

**SYLLABUS: GLOBAL POLITICAL ECONOMY**  
**SOCIOLOGY 265GS WINTER 2018, T. 5 – 7:50,**  
**PROFESSOR: WILLIAM I. ROBINSON**  
**OFFICE HOURS: W. 4:30 – 6:30 (OR BY APPOINTMENT)**  
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**Course Description and Overview**

Our personal biographies are linked to increasingly dense networks of global interrelations, as the integration of societies, economies, and cultures fundamentally transforms human life on the planet. Global political economy is a *vast* topic with hundreds, nay, thousands of important works published in the past few decades, not to mention classical readings in political economy. It is impossible to do global political economy justice in a single 10-week seminar. Instead, we will review a selection of some recent works that represent a cross-view of theoretical work and research in this area from a *critical perspective*, with special emphasis on the rise of the global economy and of transnational capitalism. Thematically, the topics addressed in this set of readings encompass developments in world systems theory, flexible production, post-Fordism, global commodity chains, transnational corporations, and global cities, the transnational capitalist class and the transnational state, transnational labor flows, U.S. interventionism, the global political economy of sex and gender, a case study of world capitalism and race/racism, and a case study in the political economy of global police state. We will also look at development, the state of world inequality, and North-South relations.

This seminar is part of a two-part sequence on globalization. The other, *sociology of globalization*, is an overview of global and transnational sociology. It looks at theories of globalism, political globalization, global culture, transnational social movements, global civil society, transnational migration, globalization and race/ethnicity, globalization and women/gender, local-global linkages, and globalization and resistance. Either course may be taken *alone* or in conjunction with the other.

This seminar requires intensive reading, critical thinking, active participation, and a lot of hard work. However, you will find that acquiring a working grasp of global political economy is a form of intellectual and social empowerment. It will enhance many times over your understanding of the social universe, analytical powers, formal studies in whatever area that may be, and protagonism in society. To quote one famous social thinker: “There is no royal road to science, and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summits.”

I understand that students are at different stages of their studies, and that global political economy is a complex and daunting subject. You may feel at times overwhelmed or frustrated. Whether you find yourself lost, confused, or elated over the learning experience, I encourage you to raise questions throughout the course, to discuss your concerns in class, and to drop by during my office hours. I also recommend that you form study groups to discuss readings and assist each other in the learning process.

## Required Readings

- 1) Reading Packet of Selected Articles and Book Excerpts (available at SBprinter, Isla Vista, 699-6342, 6549 Pardall Road)
- 2) William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy* (you will read excerpts, to be announced)
- 3) William I. Robinson, *Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity* (will read as much as possible)
- 4) David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neo-Liberalism*
- 5) Robyn Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*
- 6) Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*
- 7) Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*
- 8) Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World*
- 9) Dawn Paley, *Drug War Capitalism*

## Course Requirements and Grading

Attendance is required. Ten percent of your grade (10 points) will derive from attendance and another 30 points will derive from active and meaningful participation in class discussion. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the reading assignments. Another 40 points of your grade will derive from written responses to readings in the form of weekly reflection essays/abstracts on the readings. The final 15 points of your grade will derive from a final assignment (details below). Each of 9 assigned reflection essays/abstracts will score a maximum of 5 points, for 45 points total. In the event one of the programmed themes is canceled do to unforeseen circumstances you will automatically receive your 5 points.

## Structure Of Seminar

The course is divided into the following weekly themes:

- 1 - Jan. 9: Introduction to seminar
- 2 - Jan. 16: Overview of global political economy and discussion of political economy of uneven development, world capitalism, global cities, flexible accumulation and the global economy.
- 3 - Jan. 23: Critique of *Neo-Liberalism*, David Harvey
- 4 - Jan. 30: The Third World: Vishay Prashad's *The Darker Nations*.
- 5 - Feb. 6: Mass struggles for democracy in global society and the new U.S. interventionism: William I. Robinson's *Promoting Polyarchy*.
- 6 - Feb. 13: Women and the Rise of Capitalism, Silvia Federici's *The Caliban and the Witch*.
- 7 - Feb. 20: Case Study in World Capitalism and Racism, Manning Marable's *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*.
- 8 - Feb. 27: Transnational Labor Flows and Global Labor Market, Robyn Rodriguez' *Migrants for Export*.

- 9 - March 6: Global Capitalism Theory and Global Crisis: William I Robinson's *Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity*.
- 10 - March 13: Case Study in the Political Economy of Global Police State: Dawn Paley's *Drug War Capitalism*.

### **Format of Seminar**

The night prior to each class meeting students will e-mail their briefs to me and to all other participants in the seminar. Everyone will read each other's briefs before class.

The instructor will open each meeting with initial discussion and possibly powerpoints on the week's topic, its relevance to globalization and transnational studies, the state of theorizing and research into that particular topic, and a clarification of terms, definitions, concepts on the basis of questions raised by students in their briefs. Following the instructor's opening comments we will go around the room once. Each student will make a 3-minute (maximum) opening statement, which will consist of a comment or two on the week's reading and the major discussion points that you feel it raises and would like to see discussed. After this we will move into seminar open-discussion mode. The instructor will also participate directly in discussion, occasionally present additional lecture material, and interject otherwise when appropriate.

Please consider the following as we move into open discussion:

- *There is no such thing as a stupid question or an obvious answer* (recall, moreover, that asking a question is always more radical – literally and figuratively – than a statement of fact). If you do not know the definition of a term or are not familiar with a concept or do not understand something from the readings the chances are there are many others – maybe the whole class – who also have such questions or concerns. I am paid to be here working with you: ask anything and everything. If I don't know the answer we will explore it together.
- I will not be authoritarian in facilitating discussion but I want you to *try not to ramble on*, to state things as succinctly as possible, to formulate your point, and for the group discussion to remain focused.

We will end seminar discussion at 7:40 and use the remaining 10 minutes to discuss the topic and readings for the next week.

### **Weekly Reflection Essays and Final Assignment**

#### **Abstracts**

Abstracts are due each Monday by 5 p.m. You should e-mail me (and to the full class list) your abstract as a *Word* attachment ([wirobins@soc.ucsb.edu](mailto:wirobins@soc.ucsb.edu)). In the past my seminar students have sent these late into the evening. I would appreciate them by 5:00 pm *and I will*

*not accept them after 8:00 pm. If they arrive after 8:00 pm Monday evening I will not read them. I return them to you without points.* The abstracts should be a double-spaced and typed 12 p. font, 2 pages (3 *maximum*) response to the readings. These are brief reflection essays and should include an analytical engagement with the reading and the topic that explicitly includes: 1) ideas that you found new, relevant and/or inspirational in the readings; 2) one or more critical comments on an idea with which you disagreed or felt was unsubstantiated, ambiguous, inconsistent, poorly developed, or requires further examination. Then, at the end of the brief, make a list of the terms and concepts that you did not understand or wish to have clarified. In my opening comments I will attempt address these terms and concepts. The pedagogical purpose of these essays is for you to organize and clarify your own thoughts on the readings and subject matter, and to prepare you for meaningful seminar discussion.

### **Final Assignment**

The final assignment should be a brief discussion of how the content of this course and the readings may be applied to your particular area of MA or PhD research. These papers should be approximately 5-7 pages, and an absolute *maximum* of 10, and you should include a bibliography and appropriate citations. Additional readings are not required for the term paper, but you are free to incorporate additional material if you so wish. The paper does NOT require new research or fieldwork. The style may be more loose and discursive. These assignments are due in final exam week and the specific date will be established later.

### **Week-by-Week Schedule of Readings and Topics:**

Below you will find a week-by-week breakdown of required readings. I used to include a list of supplemental readings on each topic in this syllabus. However, the social science literature on globalization has become vast and these days it is easy to find numerous bibliographies on the internet. You are not required for this course to read beyond the week's required material. However, take into account that globalization is a cutting edge area in the social sciences and much research is new. You may wish to draw on supplemental readings for your term paper and/or presentations.

**1) Jan. 9: Introduction to Political Economy and Global Political Economy and Overview to Seminar**

No readings required.

**2) Jan. 16: Critical Theoretical Approaches to Global Political Economy: Uneven Development: Marxism, Development, Theories of Imperialism and World-System Theory, Global Cities, Fordism and Flexible Accumulation**

## **Powerpoint slide Presentation by Instructor as Overview and Introduction to Global Political Economy**

### **Readings (all in reading packet):**

- “Rich and Poor Nations: Select Terms and Concepts” and “Historical Materialism” (in reading packet: these are notes I developed for undergraduate courses and will familiarize you with a set of terms, concepts, and the historical materialist framework)
- Frederick Engels, “The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man”
- Karl Marx and Frederic Engels, excerpt from *The Communist Manifesto*
- Karl Marx, “The Genesis of Capital” (final chapter from volume I of *Capital*)
- Anthony Brewer, “Introduction: Imperialism...”
- Jorge Larrain, “Introduction” from *Theories of Development*
- William I. Robinson, “Immanuel Wallerstein and World System Theory”
- William I. Robinson, “Saskia Sassen and Global Cities”
- David Harvey, excerpt on Fordism and Flexible Accumulation from *The Condition of Postmodernity*

### **3) Jan. 23: Neo-Liberalism and Its Critique**

#### **Readings:**

- David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neo-Liberalism*

### **4) Jan. 30: Colonialism, Imperialism and the “Third World Project”**

#### **Reading:**

- Vishay Prashad, *The Darker Nations*

### **5) Feb. 6: Democracy, Global Society, and the New U.S. Interventionism**

**Readings:** William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*

### **6) Feb. 13: Women, Gender, and the Rise of Capitalism**

#### **Readings:**

- Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*

7) **Feb. 20: World Capitalism, World Economy and Racism: A U.S. Case Study**

**Readings:**

- Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*

8) **Feb. 27: Transnational Labor Flows and Global Labor Market**

- **Readings:** Robyn Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*.

9) **March 6: Global Capitalism and Global Crisis**

**Readings:**

- William I. Robinson, *Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity*

10) **March 13: Case Study in the Political Economy of Global Police State**

**Readings:**

- Dawn Paley, *Drug War Capitalism*

**APPENDIX: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**There are *thousands* of books from a critical perspective on political economy, globalization and Global Political Economy. The following annotated bibliography lists a handful of overview books, basic texts, and readers that you may want to draw during your graduate studies. These books in turn will lead you to a much broader body of literature.**

David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Also, *Spaces of Capital* and *Spaces of Hope*). Harvey's book is a masterpiece with regard to the transformation of capitalism in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and the rise of flexible accumulation

David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations*. A thorough overview of globalization issues from a liberal perspective.

Leslie Sklair, *Globalization: Capitalism and its Alternatives* (earlier editions went by the title *Sociology of the Global System*), and Sklair, *The Transnational Capitalist Class*. The two chief works of renowned globalization and development scholar Leslie Sklair

Philip McMichael, *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). An excellent text on the nature and process of economic globalization.

Peter Dicken, *Global Shift* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition), the single most important book with regard to the anatomy of the new globalized economy.

Saskia Sassen, *A Sociology of Globalization*. Excellent overview of the various themes in the sociology of globalization.

George Ritzer (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Globalization*, and Roland Robertson and Jann Aarte Scholte, *The Globalization Encyclopedia* (both in UCSB library). Two sources for a very broad and diverse collection of writings on globalization.

Lechner and Boli (eds), *The Globalization Reader* (latest edition, collection of excerpts from different sources)

Tom Riddell, Steve Stamos, and Jean Shackelford *Economics: A Tool for Understanding Society* (recent editions). The single best, easy-to-comprehend introduction to economics and political economy.

Sackrey, Schneider, and Knoedler, *Introduction to Political Economy* (4<sup>th</sup> edition). Good introduction to political economy as well.

Tom Bottomore, *Theories of Modern Capitalism*. Although somewhat outdated, a good source for leading theories of political economy.

Doug Henwood, *Wall St.: How it Works and for Whom*, updated edition, if you are baffled by the workings of Wall St. and finance, this is a good guide.

William I. Robinson, *A Theory of Global Capitalism*. Classic statement from the global capitalism school.

Barrie Axford, *Theories of Globalization*. Excellent text that reviews all of the difference schools and major works in globalization studies.

Christopher Chase-Dunn and Bruce Lerro, *Social Change: Globalization from the Stone Age to the Present*, an incredibly comprehensive textbook that reviews all the major theories and works on global political economy from two leading scholars from the world-systems perspective.

Keri E. Iyall Smith (ed), *Sociology of Globalization*, good eclectic collection of excerpts from different well known works of the sociology, politics, and economics of globalization.

Also: Oxford University Press *Handbook of Global Studies* is set for release in spring 2018. It promises to be perhaps the best concentrated source of extended essays on global studies