

CULT 320: GLOBALIZATION & CULTURE

Tuesday and Thursday, 1:30-2:45

Instructor: Allison Lakomski

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, by appointment

Cultural Studies Office: Robinson Hall A, Room 253

COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS

In this course we will examine the history and the material processes of *globalization* through its cultural characteristics. While the exact definition of globalization is contentious, many of us are now able to imagine a single planetary space linked by its technological, socio-economic, and political structures. This imaginary has a remarkable—though often unquestioned and illusory—influence on our personal and collective daily lives. From the ways we think of ourselves as citizens to the impact we have on ecological systems, globalization has had an unprecedented impact on the present and future *equality* and *quality* of existence.

We will strive to understand the complexities and contradictions of globalization in both its theoretical discourses as well as its material realities. Therefore, we will refrain from simplistic judgments that globalization is either ‘good’ or ‘bad’ and instead attempt to interrogate its dynamic character. Throughout the course, close attention will be paid to the processes of production, circulation, and consumption. This trajectory will act as a framework to specify the questions we have about needs, distribution, and politics. The arc from where something is made to where it is consumed will be an ongoing preoccupation of ours, with emphasis on the interrelated oil, housing, food, and “culture” industries.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students who successfully complete the course will have a nuanced understanding of globalization and the ability to critically engage with interdisciplinary scholarship about globalization, including the abilities to:

- Critically approach the discourses on the processes of globalization and its cultural manifestations
- Apply critiques and theories to contemporary case studies
- Examine the interrelationship of the global and local through material and cultural practices
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of global power structures and inequalities
- Discuss key challenges posed by globalization as positively and negatively impacted by real world policies and actions
- Read critically, formulate research questions, engage in research and present findings in clear prose

REQUIRED TEXTS

Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums*. Verso, 2006

Lisa Margonelli, *Oil on the Brain: Petroleum's Long, Strange Trip to Your Tank*. Broadway Books, 2008.

Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, 2nd ed. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007.

Additional readings are accessible online and marked with either direct links or as PDFs. Readings marked PDF, as well as other course documents, are available on the course website:

<http://cult320withallison.onmason.com/>

POLICIES

ATTENDANCE: Please attend class consistently. Attendance will be reflected in your success in this class. It is a good idea to exchange telephone numbers and/or email addresses with one or two other class members so that you can arrange to get any information/notes in the event you miss a class. I do not post lecture notes on the course website, nor do I give students copies of my lecture notes.

ASSIGNMENTS: All assignments are due in hardcopy at the beginning of class on the day noted on the syllabus. An assignment turned in after the beginning of class will be considered late and may not be accepted. I do not accept assignments via email. Please adhere to the format requirements for all assignments for this course as follows:

- Double-spaced, in 12 pt. Times New Roman font.
- Use 1-inch margins all around.
- Pages should be double-sided and/or stapled. No paperclips, tape, rip-folds, folders, etc.
- Be certain to check for spelling mistakes and typos. While this is not an English class, poor grammar, spelling, and syntax can disrupt the clarity of your ideas and result in lower grades.

EMAIL: GMU faculty and students are required to use GMU email accounts to communicate. Because of this, I ask that you email me only from your GMU account. Also, you must regularly check your GMU email address, as important updates will be sent that way. I will not announce any major changes to the syllabus with less than 24 hours notice. I will respond to emails within 24 hours. I do not respond to emails on the weekends; an email sent on Friday will receive a response by Monday.

LAPTOPS: Laptops are not allowed in class, unless as part of an accommodation provided by the Disability Resource Center, or through special arrangement with me.

CELL PHONES: Cell phone use is also not allowed. If you use a cell phone during class, you will be required leave your phone with me for the duration of our class meeting for the rest of the semester. If you are anticipating a special circumstance, please check-in with me at the beginning of class that day.

PLAIGIARISM AND THE GMU HONOR CODE:

When submitting work under your own name, keep in mind that plagiarism is a violation of the GMU Honor Code (<http://honorcode.gmu.edu/>). The Honor Code states, "Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work." Plagiarism means using words, ideas, opinions, or factual information from another person or source without giving due credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes; a simple listing of books and articles consulted is not sufficient. In addition to direct quotations, you must also provide an in-text citation and an entry in your list of works cited for paraphrases and summaries of opinions or factual information not formerly known to the writer. Even when you paraphrase information, you still must cite the original source of the information (in-text and in your bibliography). A serious academic offense, plagiarism is grounds for failing at least the assignment, if not the course.

TIP: When in doubt, include a citation!

The preferred citation style for this course is MLA, however you may use another style (APA/Chicago) as appropriate to your academic major. Whichever style you use, you must do so consistently and correctly. An excellent source for writing and correct formatting and use of citations is the Purdue Online Writing Lab: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA (ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING)

Your grade for this course is based on a 1000-point scale as follows:

Points	Letter		Points	Letter
940 — 1000	A		770 — 799	C+
900 — 939	A-		740 — 769	C
870 — 899	B+		700 — 739	C-
840 — 869	B		600 — 699	D
800 — 839	B-		< 600	F

Points will be allocated accordingly:

☆ **READING RESPONSE PAPERS: 200 points**

Students are responsible for writing **8 2-page critical reading responses** worth 25 points each. Responses should focus on working through the assigned texts; you will want to explain the author's overarching argument, connect the text to others we have read/classroom discussions/current events (when possible), and end with questions you have for the author/or potential questions for class discussion. Detailed information on your writing and my evaluation of reading responses can be found on the course website.

- **Hardcopies are due at the beginning of class. No late or emailed papers will be accepted.**
- **You must have at least 4 of your reading response papers submitted prior to Spring Break.**

☆ **MIDTERM: 200 points**

There will be one in-class short answer/short essay exam, scheduled for Thursday, March 5th. This exam is intended as an opportunity for me to assess your ability to understand, analyze, and critique course materials, to synthesize complex ideas, and to organize arguments grounded in evidence.

*Please note that this is the only examination scheduled for this class. However, if it becomes difficult to determine that course readings are being completed in a timely and thoughtful manner, pop quizzes will be given.

☆ **RESEARCH PROPOSAL PROJECT: 400 points**

Students will prepare a research proposal on a text, set of texts, or cultural object related to the two core concepts of this class: "Globalization and Culture." The definition of text is broad and almost any kind of object or set of objects is acceptable, as long as lends itself to productive research regarding the status of globalization and culture as presented in this class. This project will be divided into a four stages, worth 400 points total (40% of your final course grade). These stages are: topic and research question (100 points); annotated bibliography (100 points); presentation (50 points); research plan (150 points). Detailed instructions and guidance materials will be provided for each stage.

☆ **LEARNING SYNTHESIS PAPER: 50 points**

At the end of the semester, you will submit a paper that addresses key themes from the course and assesses your development as a student over the semester.

☆ **CLASS PARTICIPATION: 150 points**

As an upper-level course, the success of this class is dependent on your active participation. I expect you to engage in class discussion in a thoughtful/thought-provoking manner on a regular basis. I encourage you to bring to class relevant materials for discussion from other classes, the media, or other learning experiences. Discussions, in-class writing, class discussion questions, etc., will all contribute to the assessment of your class participation.

Through class discussions and group/individual assignments, you will have the opportunity to discover new perspectives and examine ideas that were previously unchallenged. It is important that this classroom be a

respectful learning environment in which everyone can participate. Open discussion depends on the development of trust and safety among participants, as well as risk-taking and effective facilitation. It is okay for us to disagree with one another in class discussion, but let's do so with kindness and compassion to keep the conversation as open and informative for everyone as possible.

Preparation outside of class significantly influences the quality of in-class participation. If you attend class unfamiliar with the assigned texts, indifferent to the work and/or ideas of your colleagues, and inadequately prepared with your writing, your participation grade will suffer. Please don't hesitate to let me know if you need any assistance.

CLASS MEETINGS & READING ASSIGNMENTS

RA=Reading Assignment

It is essential that you complete reading as it is assigned by the day listed. Most students will find it useful to bring the appropriate readings as well as questions/discussion points to class with them.

Week One

1/20 **T** Introduction: Course goals and expectations
PLEASE BUY COURSE TEXTS!

1/22 **TH** **CASE STUDY: OIL**
RA: *Oil on the Brain*, pp. 1-65
and Daniel Gross, "Farewell to the Gas Station: The Demise of a Car Culture Icon"
<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/05/05/farewell-to-the-gas-station-the-demise-of-a-car-culture-icon.html>

Week Two

1/27 **T** **RA:** *Oil on the Brain*, pp. 66-137
Be ready to discuss the current events related to oil production and distribution, this article is a good place to start:
Clifford Krauss, "Oil Prices Fall to Lowest Since 2009"
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/13/business/energy-environment/oil-prices-fall-to-their-lowest-since-2009-recession.html>
In-Class: 9 News Colorado, "Cheap Oil Comes With a Cost in Jobs"
<http://www.9news.com/story/news/local/2014/12/01/oil-jobs-colorado-gas-prices/19759487/>

1/29 **TH** **RA:** *Oil on the Brain*, please read the epilogue (pp.283-294)
and THE SECTION ASSIGNED TO YOUR GROUP:
Group 1: Venezuela (pp. 139-168)
Group 2: Chad (pp. 169-199)
Group 3: Iran (pp. 200-234)
Group 4: Nigeria (pp. 235-263)
Group 5: China (pp. 264-282)
and Imre Szeman, "Oil Futures"
In-Class: Amazon Watch, "Indigenous Voices: A Call to Keep the Oil in the Ground"
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amazon-watch/indigenous-voices-a-call-to-keep-the-oil-in-the-b_6312368.html?utm_hp_ref=green

Week Three

2/3 **T** **GLOBALIZATION: THE LONG VIEW**
RA: *The Origins of the Modern World*, Introduction and Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-94)
Focus on Introduction and Chapter 1

In-Class: The Hows and Whys of Writing a Research Proposal

2/5 TH **RA:** *The Origins of the Modern World*, Chapter 4 (pp. 95-121)
and Marx and Engels, "Bourgeois and Proletarians" from *The Communist Manifesto*
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm>

Week Four

2/10 T **RA:** *The Origins of the Modern World*, Chapter 5 (pp. 122-154)
and Edward Said, Introduction to *Orientalism* (PDF, pp. 1-9)

2/12 TH **RA:** *The Origins of the Modern World*, Chapter 6 and conclusion (pp. 155-207)
and Aime Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (PDF, pp. 31-46)

Week Five

2/17 T **NEOLIBERALISM, MEDIA & CULTURAL IMPERIALISM**
RA: George Ritzer, "Dimensions of McDonalldization" (pp. 14-16 from Introduction) and "Globalization and McDonalldization" from *McDonalldization of Society* (PDF)
and Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy" (PDF)

2/19 TH **RA:** Steger and Roy, "What's 'Neo' About Liberalism" from *A Brief Introduction to Neoliberalism* (PDF)
and Robert McChesney, "Global, Media, Neoliberalism, and Imperialism" (PDF)
In-Class: Research question workshop
RESEARCH TOPIC & QUESTIONS DUE

Week Six

2/24 T **RA:** David Harvey, "Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction" (PDF)
(recommended) Sasha Lilley, "On Neoliberalism: An Interview with David Harvey"
<http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2006/lilley190606p.html>

2/26 TH **RA:** Naomi Klein, "Blank is Beautiful: Three Decades of Erasing and Remaking the World" from *The Shock Doctrine* (PDF)
In-Class Film: *The Shock Doctrine*
Midterm Exam Study Guide will be distributed

Week Seven

3/3 T **RA:** Kenzo Shibata, "Disaster Capitalism, Chicago-style"
<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2013/02/disaster-capitalism-in-the-chicago-public-schools/>
and Michael Winstip, "Dave Zirin: 'FIFA's World Cup is for the wealthy, not for the people'"
http://www.salon.com/2014/06/20/dave_zirin_fifas_world_cup_is_for_the_wealthy_not_for_the_people_partner/

3/5 TH **IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAMINATION SNOW DAY: PLEASE SEE UPDATES BELOW**

Week Eight

3/10 and 3/12 ☆**SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS**☆

Week Nine

3/17	T	IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAMINATION
3/19	TH	GLOBAL CITIES/PERIPHERIES AND POPULATIONS RA: <i>Planet of Slums</i> , pp. 1-49 and Zygmunt Bauman, "Tourists and Vagabonds" (PDF)
<u>Week Ten</u>		
3/24	T	RA: <i>Planet of Slums</i> , pp. 50-94 In-Class Film: <i>City of God</i>
3/26	TH	RA: <i>Planet of Slums</i> , 95-150 In-Class Film: <i>City of God</i> (cont.) ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY & REVISED RESEARCH QUESTION DUE
<u>Week Eleven</u>		
3/31	T	RA: <i>Planet of Slums</i> , pp. 151-206
4/2	TH	PRODUCTION, CIRCULATION, AND CONSUMPTION RA: Kate Raworth, et al., <i>Trading Away Our Rights: Women Working in Global Supply Chains</i> . Oxfam, 2004 http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/rights.pdf and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "The current situation of Brazilian women" http://www.fao.org/docrep/x0210e/x0210e02.htm
<u>Week Twelve</u>		
4/7	T	RA: Philip McMichael, "The World Food Crisis in Historical Perspective" from <i>Agriculture and Food in Crisis</i> (PDF) and Kara Newman, "How Does Commodities Trading Work?" from <i>The Secret Financial Life of Food</i> (PDF)
4/9	TH	RA: GRAIN, "The New Farm Owners: Corporate Investors and the Control of Overseas Farmland" and Michael Altieri, "Agroecology, Small Farms, and Food Sovereignty" from <i>Agriculture and Food in Crisis</i> (PDF)
<u>Week Thirteen</u>		
4/14	T	RA: Lawrence Busch and Carmen Bain, "New! Improved? The Transformation of the Global Agrifood System" (PDF) and Steve Stecklow, "At Some Retailers, 'Fair Trade' Carries a Very High Cost" http://www.globalexchange.org/news/what-price-virtue-some-retailers-fair-trade-carries-very-high-cost In-Class Film: <i>We Feed the World</i>
4/16	TH	RA: Eric Schlosser, "Why Being a Foodie Isn't 'Elitist'" http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-being-a-foodie-isnt-elitist/2011/04/27/AFeWsnFF_story.html and Tom Laskawy, "Nestle wants you to be scared of organic food" http://grist.org/organic-food/2011-08-30-nestles-chairman-wants-you-to-be-scared-of-organic-food/ and Stephanie Storm, "Has 'Organic' Been Oversized?" http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/08/business/organic-food-purists-worry-about-big-companies-influence.html?pagewanted=all

In-Class Film: *We Feed the World* (cont.)

Week Fourteen

4/21 T **RA:** Josee Johnston and Michelle Szabo, "Reflexivity and the Whole Foods Market Consumer: The Lived Experience of Shopping for Change" (PDF) **and** Juliet Schor, "The New Politics of Consumption"
<http://www.bostonreview.net/forum/juliet-b-schor-new-politics-consumption>

4/23 TH Research Presentations

Week Fifteen

4/28 T Research Presentations

4/30 TH Research Presentations

LEARNING SYNTHESIS PAPER DUE

THERE IS NO FINAL EXAMINATION FOR THIS COURSE.

COMPLETE RESEARCH PLANS DUE IN HARDCOPY IN THE CULTURAL STUDIES OFFICE (Robinson Hall A, Room 253) BY 1:30 PM ON THURSDAY, MAY 7TH.

☆ **LATE PAPERS & EMAIL SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.** ☆

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

GMU Library: There are two libraries on Fairfax Campus: Fenwick and Johnson Center. You should be acquainted with these locations and how to use the library online catalog and databases. To find these pages go to the library homepage <http://library.gmu.edu/> and click on "databases." You then use the alphabetical feature at the top of the page to find your database, and then search for the article. If you need any help with the library please do not hesitate to contact the library staff available in-person and through live chat on the library website.

GMU Writing Center: (703-993-1824; Robinson A 114, main office; Enterprise 076) Provides, at no charge, tutors who can help you develop ideas and revise papers. Should you wish to use these services, it is highly recommended that you make an appointment well in advance of your assignment's due date. The Writing Center is also available online at <http://wcenter@gmu.edu>.

Counseling Services: (703-993-2380; SUB I, Room 3129) Provides individual and group sessions for personal development and assistance with a range of emotional and relational issues. In addition, the Learning Services Program (703-993-2999) offers academic skill-building workshops as well as a tutor referral service.

Office of Disability Services: (703-993-2474; SUB I, Room 2500; <http://ods.gmu.edu>) Assists students with learning or physical conditions affecting learning. If you qualify for accommodation, the ODS staff will provide a form to give to your instructor at the beginning of every course. Please note that faculty cannot legally provide accommodation to students with learning differences or physical conditions that may affect academic performance without appropriate documentation. Please obtain documentation and talk to me as soon as possible to make arrangements for your learning.