

History 2807G
Entrepreneurship in the United States and Canada since 1800
Winter 2026

Instructor: Professor Keith Fleming

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Office: Department of History, Lawson Hall Room 1208

Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Course Description:

History 2807G is a study of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in the United States and Canada in the 19th and 20th centuries. Entrepreneurs are best understood as those who take the risks to create material wealth in the economic realm. This course will examine how economic, social, and political conditions in the United States and Canada encouraged a culture of entrepreneurship, and in turn were shaped by the activities of successive generations of creative entrepreneurs. Various theories of entrepreneurship will be examined along with their practical application by entrepreneurs in a wide array of business endeavors, including corporate finance, marketing, mass production manufacturing, corporate trusts, and transportation. Entrepreneurs' revolutionary approaches to business organizational structures, and information technologies will also be discussed. A select group of women entrepreneurs are also studied.

A central emphasis of the course will be to study the careers of leading entrepreneurs, including but not limited to Andrew Carnegie, Jonas Chickering, Samuel Colt, Jay Cooke, Michael Dell, James B. Duke, Pierre Du Pont, William C. Durant, George Eastman, Timothy Eaton, Thomas Edison, Marshall Field, Henry Ford, Henry Frick, Bill Gates, A.P. Giannini, Jay Gould, Edward H. Harriman, H.J. Heinz, James J. Hill, Lee Iacocca, Henry Kaiser, Ray Kroc, Estée Lauder, Francis Cabot Lowell, Charles E. Merrill, Cyrus H. McCormick, J.P. Morgan, John H. Patterson, George Pullman, John D. Rockefeller, Howard Schultz, I.M. Singer, Samuel Slater, Alfred P. Sloan, Donald Smith, A.T. Stewart, Gustavus Swift, Cornelius Vanderbilt, William Cornelius VanHorne, Madam C.J. Walker, Sam Walton, George Westinghouse, and Robert Woodruff.

There will be one two-hour lecture each week, as well as a one-hour tutorial when the weekly assigned readings are discussed.

Course Syllabus:

Learning Outcomes: Students will be able to

- identify the major events, concepts, and personalities associated with the development of entrepreneurialism in North America since 1800

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- provide accurate factual information about a wide range of people, groups, events, and documents discussed in readings and explain their significance
- strengthen skills of oral and written communication
- analyze secondary sources, including their sources, methods, arguments, strengths, limitations, potential implications and significance for the field
- solve research problems by identifying a topic, refining it to a significant and answerable historical question, determining the essential components of the argument, organizing the parts of the essay, and drawing conclusions
- effectively integrate a wide thematic variety of secondary sources in a research essay
- situate contemporary business issues in a broader historical context, identifying ways these issue have been informed by the history of entrepreneurship described in this course

Methods of Evaluation:

Research Essay proposal (due Monday February 2 nd)	5%
Research Essay (due Monday March 23 rd)	30%
Tutorial Participation	20%
Book Review (due Monday February 23 rd)	20%
Final Examination	25%

A 3-hour **final examination**, to be held during the April examination period, will cover all required readings, lectures, and seminar content.

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Advising. Please see https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

Each student will submit on 2 February 2026 a paper copy of their **research essay proposal** (one to two pages in length) outlining the topic, thesis, and main sources to be utilized. Essays will not be accepted or assigned a grade if they are submitted on a topic other than what was approved by the instructor.

Each student will submit on 23 March 2026 a **research essay** (10-12 typewritten pages in length) on the life and principal business innovations of a leading American or Canadian entrepreneur. Students will select their entrepreneur from a list of approved topics provided by the course instructor. In addition to focusing on the entrepreneur's most significant business innovations, essays must discuss the principal societal, economic, and political influences which affected the entrepreneur's decision-making. In addition, the essay must be submitted by the due date and time to Turnitin.com via the course site on OWL Brightspace.

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Each student will submit on 23 February 2026 a scholarly review (6-7 typewritten pages in length) of Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada* (UBC Press, 2011). The focus of the assignment will be to discuss the extent to which the retail innovations described in the book were or were not ‘entrepreneurial.’ In addition, the book review must be submitted by the due date and time to Turnitin.com via the course site on OWL Brightspace.

Students are expected to attend and participate actively in all tutorial discussions, thereby demonstrating their comprehension of the assigned readings. Sample discussion questions will be posted on the course site on OWL Brightspace before each class to assist students in preparing to participate meaningfully in the tutorial. All students will be assigned a participation grade on a 10-point scale following each tutorial. Failure to attend a tutorial will result in a score of “0” for that class. Merely attending a tutorial without participating in the discussion will result in a score of “2” for that class. The assignment of a participation grade from “3” to “10” will be determined by the quality of the student’s contributions to discussion during any given tutorial.

Absences and Late Assignments:

A late penalty of 5% for the first day and 2% per day thereafter (weekends included) will be assessed against the research essay proposal, the research essay, and book review, if submitted after the due date and time.

Non-illness absences from tutorials are unacceptable. Any student attending fewer than eight of the twelve scheduled tutorials for non-illness reasons will be assigned a failing grade for tutorial participation and a failing grade in the course.

In instances when absence from tutorial is unavoidable, students are expected, when possible, to inform the instructor in advance of their pending absence.

Students must pass all components of the course (research essay proposal; research essay; tutorial participation; book review; and final examination) to achieve a passing grade in the course.

Course Materials

All course readings are available in digital format at the Western Libraries “Course Readings” site for History 2807G (<https://ares.lib.uwo.ca/ares/>).

The book for review (Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada* (UBC Press, 2011) is available digitally via the Western Libraries website. See: <https://books-scholarsportal-info.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/en/read?id=/ebooks/ebooks3/upress/2013-08-25/1/9780774819497>

No course materials need to be purchased.

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Course Schedule and Readings

WEEK #1

Introduction to History 2807G

Lecture: Defining Entrepreneurship (I)

No Tutorials This Week

WEEK #2

Lecture: Defining Entrepreneurship (II)

Lecture: Extending the Entrepreneurial Reach: Steamships, the Telegraph, and Railroads

Tutorial Readings for Week #2:

Geoffrey Jones and R. Daniel Wadhvani, "Entrepreneurship," in Geoffrey Jones and Jonathan Zeitlin (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Business History* (Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 501-509.

Gary J. Kornblith, "The Craftsman as Industrialist: Jonas Chickering and the Transformation of American Piano Making," in *Business History Review* (Vol. 59, No. 3, Autumn 1985), pp. 349-368.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3114003.pdf>

WEEK #3

Lecture: Entrepreneurial Innovations in Financial Institutions

Tutorial Readings for Week #3:

John F. Stover, "Pullman, George Mortimer," in *American National Biography Online*.

<http://www.anb.org/articles/10/10-01353.html>

"Making a difference in the way the world worked": James J. Hill and the Transcontinental Railroads," in Burton W. Folsom, *The Myth of the Robber Barons* (Young America's Foundation, 1991), pp. 16-39.

Theodore D. Regehr, "VAN HORNE, Sir WILLIAM CORNELIUS," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003

https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/van_horne_william_cornelius_14E.html.

WEEK #4**Lecture: Entrepreneurial Manufacturers and the Development of Mass Production Strategies****Tutorial Reading for Week #4:**

David A. Hounshell, “The Sewing Machine and the American System of Manufactures” in *From the American System to Mass Production, 1800-1932: the Development of Manufacturing Technology In the United States* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp. 67-123.

https://www-fulcrum-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/epubs_download_interval/qn59q6646?chapter_index=6&locale=en&title=2.+The+Sewing+Machine+and+the+American+System+of+Manufactures+%28page+67%29

WEEK #5**Lecture: Entrepreneurial Inventors****Tutorial Reading for Week #5**

Larry MacDonald, *The Bombardier Story: From Snowmobiles to Global Transportation Powerhouse* (John Wiley and Sons, 2013), pp. 15-51.

* **RESEARCH ESSAY PROPOSAL DUE MONDAY FEBRUARY 2ND**

WEEK #6**Lecture: Entrepreneurialism in Organizational Structures****Tutorial Reading for Week #6:**

Thomas K. McCraw and Richard S. Tedlow, “Henry Ford, Alfred Sloan, and the Three Phases of Marketing,” in Thomas K. McCraw, ed., *Creating Modern Capitalism: How Entrepreneurs, Companies, and Countries Triumphed in Three Industrial Revolutions* (Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 266-300.

WEEK #7**Lecture: Entrepreneurship and the Rise of Corporate Trusts (I)****Tutorial Readings for Week #7**

“The Age of Morgan,” in Charles R. Morris, *The Tycoons: How Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, Jay Gould, and J.P. Morgan Invented the American Supereconomy* (Holt, 2005), pp. 230-270.

* * **BOOK REVIEW DUE MONDAY FEBRUARY 23RD** * *

WEEK #8

Lecture: Entrepreneurship and the Rise of Corporate Trusts (II)

Lecture: Marketing Entrepreneurs (I)

Tutorial Readings for Week #8:

Art Carden, Charles Courtemanche, and Reginald Harris, “The Vital Two: Retail Innovation by Sol Price and Sam Walton,” in *Essays in Economic & Business History* (Vol. 40, 2022), pp. 189-209.

<https://www.ebhsoc.org/journal/index.php/ebhs/article/view/499/414>

Joy L. Santink, “EATON, TIMOTHY,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003

https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/eaton_timothy_13E.html.

WEEK #9

Lecture: Marketing Entrepreneurs (II)

Tutorial Reading for Week #9:

“Howard Schultz and Starbucks Coffee Company” in Nancy F. Koehn, *Brand New: How Entrepreneurs Earned Consumers’ Trust from Wedgwood to Dell* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2001), pp. 217-256.

WEEK #10

Lecture: Entrepreneurial Women

Tutorial Reading for Week #10:

“Estée Lauder” in Nancy F. Koehn, *Brand New: How Entrepreneurs Earned Consumers’ Trust from Wedgwood to Dell* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2001), pp. 149-199.

WEEK #11

Lecture: Entrepreneurs in Wartime

Tutorial Readings for Week #11:

Michael Bliss, "FLAVELLE, Sir JOSEPH WESLEY," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 16, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003

https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/flavelle_joseph_wesley_16E.html

Michael Bliss, "War Business as Usual: Canadian Munitions Production, 1914-18," in N.F. Dreisziger, ed., *Mobilization for Total War: the Canadian, American and British Experience 1914-1918, 1939-1945* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981), pp. 45-

https://books-scholarsportal-info.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/en/read?id=/ebooks/ebooks0/gibson_crkn/2009-12-01/2/402593#page=72

* * **RESEARCH ESSAY DUE MONDAY MARCH 23RD.** * *

WEEK #12

Lecture: Entrepreneurs in Communications and Information Technology

Tutorial Reading for Week #12:

"Michael Dell" in Nancy F. Koehn, *Brand New: How Entrepreneurs Earned Consumers' Trust from Wedgwood to Dell* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2001), pp. 272-305.

WEEK #13

Lecture: Flotsam and Jetsam

Tutorial Reading for Week #13:

Blaine McCormick and Burton W. Folsom Jr., "A Survey of Business Historians on America's Greatest Entrepreneurs," in *Business History Review*, (Vol. 77, No. 4, Winter 2003), pp. 703-716.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/30041235?seq=1>

Blaine McCormick & Burton W. Folsom, (2020) "The greatest entrepreneurs and businesspeople in American history: A replication of the 2001 ranking," in *Cogent Business & Management* (Vol. 7, No. 1, 2020), pp. 1-10.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/23311975.2020.1735804?needAccess=true>

Additional Statements

Communication policy: The best way to contact me is via email (kfleming@uwo.ca). I also will hold office hours in Lawson Hall 1208 on Wednesdays from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., when you can stop by to discuss course-related matters.

Use of electronic devices: No electronic devices are allowed during the final examination. No use of audio or video recording devices is permitted in lectures or in tutorials.

Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI): You may use generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in this course for activities such as brainstorming and refining your ideas, drafting an outline to organize your thoughts, but not for generating prose. All writing submitted in this course must be your own. Students must append to all written work a brief statement clearly citing, acknowledging, and explaining their use of any such tools. If in doubt, please ask me for clarification.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.