Getting in touch

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What it’s about

This course is about the interplay between societies and global inequalities, past and present. It describes the interplay between societies and global inequalities from competing theoretical perspectives, and considers the political and policy implications of these perspectives for global problems such as poverty, hunger, health, violence/genocide/war, racism, gender inequalities, consumerism, and environment.

Required materials


Other material: Web links throughout the syllabus connect to other required readings as well as to required videos and audios.

Learning expectations and global learning goals

*Expectations*

Each student is responsible for thoughtfully and punctually completing the course assignments—readings, lectures/discussions, videos, audios, writing assignments, and so on. Each student is also responsible for actively and courteously participating in class discussions.

*Global learning objectives*

By the end of this course, students will be able to identify and understand the following:

- Principal perspectives concerning societies and global inequalities in comparative-historical perspective.
  - That is, principal perspectives concerning why some places and groups in the world are comparatively wealthy while others are comparatively poor.
- How our routine ways of living—such as the foods we eat, the clothes we wear, the technologies we use, the ways we earn a living, and the ecologies we create—contribute to global inequalities.
- How perspectives concerning the causes of and solutions for global inequalities tend to vary according to the wealth or poverty of societies.
  ◦ The consequences of these differences for the future of global inequalities and conflicts.
- How global inequalities shape our personal awareness of the world and our personal political views.
  ◦ That is, how global inequalities shape our personal perspectives about the world; the diversity of such perspectives; and our levels of recognition of this diversity.
- Specific aspects of global inequalities and policy options regarding consumerism, labor, business corporations, nation-states, hunger, disease, environment, genocide, protest, and citizen action.
- How we as citizens of local, transnational, and global communities represent not only causes of, but also potential solutions for, global poverty and inequality.

The essays and exams will focus on broad concepts intended to foster and assess these global learning goals.

**Assessment of global learning outcomes**

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<th>2=Fair</th>
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**Graded assignments and final grades**

The reading, video, and audio assignments must be completed thoughtfully before each class session.

Final grades will be based on the following three components, *all of which must be completed in order to be eligible for a passing grade*:

- **Active learning: Five in-class presentations**
  - Each presentation contributes equally (4%) toward a total of 20% of the final grade
• Five 2-page typed, double-spaced take-home essays (12-point Times Roman font, standard margins):
  o Each essay contributes equally (4%) toward a total of 20% of the final grade.
  o Must be posted to the course website before the due-date class session.
  o Late assignments will be accepted only under exceptional circumstances, which must be reported promptly (ideally beforehand) and adequately documented.

• Three equally weighted, multiple-choice exams (25 questions each: exam 1 - week 5; exam 2 - week 9; and exam 3 - week 13):
  o Each exam contributes equally (approximately 16.67%) toward a total of 50% of the final grade.
  o The exam questions are conceptual and broad; see the attached study questions.
  o Make-up exams will be given only under exceptional circumstances, which must be reported promptly (ideally beforehand) and adequately documented. Make-up exams may consist of essay questions, and are much more demanding than the regular exams.

Schedule

GPCC: Robbins, Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism

• Week 1

UC Atlas on Global Inequality
http://ucatlas.ucsc.edu/howto.html

GPCC, Part I, “Money”; and Chapter 1, “Constructing the Consumer”

Videos: “The Bomb under the World” (India and consumer globalization) and “Affluenza” (U.S. consumerism and global problems)

Active-Learning #1. The Global Fashion Commodity Chain

Find the website for the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum of American History and find its site on the “Fashion Food Chain.” Read the various parts of the site, then carry out “The Global Production” exercise (about where specific clothing items in your closet/dresser are manufactured and under what labor/wage conditions they are produced). Conclude by considering the “Fashion Food Chain” site and “The Global Production” exercise in view of the GPCC, chapter 1 and the videos “The Bomb under the World” and “Affluenza.”

In-class presentations and discussion: How does the “fashion food chain” cause poverty in some parts of the world while subsidizing your own standard of living? To what extent were you previously unaware of this relationship, and, if you were unaware of it, why was this so? How is the degree of awareness of this relationship among the workers/producers at the lower rungs of these chains likely to differ from yours? What are the ramifications of your perspective and theirs for citizen action and public policy concerning global manufacturing and labor? To what extent would you be willing to promote such reform, either in your own daily life or as part of public action? If you are willing to do so at either or both levels, what might you do?
**Week 2**

*GPCC*, Chapter 2, “The Laborer in the Culture of Capitalism”

Global Issues, “Child Labor”  
http://www.globalissues.org/article/62/child-labor

http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_childlabour.html

Global Issues, “Sugar”  
http://www.globalissues.org/article/239/sugar

http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=8489


Videos:  
- “The Sugar Babies” (Haitian child labor in Dominican sugarcane plantations)  
- “Children without Childhood: Angels in the Night” (child prostitution and global sex tourism in the Philippines)

**Active Learning #2. Labor and Children in the Global Economy**

**In-class presentations and discussion:** What, according to *GPCC*, chapter 2, have been the principal historical struggles of labor in the world division of labor since the 1500s or so? How do these struggles pertain to the current plight of child labor, as portrayed in the documentary film “The Sugar Babies.” How do they pertain to the concept of “global commodity chain,” as discussed under chapter 1 and in active learning #1 (that is, “fashion food chain”)? How does this global commodity chain – and, specifically, the role of child labor within it – enhance your living standard while causing poverty elsewhere?

By contrast, what is the culture of poverty thesis? How does the global commodity chain perspective contrast to the culture of poverty perspective in explaining the principal cause of poverty?
Week 3

GPCC, Chapter 3, “The Rise of the Merchant, Industrialist, and Capitalist Controller”

“Everybody Wants to Rule the World,” Baltimore Sun
http://www.thesunmagazine.org/issues/381/everybody_wants_to_rule_the_world

Korten, “Living Wealth: Better than Money,” Yes!
http://www.yesmagazine.org/article.asp?ID=1834

Film: “Roger & Me”

Active Learning #3. Business Corporations in the Global Economy

In-class presentations and discussion: Summarize David Korten’s critique of “corporate globalization” (see Baltimore Sun and Yes!). What commonalities are there between Korten’s critique and GPCC, chapter 3? What are some implications of the critiques by Korten and GPCC for reforming global society in the current era of severe economic downturn and socio-political crises? How might these implications be different from the standpoints of richer versus poorer areas of the world? Have the perspectives of GOCC and Korten changed your understanding of business-society relations in the world? If so, how have they done so? If not, why not?

Week 4

GPCC, Chapter 4, “The Nation-State in the Culture of Capitalism”

The History of the Roma
http://www.geocities.com/~patrin/history.htm
http://www.geocities.com/~Patrin/timeline.htm
http://www.geocities.com/~patrin/holocaust.html

The Roma in Italy Today, BBC
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7400460.stm
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7402602.stm
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7476413.stm

European Roma Rights Centre
http://www.errc.org/

Roma of the Americas
http://sciway3.net/clark/freemoors/roma.html

Sacco and Vanzetti: The Red Scare and Ethnic Backlash in the U.S. after World War I
http://www.metacafe.com/watch/1471239/sacco_and_vanzetti/
http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/saccov/saccov.htm
http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/SaccoV/redscare.html
http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/SaccoV/chronology.html
**Essay #1. The Nation-State and Domestic Oppression**

From the standpoint of *GPCC*, chapter 4, in what ways has the historical oppression of the Roma in Europe been connected to the nation-state and nation-building – political, economic, and cultural? How do these same factors pertain to the historical case of the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti in the U.S. after World War I? In what ways is the persecution of the Roma in present-day Italy ironic in view of the case of Sacco and Vanzetti, as well as that the wider prejudice against Italians (as well as many European immigrant groups) in the U.S. in the 1800s and 1900s? What similar ironies can you identify in the world, past and present, in regard to ethnic-racial relations, perhaps including your own ethnic-racial identity and community?

**Week 5 – Exam #1**

Exam #1

*GPCC*, Part II (on Polanyi’s Paradox) and Chapter 5, “The Problem of Population Growth”

Video: “The Legacy of Malthus”

**Active Learning #4. Is Overpopulation the Root-Cause of Global Poverty and Environmental Destruction?**

**In-class presentations and discussion:** It is commonly argued and assumed that “overpopulation” is a basic root-cause of global poverty and environmental destruction. Describe the counter-argument made and the evidence for this counter-argument provided in *GPCC*, chapter 5 and in “The Legacy of Malthus.” What are the implications of the counter-argument for global anti-poverty policy and global sustainability policy?

**Week 6**

*GPCC*, Chapter 6, “Hunger, Poverty, and Economic Development”

“Unequal Land Ownership and Hunger,” Global Policy Forum
http://www.globalpolicy.org/socecon/hunger/land/index.htm

“Hunger and the Globalized System of Trade and Production,” Global Policy Forum
http://www.globalpolicy.org/socecon/hunger/economy/index.htm

Video: “Life and Debt” (Brazil)

**Active Learning #5. Global Hunger and Famine**

**In-class presentations and discussion:** What are the fundamental causes of global hunger and famine, from the perspectives of *GPCC*, chapter 6 and the assigned readings from the Global Policy Forum? From these perspectives, why is it that you yourself do not suffer from hunger and famine? What are the ramifications of this perspective for your awareness of the roots of hunger and
famine, and for citizen action and public policy concerning global hunger and famine? How might policy approaches to hunger and famine vary by richer versus poorer areas of the world?

• **Week 7**

*GPCC, Chapter 7, “Environment and Consumption”*

Politics of Water, PBS  

FIU, Global Water for Sustainability Program  
[http://globalwaters.net/](http://globalwaters.net/)

Documentary: “Thirst” (political conflicts over water in Bolivia, India, and the U.S.)

**Essay #2. Global Water and Environment**

According to *GPCC*, chapter 7 and the film “Thirst,” what are the basic causes of water scarcity and thirst in the world? What do the authors advocate in regard to global water policy? How might FIU’s Global Water for Sustainability Program contribute to this policy agenda? What are the consequences of the authors’ perspective for citizen action and public policy in regard to global water and environment?

• **Week 8**

*GPCC, Chapter 8, “Disease”*

“Rx for Survival,” PBS  

Selected diseases, “Rx for Survival,” PBS  

Video clips, “Rx for Survival,” PBS  

**Essay #3. Global Disease**

Choose a disease to analyze from either *GPCC*, chapter 8 or “Rx for Survival.” How is that disease’s contemporary prevalence rooted in globalization and global inequalities, according to the frameworks presented in *GPCC*, chapter 8 or “Rx for Survival”? What kind of global policy might be required to mitigate or eradicate the disease? From the perspective of this section’s materials, what about your own relationship to the global economy makes you vulnerable or not to this disease?
**Week 9 – Exam #2**

Exam #2

*GPCC*, Chapter 9, “Indigenous Groups and Ethnic Conflict”

“The Aboriginal Struggle for Land Rights and Justice,” *Green Left*  

“Aboriginal Peoples and the Criminal Justice System,” *Bulletin* (Canadian Criminal Justice Association)  

“Australia Apologizes to Aborigines,” *International Herald-Tribune*  

“Civil Rights and Native Americans,” U.S. Department of Justice  
[http://www.policyalmanac.org/culture/archive/native_americans.shtml](http://www.policyalmanac.org/culture/archive/native_americans.shtml)

“The Transcontinental Railroads: Native Americans,” PBS  

“Soul Wound: The Legacy of Native American Schools,” *Amnesty Magazine*  
[http://www.amnestyusa.org/amnestynow/soulwound.html](http://www.amnestyusa.org/amnestynow/soulwound.html)

Film: “Rabbit-proof Fence” (history of Australian oppression of Aborigines)

**Essay #4. Aborigines, Native Americans, and “Nation Building”**

From the perspectives of *GPCC*, chapter 9 and “Rabbit-Proof Fence”, what were the political and economic roots of the oppression of Aborigines in Australia? In view of the section’s readings on the U.S. and Canada, what were – and perhaps are - the similarities between the oppression of Aborigines and of Native Americans? What kinds of policy action would be required to substantially reduce or eliminate poverty among Aborigines and Native Americans? What political obstacles are in the way of such policy action, and in what way might your own short-term economic and political interests be part of these obstacles?

**Week 10**

*GPCC*, Part III (on Terrorism) and Chapter 10, “Peasant Protest, Rebellion, and Resistance”; *GPCC*, Chapter 11, “Antisystemic Protest”

Engels, “The 12 Articles of the Peasants” (Germany, 1500s)  
[http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/peasant-war-germany/ch0e.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/peasant-war-germany/ch0e.htm)

Ho Chi Minh, “The Condition of the Peasants in Vietnam” (1924)  
“The Vietnam War: The Seeds of Conflict,” The History Place

Mott and Housman, “The Chiapas Uprising” (Mexico, 1990s)
http://gurukul.ucc.american.edu/ted/CHIAPAS.HTM

“Brazil Landless Workers Protest,” CommonDreams.org (Brazil today)
http://www.commondreams.org/headlines01/0904-04.htm

“German Farmers Stage Milk Protest,” BBC (Europe today)
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7426222.stm

**Essay #5. Rural Protest**

Focusing on *GPCC*, chapter 10, what were the causes of the Chiapas uprising in the 1990s? How does this explanation pertain to other aspects of global inequality as previously discussed in this course? In particular, how might your own short-term economic and political interests contribute to the conditions that lead to poverty, oppression, and – sometimes – protest in the world’s rural areas? What kinds of citizen action and public policy would be required to create major improvements in living standards in the world’s poor rural areas?

- **Week 11**

  *GPCC*, chapter 12, “Religion and Antisystemic Protest”

  Barber, “Jihad vs. McWorld,” *The Atlantic*

  Wuthnow, “The World of Fundamentalism”
  http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=230

  Video: “God Fights Back” (film series “The People’s Century”)

- **Week 12**

  *GPCC*, Chapter 13, “Constructing the Citizen-Activist”

  Reflection and Review: Societies and global inequalities – what we’ve learned, what we need to learn, and possible ways to make a better world

- **Week 13 – Exam #3**

  Exam #3