**History 201AM Winter, 2019**

**Neoliberalism and its Discontents**

**R 2:00-4:50, HSSB 4041**

**Professor Alice O’Connor, HSSB 3252**

**Office Hours: W 3:30-5:00 and by appointment**

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**Course Description and Objectives**

In this seminar we will explore various iterations of what historians—although not without caveat, controversy, and some notable abstentions—are increasingly coming around to calling “neoliberalism,” with reference to the now (still) politically dominant ideological, political economic, and governance practices of contemporary times. We will begin with debates about conceptualization, periodization, and whether historians should be using the terminology at all. Weekly readings will then move through a necessarily selective survey of a.) some of the key theoretical texts that either anchor or have proved especially useful in theorizing neoliberalism and neoliberalization; b.) the economic transformations that set the stage for and in turn were fostered by neoliberalism; c.) key “sites” of neoliberal logic, policy, and practice; and d.) narrative accounts of neoliberalism’s origins, empowerment, and notable endurance, in light of what its rise and roll-out has wrought.

**Course Format and Requirements:**

The course is an intensive readings seminar, which relies heavily for its success on the full participation and preparedness of all of its members. Regular attendance is a must (please let me know in advance if you need to miss a session), as is careful reading, active participation in class discussion, and readiness to step in with stage-setting questions and observations when called upon.

Additional requirements include:

1. Each week, 2 students will collaborate to prepare a set of questions to guide class discussion, for distribution to the rest of the seminar at least one day in advance of our meeting. These questions should draw out and clarify key concepts and arguments in the readings, but they should also help to steer our discussion toward the broader questions about the meaning, scope, and usefulness (and limitations) of neoliberalism as a concept, a “project” and a way of making historical sense of late twentieth and early 21st century developments.
2. Two short papers: one a book review of 800-1000 words of a book not included in our readings (I will provide a list for you to choose from), due Jan 31. Your reviews will be distributed to others in the seminar. The other will be a paper of 1250-1500 words that puts two or more of the assigned course readings in conversation with one another in an illuminating way. You should confer with me about how you want to approach this. Due Feb. 28
3. A final 12-15 page paper, that builds on the assigned and supplemental readings and our discussions to assess the prospects and/or limitations of neoliberalism as a frame for understanding a “site” of transformation—could be a place, a policy, a public or private institution, a governing strategy (e.g.)—that is relevant to your own research or related interests (to be identified in consultation with me). The paper should include a selective and critical survey of the literature as well an analysis of whether/how the concept can help us to understand what happened, why, and how.

**Required Readings:**

Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos* (2015)

Melinda Cooper, *Family Values* (2017)

Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944)

Louis Hyman, *Temp* (2017)

Felicia Kornbluh and Gwendolyn Mink, *Ensuring Poverty* (2018)

Samuel Moyn, *Not Enough* (2018)

Christopher Newfield, *The Great Mistake* (2016)

Kim Phillips-Fein, *Fear City* (2017)

Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (1944)

Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists* (2018)

Daniel Stedman-Jones, *Masters of the Universe* (2012)

Adam Tooze, *Crashed* (2018)

Various articles and excerpts\*\* listed below, to be posted on the course website.

**Class Schedule and Reading Assignments**

**(\*\* indicates PDF posted on website)**

Jan 10: \*\*Rodgers on Neoliberalism and Forum (*Dissent*)

\*\*Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason* (Intro)

\*\*Fukayama, “End of History”

\*\*Peters, “Neoliberal Manifesto”

Jan 17: Hayek, *Road to Serfdom*

Polanyi, *Great Transformation*

\*\*Block and Somers, *The Power of Market Fundamentalism* (excerpt)

Jan 24: Kornbluh and Mink, *Ensuring Poverty*

Cooper, *Family Values*

Jan 31: Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe*

\*\*\***Book review (paper #1) due\*\*\***

Feb 7: Brown, *Undoing the Demos*

\*\*Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics* (excerpts)

Feb 14: Hyman, *Temp*

*\*\**Rodgers*, Age of Fracture* (excerpt)

Feb 21: Phillips--Fein, *Fear City*

\*\*Peck, *Neoliberal Reason* (ch. 4)

Feb 28: Newfield, *The Great Mistake*

\*\*Tomlinson and Lipsitz, “Insubordinate Spaces for Intemperate Times:

Countering the Pedagogies of Neoliberalism”

\*\*\*\*Conversation paper (paper #2) due\*\*\*\*

Mar 7: Slobodian, *Globalists*

Moyn, *Not Enough*

Mar 14: Tooze, *Crashed*

**Final Paper due: Friday, March 22**