

**GLOBALIZATION AND SOCIAL CONFLICT
SO 1620**

Tu-Th 10:30-11:50

**Patrick Heller
Brown University**

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Department of Sociology
Maxcy 410**

Teaching Assistants:

**Amy Kracker
Dikshya Thapa
Optat Tengia**

Course Description

Globalization has been a highly contested issue for the past two decades. The current global economic crisis, unprecedented in its scope and depth, has revealed many of the social and political faultlines of contemporary capitalism. The crisis, which has shaken established ideologies and academic paradigms to the core, poses epochal challenges of global governance and coordination. How governments, global institutions and social forces respond to these challenges will fundamentally reshape the global system. Making sense of what drives these changes and what impact they will have calls for a renewed understanding of what globalization is.

This course examines globalization as a multidimensional and open-ended process. A wide range of interpretations of globalization's impact and theories of its transformative dynamics are explored. The course takes for granted only four general propositions. First, to understand globalization it is necessary to understand the history and dynamics of capitalism as both an economic *and* social system. Second, though globalization is being driven primarily by economic forces, it is deeply and inextricably enmeshed with and mediated by social and political forces. Third, the intensity and effects of globalization are neither uniform nor linear. The impact of globalization varies dramatically across different nations, social classes and sectors, and produces a range of conflicts, reactions and recombinations. Fourth, by promoting interdependence globalization has created new opportunities and new challenges. Making the most of these opportunities (growth that is inclusive, democracies that are effective and rights that are universal) and facing the various challenges (economic crisis, climate change, terrorism, global diseases and new forms of inequality) requires new forms of coordination and cooperation between states, and between states, capital and civil society. This in turn calls for a new regime of global politics.

The course is accordingly divided into six broad sections. The first explores what drives globalization and in particular the transformation of contemporary capitalism. The second explores the historical and changing relationship of industrialized capitalist countries to the developing world. The third examines the social and political effects of globalization, including its impact on social structures and compacts, national sovereignty and democracy. The fourth examines countervailing forces to economic globalization, in particular reassertions of "traditional" identities, new social movements and the global democracy movement. The fifth and sixth explore the emergent and potential forms of global democracy, including new forms of extra-national authority and the power of global civil society.

The course is designed not only to engage the debate on globalization, but also to develop a wide range of social sciences concepts and analytical tools. The course is informed by a sociological perspective, but readings and arguments also draw extensively from political science, anthropology and economics.

Whenever possible, key themes are developed through comparisons and case studies. The six broad themes of the course are summarized below:

The Capitalist World Economy: Origins and Structures

The study of society and its relationship to the market gave birth to modern sociology. Among the most prominent theorists of the rise of capitalism were Marx, Weber and Polanyi. The transition debate remains of enduring theoretical value, and provides many important lessons and conceptual tools for understanding the current stage of globalization. Examining the origins of capitalism in Western Europe offers historically and comparatively informed insights into the social, political and cultural dimensions of globalization.

Transformation in the Developing World

The outward expansion of European capitalism transformed the world and transformed social structures in the colonies, which in turn gave birth in the post-World War II era to post-colonial projects of state-led development. This period was also marked by the rapid diffusion of institutional forms. For all its transformative powers, however, capitalism has had a very uneven impact on the world. Predictions of convergence notwithstanding, the gap between the developing and developed world persists, and by some accounts has even worsened. States in the developing world have had dramatically varying degrees of success in promoting national economic development and greater social equity.

Contemporary Globalization and Crisis of Capitalism

Capitalism has long been a driver of global interdependence. Yet, the current phase of globalization (post 1973) represents a qualitatively different stage in the transformation of the world economy. This stage is specifically characterized by the globalization of production, the rise of the service and information sectors, and the increasing power of global financial institutions. The technological characteristics of global production are well known. But how is global production organized and how is it governed? Specifically, we will explore the social and political forces that have propelled the shift from Fordist production (underwritten by Keynesian economic policies and national social contracts) to flexible-specialization forms of production. We will also examine the role of multilateral institutions in shaping the rise of the new global order and, in particular, neo-liberal economic prescriptions, and the extent to which this has weakened the role of the traditional, sovereign, nation-state. New forms of global governance have emerged but are clearly inadequate for managing new global challenges such as climate change and terrorism.

The Social Impact of the New Global Economy

The effects of economic globalization have been anything but even and uniform. Many sectors and nations have benefited, while others find themselves increasingly marginalized and even excluded. New forms of inclusion have been accompanied by new forms of inequality and social exclusion. The increasing mobility of capital and increased head-to-head competition has weakened the relative bargaining strength of labor, and the fiscal and institutional capacity of the state to counteract the more socially disruptive effects of market-led transformation. In the developing world, the absence of safety nets, the thinness of democracy, and the persistence of social vulnerabilities have exacerbated some of the more dislocating and polarizing effects of globalization, often fueling “movements of anger”. The shift of power from representative national institutions to multilateral institutions and global economic networks threatens traditional forms of democratic accountability. Unregulated growth and insatiable first world consumption has resulted in unsustainable pressures on the global environment. And even as many cities in the developing world have found a new dynamic niche in the global economy, the political and social problems of urban governance have increased.

Challenges to Economic Globalization

The transformation of economic structures and geo-political configurations has created new opportunities as well as new tensions. We will explore a set of highly debated causal connections emphasizing variations across the developing world. Are the politicization of “traditional” identities and the resurgence of nationalism a response to Western culture and the increasing dominance of liberal capitalism? How has rapid and often unregulated economic transformation exacerbated ethnic and social tensions? Many reactions to globalization have been defensive in nature, and are often at odds with democratic principles.

On the other hand, popular democratic forces, including social movements and new transnational networks of civil society organizations, have increasingly contested neo-liberal globalization. These democratically inspired movements have challenged neo-liberal policy prescriptions and their modes of implementation, and critiqued such policies as anti-democratic and harmful to the poor. Thus, while globalization has opened up new spaces for democratic politics, it has also unleashed forces that fuel conflict and may even threaten democracy. The empowerment of subordinate groups and the increasing vibrancy of civil society that has accompanied democratic transitions has also, in many instances, triggered demands for more substantive outcomes, including greater equity. In analytical terms, two different—though not necessarily exclusive—alternative projects can be identified: (1) The social-democratic response builds on the traditional politics of labor and focuses on the role of an affirmative democratic state in actively alleviating poverty, developing the national economy and managing a more equitable distribution of the gains of global integration; and (2) new social movements, located in the resurgence of civil society, have built on new forms of association such as NGOs to cultivate universal identities (the women's, human rights and environmental movements) and to promote sustainable development and grass roots democracy.

Global Governance and Civil Society

The decline of the traditional source of international power and legitimacy – the sovereign nation-state – has witnessed the emergence of new structures of global governance. These structures take many forms including formal institutions backed by international law and a range of transnational practices that are more informal but nonetheless play an important role in governing global transactions. What are these structures and how do they work? Are they capable of providing the institutional foundations for global governance? Do they simply reflect the influence and power of the dominant global economic players, or do they also reflect global norms of democracy and social justice? To what extent do they support and extend the practices of global civil society? Can human rights be universally enforced?

Requirements:

Lectures and Reading: The debate on globalization is complex. It is a highly charged mix of politics, ideologies, competing theories and cultural and social values. This course is designed entirely around the principle that students come to lecture and section fully prepared. The readings cover a lot of empirical and theoretical ground from a range of academic disciplines. The details of the various cases we explore are critical to understanding and evaluating competing arguments in the debate. There is not enough time in class to review reading materials. The structure and content of lectures presumes that you have done the readings assigned for that day carefully. You must come to all lectures prepared. Regardless of class size, there will be time for discussion and you are strongly encouraged to participate. All and any questions are welcome, but especially questions that seek clarification or elaboration of lecture materials and readings.

Sections. Sections are specifically designed to allow for in-depth discussion of lecture and reading materials, as well as to explore topics of special interest. The teaching assistants will facilitate discussion, but you must come prepared to ask questions and engage with course materials. Section attendance is required and section participation and completing thought papers (see below) will count for 10% of your final grade.

Written assignments

Exams: There are four exams: three 4-5 page (double-spaced) take-home essays and one final 7-8 page take home essay. Essay questions will be handed out 5 days before papers are due. All the questions will be based exclusively on course materials. The first three essays will count for 20% of the final grade each. The final will count for 30%. The first three essays are due Feb 12, March 19 and April 23. The final is due May ???. These are exams and deadlines will be enforced. Late papers will only be accepted under extraordinary circumstances.

Thought papers. Seven 1 page (double spaced) papers. These are required, but not graded. They are due in section every week beginning week 3, except for those weeks when mid-term assignments are being written (Weeks 8, 12 and 14). You have one pass (a week when you don't have to submit a thought paper)

to be used at your own discretion. Thought papers must be based on that week's readings and are intended to help you prepare for section and reflect more deeply on the readings. These should not be summaries, but rather commentaries on the readings that develop and/or critique arguments, draw comparisons between different authors or point to larger implications. The thought papers will not be graded, but you will receive feedback on them, especially during the first weeks of the course. The thought papers are required, and failure to submit all 7 will be reflected in your participation grade. All thought papers must be turned in to your TA at the beginning of each section, in hard copy and in person.

Prerequisites:

There are no official prerequisites for this class. The course is designed to provide an in-depth, theoretically informed and cross-disciplinary perspective on globalization, including the subfields of political economy, institutional analysis, social movements, civil society and social theory. There is no textbook for this course and there are no overview or introductory readings. All assigned readings are original, academic contributions to the debate on globalization selected either for their theoretical or empirical contributions. The course is open to all students who are interested in this topic and are willing to meet the requirements. A background in the social sciences is helpful, especially courses on political economy, development, comparative politics or introductory economics.

Readings: 1) books 2) articles in course packet 3) web-based articles

1) The 4 required books are available from the Brown Bookstore.

Castells, Manuel. 2004. *The Power of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2004 (second edition).

Rodrik, Dani. 1997. *Has Globalization Gone too Far?* Washington: Institute for International Economics.

Kaldor, Mary. 2003. *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War*. Polity Press. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Held, David. 2004. *Global Covenant*. Polity Press. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Foster, John Bellamy and Fred Magdoff. *The Great Financial Crisis: Causes and Consequences*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2009.

2) With a few exceptions, all assigned articles are contained in a course packet and are marked "*" below. The course packet comes in 2 volumes and can be obtained from Allegra at the corner of Waterman and Thayer. It is not possible to take this course without the course packet.

3) All other readings (marked "#"), including the first set of readings for September 9, are available on-line at WebCT (<https://mycourses.brown.edu/webct>) or at the indicated websites.

**Course schedule and readings will be available in the first class –
September 10**