

IL52– Culture and Political Economy—Fall 2008
Dr. David Crawford
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5 – 6:15, in Canisius 303
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 small-scale 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. Articulate the main theoretical currents and critiques of “globalization.”
Students will 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 eight reading **summaries**, one each for the days that concern social theory. Each summary will count 5% of the final grade, for a potential total of 40%. Students will write a short paper (~ 4 pages) on each of the ethnographies. The **papers** will aim to connect the theory taught earlier in the course to the particular ethnographic contexts described in the books, and will be worth 10% each, for a total of 40%. We will have a **final exam** worth 30% of the grade. The potential points add up to 110%, so students can miss any combination of work that equals 10% and still get all the points in the class. However, late work will not be accepted. Please do not ask. All work is due at the beginning of class, and must be submitted in person. No excuses for absences are required or desired.

Course Readings

- Kenny, Mary Lorena (2007) Hidden Heads of Households:Child Labor in Urban Northeast Brazil
Broadview Press.
- Lansing, J. Stephen (1995) The Balinese. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Scott, James C. (1985). Weapons of the Weak. New Haven, Yale University Press.
- Wardlow, Holly (2006). Wayward women : sexuality and agency in a New Guinea society.
Berkeley, University of California Press.

These books will be supplemented with articles and book chapters available online and in a course packet.

Assignments

Week 1: (9/2, 9/4) Introduction to the course: What is Political Economy? What is culture?

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.

(9/2, 9/4) 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 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 built in them?

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

(9/9 Bernard summary due; 9/11 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.

(9/16 summary of Adam Smith’s ideas due; 9/18 nothing due)

Week 4: 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?

(9/23 summary of Durkheim’s ideas due; 9/25 nothing due)

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

Read: Chapter 11 from [Capitalism and Modern Social Theory](#) by Anthony Giddens,

[The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism](#) by Max Weber, and [Discipline and Punish](#) by Michel Foucault

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 do forms of authority shift with forms of society?

(9/30 summary of Weber and Foucault due; 10/2 nothing due.)

Week 6: Conflict, Exploitation, Capitalism: Karl Marx and the Production of Social Life

Read: A chapter from [Marx's Revenge: The Resurgence of Capitalism and the Death of State Socialism](#) by Meghnad Desai, and selections from [The German Ideology](#), [The Communist Manifesto](#), and the first volume of [Capital](#) by Karl Marx (and Frederick Engels). 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 creative ideas 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?

(10/7: summary of Marx's ideas due; 10/9 nothing due)

Week 7: Going Global: Development v. Underdevelopment

Read: Selections the introduction to [Europe and the People without History](#) by Eric Wolf, a chapter from [The Origins of Capitalism and the 'Rise of the West'](#) by Eric Mielants, [The World is Flat](#) by Thomas Friedman, and [The World is Flat?](#) by Aronica and Ramdoo
What are the effects of global capitalist 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? How does our theoretical perspective frame the future we envision?

(10/14 – no class. Go to your Monday classes; 10/16 Summary of Wolf and Mielants due; optional summary of Friedman and Aronica and Ramdoo due)

Week 8: Culture: The Triumph of *Geist* and the Institutionalization of Ambivalence

Read: The introduction from [The Interpretation of Cultures](#) by Clifford Geertz, the introduction to [The Idea of Culture](#) by Terry Eagleton, and the essay "[Two or Three Things I Know about Culture](#)" by Marshall Sahlins.

What is culture? Where does it come from? How does it endure? What are the boundaries of culture? Can I change my culture? Can my culture change me? What is the relationship between culture and political economy?

**(10/21 special lecture; summary due: answer the question: what is culture? How are these authors influenced by classical theory? Draw on all three of the readings. Bring your essay to the Library Multimedia room at 6 p.m.
10/23: Nothing due.**

Week 9: An Incomplete Epiphany: Feminist, Anarchist, and other Critiques

Read: Selections from [Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge](#) by Micaela di Leonardo,

and [Beyond Power / Knowledge](#) and [Turning Modes of Production Inside Out](#) by David Graeber

Is social theory masculine? Does it assume the inevitability of state power? Why are women systematically disadvantaged in virtually all contemporary societies? What can we, or ought we, do about it? What would society look like if women were equal to men? What would social theory look like if theorists were mostly women? What have feminists taught us about the relationship between social structure and personal agency?

(10/28: summary of DiLeonardo and Graeber due; 10/30 nothing due)

Week 10: Putting it all Together 1: 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?

(11/4: paper on Scott due; 11/6 nothing due)

Week 11 : Putting it all Together 2: 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?

(11/11: paper on Wardlow due; 11/13 nothing due)

Week 12: Putting it All Together 3: Knowledge(s) and Power

Read: [The Balinese](#) by Stephen Lansing

How does scientific knowledge shape social policy? How did the Green Revolution happen in Bali? What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom? What is the point of an economy?

(11/18 Lansing paper due; 11/20 no class)

Week 13: Putting it All Together 4: Production and Reproduction in a Global Economy

Read: [Hidden Heads of Households: Child Labor in Urban Northeast Brazil](#) by

Mary Lorena Kenny

What is the relationship between production and reproduction? How are families impacted by globalization? How might you use social theory to make sense of the Brazilian situation?

(11/25 no class; 12/2 Kenny paper due)

Week 14: Summary and preparation for the final exam. Read Crawford [“The Market Has no Memory”](#)

(12/4: [Here are final exam questions](#); 12/9 discuss final exam questions)

Final Exam: Saturday, December 13th, 1:30 p.m.

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
atiu@mail.fairfield.edu

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.”