

26:478:572/26:790:508 EVOLUTION OF THE GLOBAL SYSTEM

Fall 2012

Class meeting time and location: Tues. 2-4.40pm, Hill 215

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Office hours: Monday 2-4pm (CON 221); Tuesday 4.45-6pm (CON 318).

At other times by appointment.

Course overview

What is the “global system”? Is there a single system that encompasses all parts of the world, or overlapping regional systems more loosely connected? What is the character of this system (or these systems), and for how long have they bound distant people together? How and why has the global system evolved over time? Where does the locus of power lie within this matrix?

To these open-ended questions historians, anthropologists, and social scientists have offered an array of competing answers—as we’ll see. Some regard the global system as dating back 500 years, others, 5000. And where some conceive interconnectedness in terms of capitalism’s worldwide evolution, others focus on the emergence of a system of states, and latterly on organizations that arguably exceed and render obsolescent the sovereign state: multilateral agencies like the World Bank and IMF; NGOs, and multi-national corporations.

This course takes a long view of globalizing processes: thickening connections between peoples and cultures, often in asymmetric patterns of exchange and/or expropriation. The selected readings have been chosen to draw attention to the “lumpiness” of their development, and to the ways in which large-scale phenomena (like the evolution of capitalism, chattel slavery, empire and decolonization) have affected—and continue to shape—everyday life in specific places.

The specific place we will concentrate on is Africa. This may appear a counter-intuitive choice. After all, many contemporary commentators consider most (if not all) sub-Saharan Africa to be “left behind” by globalization. But is it? What might such a statement overlook about the continent’s past and present?

This course aims to encourage critical reflection on the complexity of interactions between the local and global, past and present. It sets out to tackle large-scale questions about the organization and distribution of power in the world, across time and space. Readings thus broach such major themes as sovereignty and statehood; empire and transnationalism; the development of capitalism; decolonization and neocolonialism; and grassroots processes of mobilization and mobility.

CLASS FORMAT & PREPARATION

This class will take the form of a group discussion. The exact format will likely change from week to week, and in some classes we will also watch film material. But the bottom line is that **we all share responsibility** for making the classroom a dynamic place for thoughtful, civil but rigorous exchange—which means both doing the reading and coming to class prepared to discuss the material in a generous spirit of critical engagement. Our discussions all take shape around the week’s assigned reading. My role in the proceedings is to offer some historical context for the topic; to set out what contribution I see the books making to the larger themes of the course, and to provide the “connective tissue” between each of the classes.

Weekly Discussion Points

To help galvanize class discussion, each participant will post **TWO** discussion questions about the current week's reading on the course Blackboard site. Discussion points must be posted by **midnight on Monday**, giving everyone the opportunity to review other classmates' "take" on the book by the time class meets at 2pm.

Discussion points should aim to tackle what you regard as the most significant themes and arguments raised by the author. Try to avoid focusing on peripheral or more incidental issues. Use this opportunity to broach questions that you think will generate the most productive, lively conversation about the week's reading.

To do this well means taking a couple of steps back from the reading once you’ve finished it. Allow yourself time to digest and contemplate the material as a whole. Try not to get hung up on small details. Then think critically about the big picture, and frame your questions accordingly.

Preparing for Class

- ⤴ **read carefully and take notes.** Pay attention to both the material you find most helpful and provocative in the text but also most troublesome (whether because the author hasn't made the thesis clear or because you consider the argument mistaken)
- ⤴ **mark up parts of the text that merit closer attention in class.** If there are parts of the argument that seem baffling, confounding or downright wrong, make a note of them and be sure to raise these points of puzzlement in class. There's every chance that something you've struggled over has also perplexed others. Working through complexity is a core function of class discussion.
- ⤴ **read reviews of the books and gauge your reactions to the book against those of academic reviewers.** (The best single online source of reviews is "Academic Search Premier" which you can find on the Rutgers library website under the "research resources" tab. For older books, JSTOR is also a good source.)
- ⤴ **BUT...** do be sure to read the book **BEFORE** you read the reviews. Negative and/or highly opinionated reviews will undoubtedly color your reading of the

- book if you read the critics before the author him/herself. Remember that no two people will read any work in an identical way, and that critics can also read books wildly against the grain. That said, testing your responses against those of other readers is invaluable in preparing for class discussion-- not as a substitute for reading the book, but as an avenue to closer engagement with the text itself.
- ^ **consider HOW the author has written the book.** What sources has s/he used? What particular methodologies? How does the work in question exemplify the practices of a specific academic discipline? (I.e. how does a historian, say, go about things differently than an anthropologist? How should we think about the distinct contributions of fiction or more "engaged" scholarship to global affairs?)
 - ^ after you finish reading, allow yourself time to think about the larger themes of the book. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - how does the author contribute to your understanding of the "global system"?
 - how might this book be brought into dialog with others we've read?
 - what are the particular strengths and weaknesses of the author's intellectual approach and the distinctive way in which they've pursued their project?

About the classroom...

The material we'll read **ought** to generate spirited discussion. I welcome critical engagement with the texts themselves and lively conversation about them in the classroom. By "critical" I mean that we should approach intellectual inquiry and debate with rigor, striving to reach a deeper appreciation of complex ideas and to grasp the multiplicity of ways in which we might approach "the global." "Critical" in this sense encompasses generosity, empathy, and civility-- as opposed to the more popular usage of the word which implies negative and more destructive modes of engagement. I expect you to engage both the authors of the books and fellow classmates in a spirit of openness, and with genuine curiosity. Allow yourself to be surprised—or even to change your mind! Please listen carefully to what classmates have to say. Respect the views of others-- even, or indeed especially, if you happen to disagree with them.

Some things to avoid

- ^ being late (unless traffic or other unforeseen calamities impede you)
- ^ using cellphones or other devices to text or email in class
- ^ we will typically take a short break midway through class-- so I expect you to be able to contain your urge to check for messages (and to use the bathroom!!) for 80 minutes at a stretch... If you consider this is beyond the limits of your endurance, you should let me know so from the start!

Finally... Please do **use my office hours to come and talk to me** whenever you feel a need to do so. I am happy to discuss the readings, your classroom performance, preparation for papers or any other pertinent matters arising. All you need do if you want my attention is email me and we'll set up an appointment.

Schedule of classes

09/04 Introductory meeting:

What is the global system? Why take an Africanist perspective on “globalization”?

Reading: Frederick Cooper, “What is the Concept of Globalization Good For? An African Historian’s Perspective,” *African Affairs* 100 (2001): 189-213

<http://afraf.oxfordjournals.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/cgi/reprint/100/399/189>

09/11 **State/nation/empire:**

Jane Burbank, Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2011, ISBN: 9780691152363), pp.xi-218

09/18 **State/nation/empire:**

Burbank and Cooper, pp.219-459

09/25 **Slavery:**

Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (University of North Carolina Press, 1994, ISBN 0-8078-4488-8)

10/02 **Evolution of Capitalism I:**

Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Foreword; pp.1-135)

Complementary film: *Last Train Home* (dir. Lixin Fan, 2009)

10/09 **Evolution of Capitalism II:**

Polanyi (pp.136-268)

Work due: short paper

10/16 **Transnational Norms I: Self-determination**

Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford University Press, 2009, ISBN13: 9780195378535)

10/23 **Transnational Norms II: Human Rights**

Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Harvard University Press, ISBN-10: 0674025369, 2007)

10/30 **Decolonization and Neocolonialism I:**

Ousmane Sembène, *God's Bits of Wood* (Heinemann African Writers Series, 1995, ISBN 0-435-90959-2)

Complementary film: *Xala* (dir. Ousmane Sembène, 1975)

11/06 **Decolonization and Neocolonialism II:**

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press, ISBN 9780802141323)

Complementary film: *The Battle of Algiers* (dir. Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966)

11/13 **Neoliberalism I:**

David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford University Press, 2007, ISBN 0-19-928327-3)

Work due: preliminary paper pitch (a brief—1pg max—outline of your intended approach to the final paper)

11/20 NO CLASS

11/27 **Neoliberalism II:**

James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Duke University Press, 2006, ISBN 978-0-8223-3717-1)

12/04 **Mobility and Confinement I:**

Michel Agier, *Managing the Undesirables: Refugee Camps and Humanitarian Government* (Polity Press, 2011, ISBN-10: 0745649025)

Complementary film: *Dirty Pretty Things* (dir. Stephen Frear, 2002)

Work due: draft of final paper

12/11 **Mobility and Confinement II:**

Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (Zone Books, 2010, ISBN-10: 1935408089)

12/16 FINAL PAPER DUE (email to SC by 9am)

ASSESSMENT

Weekly discussion questions:	20%
Classroom participation:	10%
Short paper:	20%
Final paper:	50%

Short paper: Drawing on the first three volumes studied (Burbank and Cooper, Williams and Polanyi), address Cooper's inquiry, "What good is the concept of globalization for historians?" (2000 words; due **9 Oct.**)

Final paper: Drawing on AT LEAST FOUR of our readings, critically engage one of the core themes of the class (e.g. statehood; self-determination; empire; neoliberalism; migration/mobility; humanitarianism; inequality). Use a close reading of the texts to elucidate why you regard your chosen theme as central to an appreciation of how the global system has evolved (5000 words; draft due **4 Dec**; **final deadline 16 Dec.**)

Please present written work double-spaced with page numbers inserted. You should cite your sources clearly, using the *Chicago Manual of Style* conventions.

A note about plagiarism

I take plagiarism, cheating, and all breaches of academic integrity very seriously indeed. Work you submit should always constitute your own interpretations and arguments-- in your own words. Where you draw on the ideas of others and/or borrow other scholars' verbal formulations, you must ALWAYS acknowledge the intellectual debt, whether you're directly quoting that author, summarizing their work, or influenced by it more loosely.

http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf

Please take the time to familiarize yourself with Rutgers' statement on academic integrity. If you are in any doubt about its contents, or about what constitutes plagiarism, you should be sure to discuss those concerns with me before submitting written work.

Severe cases result not only in the award of an F for the course in question but can also lead to separation from the university.