

CULT 320 — Globalization & Culture

Prof: Roger Lancaster

Thursday, 7:20-10:00 PM

Robinson A106

Office Hours: Wed/Thurs, 2-4 PM

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We are told that we live in an age of globalization and that the world is becoming a global village. The interconnectedness of places and peoples is depicted as being somehow both *new* and *natural*, or at any rate inevitable. This course will show that such interconnectedness is neither new nor natural much less inevitable—although it is increasing, accelerating, and intensifying.

Now if this were a course on ancient history, we would trace the rise and fall of empires; the circulation of goods like salt, gold, or silk over far-flung trade routes; the long-wending migrations tribes, nations, and captives; and the effects such traffic in goods and persons had on the 90% or so of humanity who were peasants. A modern world history course would start with the age of conquest, dispossession, and colonialism—which ultimately fostered the development of capitalism on a global scale.

We will cast backward glances at these pre-histories, because they set the stage for our present-day realities. But in this course our focus is on the *contemporary* forms of what we call globalization, which result from a specific conjuncture of *technologies*, *treaties*, and *cheap transport*. Emphasizing the post-1970s dispensation of neoliberal capitalism, we will pay special attention to the role that media and new media technologies play in shaping the cultural spaces in which people live today. We will try to understand how globalization is lived in everyday life and is experienced differentially across the globe. We also will critically examine globalization's planners' claim that everyone gets rich off free trade, inspecting the effects of globalization on subsistence, inequality, and fairness in various locations.

Lastly, this course will consider *limits* to globalization. We will survey resource and climate change questions; we will consider "globalization from below" (movements that resist or attempt to construct alternatives to neoliberal globalization); and we will discuss persistent flash points and trends (events such as Brexit and the rise of neo-nationalist movements across the North Atlantic) that take aim at the nexus of treaties, laws, and conventions that have undergirded modern globalization.

COURSE Commitments (aka learning objectives)*Your commitments as a student:*

- Read all material before class.
- Read to engage and understand, marking up your copy of the materials and making notes.
- Put your best effort into all assignments.
- Engage thoughtfully in class discussion and activities.
- Open your mind to new ideas and perspectives.
- Come to class on time.

My commitments as the teacher:

- Introduce you to critical approaches to globalization and its cultural dynamics.
- Provide you with the opportunity to apply theoretical models to the world around you.

- Develop your understanding of global power structures and inequalities.
- Expand your comprehension of the links between the global and the local.
- Challenge you to think about the relationships between theory and practice, or how social change comes about.
- Help you improve and expand a variety of essential skills, including reading comprehension, written/visual/verbal communication, and time-management.

Grading (component points):**Cumulative Points:**

Component	Points	Criteria
Class Participation	10	Dependent on your level of constructive engagement with class discussions.
Globalization in the News	10	Over the course of the semester, bring five (5) relevant news or current events items to class for brief (2-3 min) presentation and discussion. Explain and explore these items' relevance to course subject matter. (Note: Under our definitions, <i>international</i> news does not inherently qualify as news of globalization.)
Pop Quizzes	20	Periodic pop quizzes will monitor your preparation of class readings.
Midterm	20	Due March 10, 5 PM (via email). A short take-home essay (2,500 words, excluding references) on readings and lectures from Weeks 1-7. You are in the role of instructor, and you are tasked with introducing a course on globalization and culture. Develop an overview, analysis, polemic, or argument (not necessarily to unfold in the same order as the weekly readings). Reference every assertion with a source from the readings. Late midterms will be penalized.
Group Presentations	20	Small groups of students (3-4 each) will intensify our learning experience by collaboratively organizing one-hour sessions on the following topics: Immigration/Borders/Hybrids (Week 9); Sex/Food (10); Shadow Economies (11); Cities (12); Climate (13); Alternatives (14); The End? (15). Your session will include some combination of presentation; an audiovisual component; class discussion.
Final Essay	20	Due May 5, 5 PM (via email). What is happening and what can or ought to be done? Write an op-ed (2,500 words) covering subjects related to the second half of the course. Introduce and develop your arguments in a systematic and logical manner. Reference every assertion with a scholarly source. Topics and Guidelines will be discussed. Late papers will be graded down accordingly.



A 94–100
A- 90–93
B+ 87–89
B 84–86
B- 80–83
C+ 77–79
C 74–76
C- 70–73
D 60–69
F below 60

SCHEDULE

It's not that there's some inexorable force leading to stuff rattling around the globe; it's that the combination of containerization and trade liberalization has made it possible to break up the value chain to take advantage of international wage differences. — Paul Krugman

Week 1 | Introductions (26 January)

- Paul Krugman, "America is Flat (the World Isn't)," "A Globalization Puzzle," and "Recent History in One Chart," *Conscience of a Liberal* blog (PDFs)
- Paul Krugman, "And the Trade War Came," *New York Times*, 26 December 2016
- "To understand 2016's politics, look at the winners and losers of globalization: An Interview with economist Branko Milanovic," *The New Republic* (PDF)

Week 2 | What is Globalization? A Crash Course with Key Concepts (2 February)

- Anthony Giddens, "Globalization of Modernity" (pp. 60—66),
- John Tomlinson, "Globalization and Cultural Identity" (pp. 269—277), and
- Kevin Robins, "Encountering Globalization" (pp. 239—245), from *The Global Transformations Reader, 2nd Edition* (PDFs).
- Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," from *The Globalization Reader* (PDF).
- In-Class Video: [Marti Gras, Made in China](#) (select scenes).

HISTORIES

Armand Mattelart's book, Networking the World, shows how for centuries globalization always has been the same thing: an Enlightenment utopian dream of universal communication, imagined first as elaborate canal systems that would conquer nature and connect far-flung cities, imagined today as the ecstasy of free trade and instantaneous communication through digital media. Such is the stuff of dreams; your results may vary.

Week 3 | The World Before 1492 (9 February)

- Robert B. Marks, Chapters 1, 2, 3, *The Origins of the Modern World*, pp. 1-94 (book).

Week 4 | Colonialism, Capitalism, & Underdevelopment (16 February)

Required Reading:

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Bourgeois and Proletarians," from *The Communist Manifesto*, <http://www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/classics/manifesto.html>.
- Sven Beckert, "Slavery and Capitalism," *The Chronicle Review* (PDF).
- LS Stavrianos, Introduction to *Global Rift* (PDF).
- Andre Gunter Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment" (PDF).

Supplemental Reading:

- Robert B. Marks, Chapter 4, *The Origins of the Modern World*, pp. 95-122.

Week 5 | Neoliberal Globalization (23 February)

Required Readings:

- Manfred Steger and Ravi Roy, "What's Neo about Neoliberalism?" from *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (PDF).
- David Harvey, "Accumulation by Dispossession," from *The New Imperialism* (PDF).
- Martin Jacques, "Neoliberalism has had its day. So what happens next?" *Guardian* (PDF).
- In-Class Video: ["Burkina Faso President Thomas Sankara's 'Against Debt' Speech."](#)

ISSUES

"Americanization, Professor, means that Mexicans, instead of thinking in Spanish like before, think in Spanish like now." – Carlos Monsiváis

Week 6 | Global Media: Who Owns What (and What Does it Matter)? (2 March)

- Robert W. McChesney, "The New Global Media" (pp. 260-268), from *The Global Transformations Reader, 2nd Edition* (PDF).
- Ramon Lobato, "Nollywood at Large" and "Six Faces of Piracy," from *Shadow Economies of Cinema* (PDF).
- Dean Baker, "Is Globalization to Blame?" *Boston Review*.
- **Visual:** [Internet Population and Penetration, 2013 \(map\)](#).
- **Video (watch this for homework):** ["Good Copy, Bad Copy"](#) (59 min video).
- **Check this project out if you have time:** [Why We Post: Social Media Through the Eyes of the World](#).
- **In-Class Video:** ["Everything is a Remix"](#) (36 min video).

Week 7 | Work in the Age of Globalization, Cyberspace, and Uberization (9 March)

- Jane Collins, "The Age of Wal-Mart," from *The Insecure American* (PDF).
- Nick Dyer-Witheford, "Vortex" and "Cybernetic," from *Cyber-Proletariat: Global Labour in the Digital Vortex* (PDF).
- **All About Uber:** ["I was an Undercover Uber Driver"](#) (*City Paper*), ["Uber's Global Expansion in Five Seconds"](#) (*Forbes*), and ["The Real Reason Uber is Losing in China"](#) (*Fortune*).
- **And ultra-rapid transit of the near future:** Jamie Lincoln Kitman, "Google Wants Driverless Cars, But Do We?" *New York Times* (PDF); Vivek Wadhwa, "Your Future Commute," *Washington Post* (PDF).

MIDTERM: Due March 10, 5 PM (via email).

Week 8 | SPRING BREAK (16 March)

Week 9 | Borders & Hybrids (23 March)

- Carlos Monsiváis, "Would So Many Millions of People Not End Up Speaking English? The North American Culture and Mexico," from *Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader* (PDF).
- Nestor Garcia Canclini, "Hybrid Cultures, Oblique Powers" (PDF).
- **In the News:** "After Years on the Outside, Foes of Legal Immigration Find a Louder Voice with Trump's Election," *Washington Post* (PDF).

- **Video (watch this for homework):** [“The Time Has Come: A Border Community Stands Up to the US Border Patrol.”](#) (Debbie Nathan writes: “This was made in 1995 with \$5K of a Border Patrol settlement with students and staff at an El Paso high school. Settlement called for a ‘cultural sensitivity’ training film for agents. My rights group used it instead to do a community ed piece, and agents also had to watch it.”)

Week 10 | Sex and Food in the Global Circuit (30 March)

Required Reading:

- Denis Altman, “Global Gaze / Global Gays,” *GLQ*, Vol. 3, pp. 417-436 (PDF).
- Roger Lancaster, “Tolerance and Intolerance in Sexual Cultures in Latin America,” from *Passing Lines* (PDF).
- Sidney Mintz, “Time, Sugar, and Sweetness,” from *Food and Culture: A Reader* (PDF).

Supplemental Reading:

- Mark Liechty, “Carnal Economies: the Commodification of Food and Sex in Kathmandu,” *Cultural Anthropology* 20(1) (2005): 1-38 (PDF).

Week 11 | Shadow Economies, etc.: The Dark Side of Globalization (6 April)

- Carolyn Nordstrom, “Extrastate Globalization of the Illicit,” *Why America’s Top Pundits Are Wrong*, ed. Catherine Besteman and Hugh Gusterson, pp. 138-153 (PDF).
- Carolyn Nordstrom, “The Cultures of Criminals,” from *Global Outlaws* (pp. 139-148) (PDF).
- Schneider and Enste, “Shadow Economies: Size, Causes, and Consequences,” *J. of Economic Literature* (PDF).
- **Up Close: Narco-Trafficking:** [“Mexico’s Drug War,”](#) Council on Foreign Relations; [“Mexico’s Drug War: A New Way to Think About Mexican Organized Crime,”](#) *Forbes*; and [“Mexico Grapples with a Surge in Violence,”](#) *New York Times*; [“A Brutal Trend is Emerging in Mexico,”](#) *Business Insider*.
- **Visuals:** US Firearms Sales and Military Assistance to Mexico, pages 5 and 11, *Where the Guns Go*, AFSC; [The Global Arms Trade](#), Princeton fact sheet.
- **In-Class Video:** [Janine Wedel, Shadow Elites.](#)

FUTURES

Our old world, the one that we have inhabited for the last 12,000 years, has ended, even if no newspaper has yet printed its scientific obituary. – Mike Davis

Week 12 | Cities in Globalization (13 April)

Required Reading:

- Mike Davis, “Planet of Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Proletariat,” *New Left Review* 26 (March-April 2004) (PDF).
- Mike Davis, “Fear and Money in Dubai,” *New Left Review* 41 (September-October 2006) (PDF).
- Carlos Monsivais, “Identity Hour, or, What Photos Would You Take of the Endless City (From a Guide to Mexico City),” from *Mexican Postcards* (PDF).

Supplemental Reading:

- Dennis Rodgers, "A Symptom Called Managua," *New Left Review* 49 (January-February 2008) (PDF).
- "What San Francisco Says About America," *New York Times* (PDF).
- David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *New Left Review* 53 (Sept-Oct 2008) (PDF).

Week 13 | Resources and Global Climate Change (20 April)

- Roger Lancaster, "Junkyards," from *Life is Hard* (PDF).
- Mike Davis, "Who Will Build the Arc?" (PDF).
- **News Item:** "Tossed Aside in the 'White Gold' Rush: Indigenous peoples are left poor as tech world takes lithium from under their feet," *Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/business/batteries/tossed-aside-in-the-lithium-rush/>
- **Video (Watch this for homework):** [Global Creative Leadership Summit: Climate Change versus Globalization](#) (9 min). (Not much has happened since the 2008 summit.)
- **In-Class Video:** ["E-Waste Hell."](#)

Supplemental Reading:

- Richard Hayes, "Our Biopolitical Future: Four Scenarios," *World Watch* (2007) (PDF).

Week 14 | Another World Is Possible: Globalization From Below (27 April)

Required Reading:

- Peter Evans, "Counterhegemonic Globalization" (548-554)
- Peter Pleyers, "The Global Justice Movement" (555-560)
- Subcommandante Marcos, "Tomorrow Begins Today" (575-579)
- World Social Forum, "Porto Alegre Call for Mobilization" (580-582)
- International Forum on Globalization, "A Better World is Possible!" (583-595), from *The Globalization Reader* (PDFs).

Supplemental Reading:

- **The Zapatistas Today:** Laura Gottesdiener, "A Glimpse into the Zapatista Movement, Two Decades Later," *The Nation* (PDF)
- **Mondragon in Hard Times:** Vicente Navarro, ["The Case of Mondragón,"](#) *CounterPunch*; Gar Alperovitz and Thomas Hanna, ["Mondragón and the System Problem,"](#) *Yes Magazine*; ["Mondragón: Spain's giant cooperative where times are hard but few go bust,"](#) *Guardian*.

Week 15 | Is This, Then, The End of Globalization? (4 May)

- Dani Rodrik, "Has Globalization Gone Too Far?" (pp. 379-383), *Globalization Reader* (PDF).
- Tim Parks, "Why the EU Had it Coming," *New York Times* (PDF).
- Ian Bremmer, "After the G-Zero: Overcoming Fragmentation," Eurasia Group (PDF).
- Wolfgang Streeck, "How Will Capitalism End?" *New Left Review* (PDF).
- Dani Dodrik, ["No Cheers for Globalization"](#)

Supplemental Reading:

- Amartya Sen, "How to Judge Globalism" (19-24),
- Joseph Stiglitz, "Globalization's Discontents" (218-226), from *The Globalization Reader* (PDFs).

Final Essay: Due May 5, 5 PM (via email).

House Rules and Miscellanea

Classroom Environment: We aim for a respectful learning environment in which everyone can participate. Please try to learn your classmates' names and pronounce them correctly. It is okay for us to disagree with one another in class discussion, but let's do so in the spirit of dialogue and let's remember to substantiate assertions. In short, let's keep the conversation as open and informative for everyone as possible.

Email: GMU faculty and students are required to use GMU email accounts to communicate. You must regularly check your GMU email address, as important updates will be sent that way. I will not announce any major changes to the syllabus with less than 24 hours notice. I will respond to emails within 24 hours. I do not respond to emails on the weekends; an email sent on Friday will receive a response by Monday.

LAPTOPS AND CELLPHONES:

- Laptops are not allowed in class, unless as part of an accommodation provided by the Disability Resource Center, or as part of one of your class presentations.
- Cell phone use is also not allowed. This includes texting, Facebooking, Snapchatting, Tweeting, Instagramming, hunting Pokémon, and anything else you might do with a cell phone outside of class. If you are anticipating a special circumstance in which you might need access to your phone during class, just check in with me.

SOME CAMPUS RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOU:

- **Writing Resources:** You may wish to use the Writing Center to assist you with an assignment. Tutors at the Writing Center can help you brainstorm, structure, and revise your written work. The Writing Center is located in Robinson A 114; 703-993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>.
- **Counseling Services:** Professional counselors provide individual and group sessions for personal development and assistance with a range of emotional and relational issues. Counseling Services are located in SUB I, Rm.364; 703-993-2380; <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/csdc>. In addition, the Learning Services Program (703-993- 2999) offers academic skill-building workshops as well as a tutor referral service.
- **Student Technology Assistance and Resource Center (STAR):** The STAR Center is available to help students with technology needs, such as video, multimedia, desktop publishing, and web skills. The STAR Center is located in Johnson Center, Rm.229; 703-993-8990; <http://media.gmu.edu>.
- **Division of Instructional and Technology Support Services (DoIT):** If you have any difficulties with accessing the campus network or on-campus computers, please contact the help desk. DoIT is located in Innovations Hall, Rm.416; 703-993-3178; <http://www.doit.gmu.edu>.
- **Last but not least, I am your resource!** I am available during office hours and by appointment to discuss and support any and all aspects of your learning and development in this course. We can go over assignments before and after you've turned them in; we can review concepts from class; and we can extend discussions just because you're interested and curious. If you are experiencing difficulties, please come to me for assistance before you fall behind. I will be glad to match your efforts.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: When submitting work under your own name, keep in mind that plagiarism is a violation of the GMU Honor Code. The Honor Code states, "Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work." Plagiarism means using words, ideas, opinions, or factual information from another person or source without giving due credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes; a simple listing of books and articles consulted is not sufficient. Nor does rearrangement of another person's phrasing (paraphrase) release one from the obligation to document one's sources. Plagiarism is a form of fraudulently claiming someone else's work as your own, and as such is the equivalent of cheating on an exam. **A serious academic offense, plagiarism is grounds for failing at least the assignment, if not the whole course.** If you are unclear about what you should document, consult with me. When in doubt, document. *(Adapted from the English Department Statement on Plagiarism)*

DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.