

**HH3004:
COMPARATIVE BUSINESS HISTORY
(SYLLABUS SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

HH3004 Comparative Business History

[Seminars: 39 hours; Academic Unit: 3.0]

Learning Objectives

The objective of this course is to provide students with an introduction to business history by examining the major themes and concepts of the field, and the relationship between business, culture, economy, politics, and society. It compares business practices, organizations, strategies and structures in different cultural contexts, as well as cross-cultural environments. Students will undertake a comparative study of business history in different parts of the world, as well as the interconnections between them. In addition they will develop an awareness of the changing nature of business over time. Students will become familiar with the 'tools' used by business historians in the course of research. They will also become familiar with some of the key scholarship and current debates in this field.

This course will develop student's appreciation of history and the field of business history, it will help them to develop research and critical writing skills as students of history.

Content

This course covers early modern and modern history, drawing on case studies from the UK, Europe, America and Asia. This course takes a comparative approach to explore the development of modern businesses across Western and Asian societies. Business historians investigate both small and large enterprises and their management practices. Importantly, they also consider the economic, political and social environments in which these businesses operate; this will also be our approach over the semester. The scope of this course is from the late 18th Century through until present times; we'll trace the development of modern business and business networks in Europe, UK, America and Asia. Case studies from historical and contemporary sources allow students to see the relevance of this field of study to our understanding of businesses in the present day.

Course Outline

All readings will be uploaded on NTULearn.

Seminar I: Business History: key concepts and approaches (January 18th)

This seminar examines key concepts and approaches in Business History, as well as broaching the question of what is business history? How is business history distinguished from economic history or the history of management. It also examines how has business history been transformed in the last century since its possibilities were broached in the 1920s, if not earlier. This discussion will outline the major themes and issues to be explored in subsequent classes.

Gras, N. S. B., "Business History", *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Apr. 1934), pp. 385-398.

Hidy, Ralph W. "Business History: Present Status and Future Needs", *The Business History Review*. Vol. 44, No. 4. p. 483-497

Walton, "New Directions in business history: Themes, approaches, and opportunities". *Business History*. 1-16

Seminar II: Ancient Trade and Business: Networks, Communications, and Transactions (January 25th)

This seminar surveys the emergence of ancient trade and the business ventures and enterprises surrounding the early ancient economic, political, and societal landscapes, in different parts of the ancient world. It examines the structural dynamics of this trade, and explores ways in which we can bring our concepts used for modern businesses to these early human environments. The seminar also examines the uniqueness of these environments vis-à-vis these present-day concepts and approaches.

Curtin, Philip. "Ancient Trade" in *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*.

Moore, K. J. & E. C. Lewis. "Multinational enterprise in ancient Phoenicia", *Business History*, 2000.

Kuhrt, Amelia. "The Old Assyrian merchants" in Parkins, Helen & Christopher Smith (eds). *Trade, Traders and the Ancient City*.

Seminar III: Medieval and Early Modern Business: Accounting, Finance, Law and Family (February 1st)

This seminar explores premodern trade and business practices and networks, especially . How can we see business in a long-term historical perspective, and use the themes and frameworks associated with it to understand pre-modern trade and economic activity? What were the precursors of modern business? In what ways did premodern business continue to provide a framework for understanding modern business? We shall examine these issues with respect to Italian, Middle Eastern, and Chinese businesses.

Readings:

Abu-Lughod, "Studying a System in Formation". In Abu-Lughod. *Before European Hegemony*.

Cohen "A Partnership Gone Bad – Business relationships and the Evolving Law of the Cairo Geniza Period".

Goitein. "Portrait of a Medieval India Trader – Three Letters from the Cairo Geniza".

Seminar IV: The Estado da India and East India Companies: States as Companies and Companies as States or the rise of the first global Multinationals (February 8th)

This week's discussion shall examine the rise of trans-regional state and business enterprises in Asian trade, namely the Zheng He voyages, the Portuguese Estado da India and the Dutch and English East India Companies. It shall examine the foundations and organizations of such enterprises, and the strategies of scale and scope adopted by these enterprises.

Readings:

K.Pomeranz & S. Topik, *The World That Trade Created: Society Culture, and the World Economy. 1400 to the Present*. 2nd Edition. (New York: M E Sharpe, 2006). pp.25-40. (sections 1.8, 1.9, 1.11, 1.12)

Liu Yong, "The Commercial Culture of the VOC in Canton in the Eighteenth Century" in Haneda Masashi (ed) *Asian Port Cities 1600-1800: Local and Foreign Cultural Interactions*, (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009).

H.V. Bowen, "Sinews of Trade and Empire: The Supply of Commodity Exports to the East India Company during the Late Eighteenth Century" *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Aug., 2002).

Seminar V: Trade and Business Networks in Colonial Asia: Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia and the China Seas (February 15th) –

The seminar for this week shall examine the Asian and European business and trade networks in the Asian trade that persisted or emerged alongside the Portuguese Estado and the East India Companies. It examines the organization of these businesses, their connections and strategies in the context of new empires. It compares the European, Chinese, Arab, and Bugis trading networks and their dynamics in nineteenth-century Asia. It examines the continuities from the earlier period of merchants.

Readings:

Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. *Merchant Networks in the Early Modern World*. Ashgate Variorum. 1996 (selected chapters)

Watson, I. B., *Foundation for Empire. British Private Trade in India 1659-1760*. Delhi. 1980. (Selected Chapter).

Blusse, Leonard. *Strange Company*. 1986. (Selected Chapter).

Seminar VI: Technology, Big Business And Modern Corporations in the 19th & early 20th Centuries: Scale, Scope and Enterprise across the Atlantic (February 22nd)

This seminar explores the rise of Big Business and the Modern Industrial Corporation in North America and western Europe. It examines the work of Alfred Chandler on these early corporations, the rise of management enterprises, and the strategies adopted in handling scale and scope in these enterprises. It examines the extent to which these firms came to lay the foundations of modern business enterprises.

Readings:

Alfred Chandler 'The railroads: pioneers in modern corporate management,' *Business History Review*, Vol. 39, No.1 (spring 1965)

Janet E. Hunter, *The Emergence of Modern Japan: An Introductory History Since 1853*, London: Longman, 1989. Chapter 6 "The Pattern of Industrial Development" pp.106-124.

Kozo Yamamura, "The Founding of Mitsubishi: A Case Study in Japanese Business History" *The Business History Review*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Summer, 1967).

Semester Break: March 1st

Seminar VII: Big Business and Economies of Empire: Commercial Agriculture, Mining, and Transport Companies and the Modern Enterprise in colonial Asia and Africa. (March 8th)

This week's discussion explores the rise of Big Business and Modern enterprises in Asia between the late nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century. This period saw the growing challenge to Asian enterprises in Asian environments posed by new large-scale European and North American enterprises, as well as Japanese firms modelled after them. It examines how the first half of the twentieth century brought interesting changes and encounters in business, financing and accounting practices in Asia.

Readings:

Hao, Yen-Ping. *The Commercial Revolution in Nineteenth Century China*. (Selected Chapters)

Cochran, Sherman. *Big Business in China: Sino-Western Rivalry in the Cigarette Industry*. (Selected Chapters)

Jamie Mackie, "Five Southeast Asian Chinese Empire Builders: Commonalities and Differences" in Michael Charney, Brenda Yeoh, and Tong Chee Kiong (eds) *Chinese Migrants Abroad: Cultural, Educational and Social Dimensions of the Chinese Diaspora* pp. 3-22.

The Memoirs of Tan Kah Kee Edited and translated with notes by A.H.C. Ward, Raymond W. Chu and Janet Salaff. (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1994) pp.297-303.

Seminar VIII: Nation, Ideology and Multinationals: Nationalism, the Cold War, and the Shape of Global/Local Business (March 15th)

This seminar explores the transformations in the global business landscape arising from the onset of decolonization, the Cold War, and technological shifts in the global economy, impacting on structures of ownership, trade, production, and business in general in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas. The rise of western multinationals and new business forms in different parts of the world coupled with the new borders and laws on ownership and economy in the new nation-states of Asia and Africa.

Readings:

Hirsch, Robert & Mikhail V. Grachev. "The Russian entrepreneur", in *Journal of Business Venturing*.

Buchell, Marcelo. "Multinational corporations, totalitarian regimes and economic nationalism: United Company in Central America, 1899-1975." In *Business History*. Vol. 50, 2008, Issue 4.

Kang Rongping, "The Emergence of Ethnic Chinese Multinational Enterprises" in Yu Chunghsun (ed), *Ethnic Chinese: Their Economy, Politics and Culture* (Japan: the Japan Times, 2000), pp.53-68.

Seminar IX: States, Business, and "Miracles": The Developmental State and the changing landscapes of Asian Business in post-1945 Asia (March 22nd)

This session examines the relations between state and business in Asia and beyond. Through laws and administration of land, capital/finance, and business practices, as well as policies of development, the state plays an important if at times indirect role in the economy and in shaping business history if not in the direct investment in enterprises. This session compares different states in Asia and beyond, and overlaps as well as divergences in their relations with businesses and the business world in these countries and beyond. It also examines the responses of big business and small-and-medium enterprises to the new opportunities and pressures brought about by changes in the regional and global environments.

Readings:

Tipton, Frank. *Southeast Asian Capitalism: Histories, Institutions, States and Firms*.

Wonik, Kim. "Rethinking Colonialism and the origins of the Developmental States in East Asia."

Gomez, Terence. "State–Business Linkages in Southeast Asia: The Developmental State, Neo-liberalism, and Enterprise Development". In *East Asian Capitalism: Diversity, Continuity and Change*.

Seminar X: Ethnicity, Nation, and Family: The Family Business and Scale/Scope in the New National Economies (March 29th)

This seminar discusses the debates surrounding the family firm in the context of global shifts in the business environment, especially in terms of its ability to deal with business expansion and the challenges of scale and scope. It tries to look at family businesses in terms of their organizational dynamics and the business practices associated with them and the transformations over time.

Colli, Andrea. *The History of Family Business, 1850-2000*. Introduction.

Sharma, P. & Chua J. H.. "Asian family enterprises and family business research". *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*. 2013.

Gomez, Terence E. & Michael Hsiao Hsin-Huang. *Chinese Business in Southeast Asia: Contesting Cultural Explanations*.

Seminar XI: Technologies, Consumption, and the Changing Parameters of Global Competition: Information Technologies, the Internet, and Beyond (April 5th)

This seminar explores the changes in the business landscape and the structures, strategies and perspectives of entrepreneurs and business organizations arising from the technological shifts after the 1990s, especially with the rise of information technology and the internet and the emergence of new virtual platforms as well as the emergence of China as a major market and producer in the global economy.

Campbell-Kelly, M. "Not only Microsoft: The maturing of the personal computer software industry, 1982-1995." *The Business History Review*. 2001.

Wu, X. & G. Gereffi. "Amazon and Alibaba: internet governance, business models and internationalization strategies", in *International Business in the information and digital age*.

Santoso, A. S. "Maiximizing strategic alliances in the multi-sided platform firms". In *International Journal of Business*. 23(1), 2018.

PRESENTATION WEEK (12th APRIL)

Learning Outcome

Students will be familiar with the main scholarship and scholarly debates in relation to Business History. Through examining case studies, students will be able to critically compare and contrast various businesses and business practices. This course will develop student's abilities to write and think critically and to conduct independent research.

Student Assessment

Major Essay	35% (Annotated bibliography 10% + Actual Essay 25%)
Group Documentation Project	35% (Proposal 5% + Docu Portfolio 20% + Presentation 10%)
Class Participation, Fieldtrip assignments/exercises & Seminar Presentations	30%

Major Essay: The major essay will consist of an annotated bibliography and the actual essay. It will be based on a topic of your own choice. Instructions for the annotated bibliography will be announced in class. The actual essay will be a paper of 3,000 words (excluding bibliography) on a topic of own choice.

The group documentation project will be about any aspect of Singapore's business history. Students will be expected to work as a group to identify a key aspect of Singapore's business past, to conduct an oral history and audio-visual documentation project based on this theme/personality/event/company/organization. The expected output of this project will be a documentation portfolio and group presentation.

Some possible topics include entrepreneurs, trades, prominent brands or businesses, or business associations (can be guild or chambers of commerce). You are free to choose any topic, in consultation with the instructor.

Textbooks/References

There is no set textbook for this course. Readings are drawn from both popular business and economic history works such as K. Pomeranz and S. Topik's *The World That Trade Created: Society, Culture, and the World Economy. 1400 to the present*. 2nd edition (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2006). Students will also read a selection of the writings of Alfred Chandler who is considered one of the founding scholars of modern business history as we know it today, and examine the works of Jack Goody, especially *The East In the West*, exploring the cross-cultural understandings, organization, and practice of business. In addition, contemporary newspaper and magazine articles and primary documents will be used throughout the course.