Culture, Capitalism and Globalization
International Studies 260
Winter 2013
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12 noon - 1:20 pm

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In this class we will draw on key lessons of the anthropological tradition in order to develop an outsider’s perspective on the culture of capitalism. Using a combined cultural and historical approach this course explores the development of the culture of capitalism and explores the connections between this culture and a suite of contemporary global problems. By adopting a critical perspective that approaches capitalism as a cultural phenomenon with a particular place in the span of human history we will be better able to appreciate its uniqueness.

In the first section of the course, we examine specific components of the culture of capitalism. We explore the historical development of consumerism, wage labor, trade, nation-states and corporations. In the second section, we explore the implications, effects of and responses to capitalism as a dominant way of life.

Part of the International Studies Core Course Sequence
The unique character and focus of the University of Oregon Department of International Studies (IS) is distinctly captured in the phrase ‘Culture and Development’. We integrate theory and praxis, drawing pragmatically from many disciplines to find the best mix of approaches to address rapidly changing and complex global issues in our classes.

Our opening course, INTL 101, Introduction to International Issues, and four 200 level courses (INTL 240: Perspectives on International Development; 250: Value Systems and Cross-Cultural Perspectives; 260: Culture, Capitalism, and Globalization; 280: Global Environmental Issues) are the intellectual core of the IS major – foundational courses where our students learn to link human security and people-centered social change to questions of culture, belonging and meaning. We conceive culture in a broad sense that encompasses social, political, economic, and religious institutions, processes and relations, as well as the environment. Each core course has a different emphasis that enables students to cover the range of themes and issues characteristic of the wide universe of international studies. Students will find these courses share a common purpose of fostering critical and cross-cultural thinking, encouraging them to seek out and
understand diverse perspectives on topics such as globalization, development, climate change, free markets and human rights. In the process they will learn to get outside of their preconceived worldviews on these and other matters. These five courses, together, provide the foundation for deeper investigation of issues, regions, and cultures in our 300 and 400 level INTL courses.

Course Format
This course has two principal components: lecture and discussion section. A quick look at the text I have selected for this course will reveal that it covers a broad range of topics – in conceptual, spatial and temporal terms. Thus, by design, my lectures will direct your attention to a limited number of issues and ideas. In lecture I will explain and elaborate on selected topics, themes and examples. On occasion I will use a video in lecture in order to illustrate a key issue or situation. The discussion sections are designed to enrich your understanding of the material I cover in lecture. To achieve this goal, in your sections you will explore in detail numerous supplementary readings and will complete a set of homework assignments. Be advised that new material will be covered in discussion sessions.

Required Texts
Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism (Fifth Edition) by Richard Robbins. This text is available for purchase at the University bookstore. A copy of the text is on reserve at Knight Library. A set of supplementary readings for the discussion sections is also available on the Blackboard website.

Course Blackboard Website
The course site will provide you with copies of an assortment of course documents, including a copy of this syllabus, class/lecture outlines, and handouts. The materials on the site are definitely not designed as “stand-alone” resources and you should not approach them in that way. In particular, the class/lecture outlines are meant solely as overviews of the terrain and issues covered in class – as such, they are of extremely limited use by themselves.

Course Requirements
Exams
There will be three exams in this course: two “in class” exams during the term and one “take home” exam due during finals week. The first two exams will measure your understanding of the material presented in your text and the ideas discussed in lectures, discussion sections, videos, and exercises. The format of these exams will be a combination of objective style questions (a mix of multiple choice, true/false, and matching questions) and short essay questions designed to address key concepts in a narrative fashion. The take home final will present you with a series of focus questions designed to stimulate your thoughts on the culture of capitalism.

Homework assignments
You will have regular homework assignments during the course. These assignments are associated with the material covered in your discussion section. You will read and respond to the supplementary articles on Blackboard. Your responses will come in the form of one page talking points outlines in which you summarize the key points and arguments of each week’s discussion section readings. These assignments will be collected and graded each week by your GTF.

Class attendance and participation
Regular attendance at lecture and full participation in your discussion section will greatly improve your chance of success in the course. Attendance will be recorded weekly in your sections.

Evaluation and Grading
Exams I and II (60%)
Exam III: The Final Exam (20%)
Discussion section assignments (15%)
Attendance and participation (5%)

Grades will be assigned using a straight scale: e.g., 90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, etc. and pluses and minuses will be used where appropriate.
Extra Credit Option
With advance permission, you may complete one extra credit assignment. This will involve writing an essay on one of the sets of readings explored in your discussion section. The assignment will be worth up to 5 extra points to be added onto the lower of your first two exam scores. See your GTF for permission and assignment details. This assignment is due on or before your last discussion section.

Policy Issues
Classroom Culture
In order to create and maintain a focused and productive learning environment we need to agree on some basic elements of classroom etiquette. Ideas for things to include or address in this regard?

Graded Assignments and Personal Crises
No make-ups will be offered for any graded assignments in this course. Homework assignments are due when they are due, and exams are given only at the scheduled time. Exceptions to this rule will only be made in the case of serious, officially documented personal crises (e.g., death in the family, major illness, etc.). If you are encountering such a situation, be sure to contact your GTF or I before the scheduled assignment is due or before the exam is administered to discuss any potential accommodations. If you happen to miss a lecture or a discussion section, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. Be advised that neither your GTF nor I are under any obligation to provide you with copies of lecture notes. We will, however, be glad to meet with you during office hours to discuss the material you missed. It may be possible to obtain lecture notes from a classmate.

Cheating and Academic Dishonesty
All assignments in this class are designed to assess your individual knowledge and understanding of the material covered in the course. Thus, cheating or plagiarism – in any form – will not be tolerated. The work you present must be entirely your own. All individuals involved in an act of academic dishonesty will fail the course. I do not expect to encounter any problems in this area, but feel you should be forewarned.

Discrimination
The University of Oregon is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity institution. Discrimination on the basis of any of the categories covered in the University’s anti-discrimination policy will not be tolerated in this class. If you have a concern in this regard, please contact the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity at 346-3123.

Physical or Learning Disabilities
If you have a condition that inhibits learning or evaluation under customary circumstances, please request a letter from Disability Services that verifies your situation and states the accommodations that I can make to improve your learning environment.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments
(This is a tentative timetable – our progress may deviate slightly.)

SECTION ONE: The “Culture of Capitalism” – Processes and Players
Week One
1/8-1/10 Course Overview and The Consumer
Begin Robbins Chapter 1

Week Two
1/15-1/17 The Consumer – continued
Finish Robbins Chapter 1
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, from The Communist Manifesto (1848)

Week Three
1/22-1/24 The Laborer
Robbins Chapter 2
Allen Myerson, from “In Principle, A Case for More ‘Sweatshops’,”
The New York Times (June 1997)
Week Four
1/29-1/31
The Trader/ The Capitalist
Robbins Chapter 3

Week Five
2/5-2/7
Catch Up and Exam One
* Exam 1 in class on Thursday 2/7; Bring a pencil and a pen *

Week Six
2/12-2/14
The Nation-State/The Corporation
Robbins Chapter 4

SECT ION TWO: The “Culture of Capitalism” – Implications, Effects & Responses

Week Seven
2/19-2/21
Population, Hunger and Poverty
Skim Robbins Chapters 5 and 6

Week Eight
2/26-2/28
Environment/Disease/Indigenous People
Skim Robbins Chapters 7, 8 and 9

Week Nine
3/5-3/7
Resistance and Protest
Skim Robbins Chapters 10, 11 and 12
The Zapatista Army of National Liberation Announces Next Steps

* Exam 2 in class on Thursday 3/7; Bring a pencil and a pen *

Finale: The “Culture of Capitalism” – New Directions

Week Ten
3/12-3/14
The Future
Robbins Chapter 13
“The New Politics of Consumption”
http://www.bostonreview.net/BR24.3/schor.html
“The Prophet of Modest Profit”
(On Blackboard in Discussion Section Readings)

* Exam 3 “THE FINAL EXAM” posted on Blackboard by Friday, March 15th at 5 pm and due on Blackboard on or before Tuesday, March 19th at 10:00 AM. *