Think Piece two: Corporations

We’ve looked at the “good, bad and ugly” of corporations in the U.S. So what do we make of all of this? How can we influence corporations to better balance their fiduciary requirement for profit with our wishes for them to be better “citizens”? And what of the role of the consumer in all of this? To what extent are we, as consumers, influencing corporations in ways that promote or detract from the public good? These are issues that merge philosophy with reality. Here is a list of possible themes for your second Think Piece:

- Is Wal-Mart good for America?
- Can corporations seek to both maximize profit and contribute to society?
- Can people reconcile their actions as both consumers and citizens?
- Are consumers well enough informed to respond to corporate actions or market conditions? How can we help make consumers better aware of what’s going on?
- Are the big, boxy superstores adding to or taking away from our social space or our culture?
- Does the ever-expanding corporate orthodoxy of businesses like Borders, Starbucks and Apple threaten or promote diversity?
- Should corrupt corporations that use illegal or dishonest methods be sanctioned and regulated by the government or by the market.
- Are media mergers bad for America?
- Should investors be able to sue corporate boards or CEOs for the declining value of stock?
- Should CEO pay and compensation be changed or regulated?
- Develop your own theme addressing corporate America with your instructor’s approval

Remember, your second Think Piece needs to incorporate what we’ve learned about the nature of corporations in the U.S. Review the readings from class, including Paul Krugman and Robert Reich. Also, don’t forget the readings on “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) and corporations and the public good from The Economist. Our viewing of “The Corporation” is also of value for this think piece.

Specific Instructions:
- Your think piece needs to argue a point.
- Your point must be supported by observation, facts, research, expert opinion, etc.
- You cannot ignore the other side (e.g. Wal-Mart does have some benefits – otherwise how would it continue to thrive? Don’t simply pretend that there’s nothing good about the corporation.)
- While we’ve studied corporate America broadly, you should focus your think piece on only one aspect of our exploration and think more deeply about that (again, aim for depth not breadth).
- Somewhere, somehow, I should get the distinct impression, after reading your page, that you have read material from the class, or even additional material that you’ve obtained, and have spent quality time thinking about the issues.
- If you get stuck, your theme should be: How can I both obtain what I want and be a decent member of society? Alternatively: what needs to happen to help me be both a good citizen and a good consumer?

General Guidelines:
- One page, single-spaced (leave me 1 inch margins all around)
- Carefully edit for clarity, coherence, grammar
- While your examination should start broadly, your writing should be focused;
- Write about one challenge to democracy;
- Waste no space on flowery or formulaic introductions;
- Ditto for conclusions;
- When in doubt, remember this: ENGAGE ME IMMEDIATELY with your thoughts;
- SNOT (show-not-tell): I want to know your thoughts and ideas not your process (e.g. “well, first I thought ‘democracy is really cool,’ but then I read this book by Kneecheeze and I thought to myself, ‘Wow!’...”)
