

IL52– Culture and Political Economy—Fall 2009
Dr. David Crawford
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5 - 6:15 in Canius 104
www.faculty.fairfield.edu/dcrawford/

Goals and Objectives

This course examines the ways in which global political economic dynamics impact local cultures. Students will look to societies in the Global South for an intimate, ethnographic appreciation of our global era. By the end of the course students will be able to:

1. Intelligently discuss the origins of Western thinking about “globalization.”
Draw from the work of Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber to examine the history of Western thinking about the operation and expansion of capitalism, the nature of the individual, and the role of the state.
2. Explain the main contemporary arguments for and against different aspects of extra-local intervention in local societies.
Students will show how classic arguments in social theory are manifest in contemporary debates over policy, including economic development and humanitarian intervention by corporations, non-governmental organizations, and various types of states.
3. Draw upon case studies in different regions to support informed opinions about the human costs and benefits of articulation with the global economy.
Students will use case studies to show how theory is used in social analysis, and how decisions made at the regional, state, and international level affect the livelihoods of the world’s poor.

Evaluation and grades

Students will submit seven reading **summaries**. Each counts 3% towards the final grade, for a total of 21%. Students will write four short papers connecting the social theories we have studied to the ethnographic accounts of particular societies. Each counts for 10% towards the final grade, for a total of 40%. We will also have a **midterm exam** worth 25%, and a final portfolio worth 20%. The potential points add up to 106%, so students can miss any combination of work that equals 6% and still have a perfect score in the class. **However, late work will not be accepted and there are no alternate exam times. Please do not ask.** All assignments are due at the beginning of the specified class, and must be submitted in person. No excuses for absences are required or desired.

Course Readings

Crawford, David (2008) *Moroccan Households in the World Economy*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press
Lee, Richard B. (1993) *The Dobe Ju'hoansi*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
Scott, James C. (1985). *Weapons of the Weak*. New Haven, Yale University Press.
Wardlow, Holly (2006). *Wayward Women*. Berkeley, University of California Press.

These books will be supplemented with articles and book chapters available online.

Assignments

Week 1: Introduction to the course: What is political economy? What is culture? What is theory? Why does it matter?

No reading assignment. We will discuss the broad outline of Western thought concerning the production of society and the distribution of wealth, the origins of thinking about cultural difference, and the contemporary relevance of understanding the underpinnings of both popular and scholarly thought on these issues.

(9/1, 9/3) Nothing due.

Week 2: The Nature of Social Knowledge (the North African view): What is a Theory?

Read: "[Cultural Anthropology and the Social Sciences](#)" by H. Russ Bernard. You should also begin to look over this [glossary of terms](#) assembled by Ken Morrison. It may be useful to you over the next four weeks in particular.

We will discuss the rise of scientific thinking and the ideas of Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), especially his understanding of the division of labor, the dynamics of civilization, and his theory of human nature. We will use this as a springboard to asking:

What is a theory?

What counts as evidence?

How do differences in scale (of time and space) affect theories of social change?

How do social contexts influence social theories?

Are there patterns to historical change and how do we detect them?

(9/8 Bernard summary due; 9/10 nothing due)

Week 3: The Problem of Lack and The Production of Wealth: Adam Smith and the Scottish Enlightenment

Read selections from [An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations](#) by Adam Smith (pgs. 8-30, 227-232, 393-436) and [A Select Society: Adam Smith and his Friends](#) by Arthur Herman,

We will discuss Smith's writings on the division of labor in society, its social benefits and human costs. Additionally, because Smith was concerned with *national* wealth, we will consider the concept of the nation and the implications of Smith's ideas in a world economy.

(9/15 summary of Adam Smith's ideas due; 9/17 nothing due)

Week 4: Conflict, Exploitation, Capitalism: Karl Marx and the Production of Social Life

Read: Selections from [The German Ideology](#), [The Communist Manifesto](#), and the first volume of [Capital](#) by Karl Marx. If you find this difficult, you might want to begin with a chapter from [Marx's Revenge: The Resurgence of Capitalism and the Death of State Socialism](#) by Meghnad Desai.

How can we disentangle Marx's ideas from the parties and pundits who have claimed him as their prophet? What is a "materialist perspective" of social order, and what role does human labor and creativity play in it? How does Marx see "globalization?" What is the role of the state in an ideal economy? What is Marx's theory of human nature, and how does this fit with his concern with exploitation and alienation? How is Marx different from or similar to the other theorists we have read?

(9/22 summary of Marx due; 9/24 nothing due.)

Week 5: Status, Meaning, and Scale: Max Weber

Read: [The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism](#) by Max Weber, and Chapter 11 from [Capitalism and Modern Social Theory](#) by Anthony Giddens

How do values and sentiments operate in society? What is the distinction between status and class, meaning and function? What is the difference between the human and natural sciences? What does an expanding bureaucracy mean for society? What is the proper role of the state in the contemporary world? How does religion play a role in society? How to forms of authority shift with forms of society?

(9/29: summary of Weber's ideas due; 10/1 nothing due)

Week 6: The Problem of Chaos, Anomie, and Solidarity: Emile Durkheim

Read: The introduction to [The Elementary forms of Religious Life](#) as well as selections from [De la Méthode dans les sciences](#) and [The Division of Labor in Society](#), by Emile Durkheim. You may also want to refer to the [Morrison glossary of terms](#).

What is the significance of religion in society? How does Durkheim use "primitive" society to make his point about the nature of human understanding? How does Durkheim define the science of "sociology?" What does Durkheim mean by "division of labor" and how is his view different from Ibn Khaldun and Adam Smith? What is the difference between "organic" and "mechanical" solidarity? What holds society together? What are the causes of, and solutions for, social unrest?

(10/6 summary of Durkheim's ideas due; 10/8 nothing due)

Week 7: Summing Up: What is "classic" about classic social theory?

(10/13 no class --go to Monday classes instead; 10/15 review for exam)

Week 8: Midterm Exam, then Anthropology and Globalization

Read: The introduction to [Europe and the People without History](#) by Eric Wolf
How does capitalism expand? What are the effects of this expansion? Do nations "develop" along a general trajectory, or does wealth production in one place impoverish another? Are we witnessing an era of unprecedented homogenization, or an unprecedented polarization? Is capitalism good or bad, inevitable or avoidable? What is the relationship between culture and globalization? How does our theoretical perspective frame the future we envision?

(10/20 MIDTERM EXAM; 10/22 Summary of Wolf due)

Week 9: Contemporary Concerns: Anthropology and Social Theory

Read: [Beyond Power / Knowledge](#) by David Graeber, [Temporality of Resistance](#) by David Crawford and [To Each According to his Greed](#) by Slavoj Zizek.

How does anthropology draw on classic social theory? What assumptions does it commonly make? What sorts of advantages does an anthropological inquiry have? What are its limitations? What is the future of classic theory?

(10/27 summary of Graeber, Crawford, Zizek due; 10/29 nothing due)

Week 10: Putting it all Together 1: Indigenous Society and Global Forces

Read: The Dobe Ju/hoansi by Richard Lee and The Bushman Myth by Rob Gordon and Stuart Sholto Douglas ([Chapter 1](#) and [Chapters 3 & 4](#)).

How does classic theory shape our understanding of society? How does it frame the questions we ask and the answers we get?

(11/3 nothing due; 11/5 Paper 1 due)

Week 11 : Putting it all Together 2: Power and Resistance

Read: Weapons of the Weak by James Scott

How and why do the weak resist the powerful? How did the Green Revolution happen in Malaysia? What does culture have to do with resistance?

(11/10: Nothing due; 11/12 Paper 2 due)

Week 12: Putting it All Together 3: Agency and Sexuality

Read: Wayward Women: Agency and Sexuality in New Guinea Society by Holly Wardlow

How do women in Papua New Guinea use the global economy to undermine their local social orders, and what sorts of new oppression does this engender?

(11/17: Nothing due; 11/19 Paper 3 due)

Week 13: Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: Putting it All Together 4: Production and Reproduction in a Global Economy

Read: Moroccan Households in the World Economy by David Crawford.

How are production and reproduction linked in the global economy? How do local level inequalities articulate with broader economic dynamics? Why do economists fail to understand the expansion of capitalism?

(12/1: Nothing due; 12/3 Paper 4 due)

Summary and final evaluation of the course

(12/8: What have we been doing all semester?)

Final portfolios are due on or before 12/15 at 12:30.

Grading Scale

A	93- and up
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D	60-69

If you have a disability or that will impact your performance in class or need special accommodations, please see:

Aimee Tiu
Director of Academic & Disability Support Services
Aloysius P. Kelley, S.J. Center
(203) 254-4000 ext. 2615
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Just so you know...

“**Plagiarism** is the appropriation of ideas, data, work, or language of others and submitting them as one’s own to satisfy the requirements of a course. Plagiarism constitutes theft and deceit. Students are often confused by just what constitutes plagiarism. When the ideas or writings of others are presented in assignments, these ideas or writing should be attributed to that source. Special care should be taken, when cutting and pasting materials or when paraphrasing, to cite sources correctly and to use quotation marks around exact words from source materials. Actions that result in plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Consequently, students must understand the concept of plagiarism. When reading, processing, or using materials from any source, appropriate documentation is always essential. Resources such as the library (ext. 2178) and the Writing Center (http://www.fairfield.edu/eng_writingcenter.html) are available on campus to assist you in your academic endeavors. You are encouraged to take advantage of these resources.”