

COMM 495 - Fall 2009 Syllabus

We live in a world in which transnational flows of money, media images, information, technology, and people spawn intense debates about the “global” impact of commodities and capital on cultural diversity. While globalization, it would seem, is all around us, what this actually means for culture, identity, our “way of life,” and the environment is highly contested.

In this course, we will take up questions about globalization in an attempt to address the linkages between communication, culture and globalization. In so doing we will read a wide range of scholarly work advocating multiple perspectives on this complex issue. Some of the key questions we will address include: Is globalization universal? How has globalization affected cultures and identities? What are the implications of the reorganization of work and production that globalization entails? How are “first world”-“third world” relationships affected by globalization? What is the relationship between the ‘global’ and the ‘local’? Are there any alternatives to the effects of transnational capital and politics?

The course is divided into seven units. Each unit spans two weeks, starting on Monday and ending on Sunday. The study of globalization is interdisciplinary, and in this course we will draw from research in economics, political science, cultural studies, sociology, and communication studies. We will begin by defining and understanding the key concepts for this semester: globalization, culture, and communication. In Unit 2 we will continue by learning about the major debates and controversies associated with the study of globalization, and we will build our “discourse perspective” on globalization. Unit 3 historicizes globalization, and we will pay special attention to the processes of modernization and colonialism. In Units 4, 5, and 6 we will look at how globalization has impacted three distinct areas: popular culture, economic production, and humanitarian and social issues. We will conclude this semester with a detailed look at “other” possibilities for globalization. In this unit we will read and discuss alternative voices and perspectives, and will focus on specific strategies associated with “grassroots globalization,” or “globalization from below.”

Throughout this class we will approach globalization using a communication-centered framework, and will draw from cultural studies approaches in order to consider globalization as a communicative phenomenon, as discourse, and as ideology.

Learning Objectives

The objectives in this course include:

- To introduce you to the key controversies and perspectives on globalization.
- To develop your ability to engage multiple theoretical perspectives when examining a single phenomenon.
- To introduce you to key communication and cultural studies approaches to globalization.
- To develop your ability to write academic papers.
- To assist you in making connections between course concepts and your own interests and experiences.

Required Materials

All required readings will be available for download in the “Readings” folder. Make sure you have the latest FREE version of Adobe Reader installed on your computer.
<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

We will also take advantage of online resources throughout this class. In particular, you will be required to watch several documentaries which you can stream for free at <http://www.freedocumentaries.org/>

Finally, you will need to stay abreast of international/global issues. The best way to do this will be to read the news online. My two favorite news sources with a *global* perspective include the New York Times (<http://www.nytimes.com/>) and the BBC (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/>).

Course Assignments

Assignment	Point Value
Essay #1 – Sunday, September 27	20 Points
Essay #2 – Sunday, November 8	20 Points
Essay #3 – Sunday, December 13	20 Points
Short Assignment #1 – Sunday, September 13	5 Points
Short Assignment #2 – Sunday, October 11	5 Points
Short Assignment #3 – Sunday, October 25	5 Points
Short Assignment #4 – Sunday, November 22	5 Points
Discussion Participation*	20 Points
TOTAL	100 Points

* Instead of grading individual discussion postings, in this class I will evaluate your overall participation in discussions. Full credit will be given for:

1. Participation that is *ongoing* and *responsive*. Please check the discussion board often so that you can respond to other postings, including (and especially) responses to your postings. **ALL students should complete an initial posting by the first Sunday of each unit, and should check back regularly to the discussion.**
2. Postings that draw from course readings, course films, and that reference contemporary issues. Please refrain from postings that only refer to your own experience(s).
3. Postings which are proofread. TIP: Type up your posting in a Word Processing document first, run spell check, and then cut and paste your posting into the discussion field on Blackboard.

Grading Scale:

A 94-100; A- 90-93; B+ 86-89; B 83-85; B- 80-82; C+ 76-79; C 73-75; C- 70-72; D+ 66-69; D 63-65; D- 60-62

Schedule

UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO GLOBALIZATION, CULTURE, AND COMMUNICATION

August 31 – September 13

Readings

Schirato & Webb, *The Idea of Globalization*
 Pieterse, *Globalization: Consensus and Controversies*
 Risse, *Constructivism Meets Globalization*
Unit 1 Lecture Notes

Film

Life and Debt, view at <http://www.freedocumentaries.org/>

Due

Participate in Unit 1 Discussion (Initial posting by Sunday, September 6)
Short Assignment #1 (Sunday, September 13)

UNIT 2: CULTURE, MEANING, AND DISCOURSE

September 14 – September 27

Readings

Lewis, *Contemporary Culture, Cultural Studies, and the Global Mediasphere*
Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld*
Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture: 3 Paradigms*

Due

**Participate in Unit 2 Discussion (Initial posting by Sunday, September 20)
Essay #1 (Sunday, September 27)**

UNIT 3: HISTORICIZING GLOBALIZATION

September 28 – October 11

Readings

Hall, *The West and the Rest*
Schirato & Webb, *History and Ideology*
Lappe and Collins, *Why Can't People Feed Themselves*

Due

**Participate in Unit 3 Discussion (Initial posting by Sunday, October 4)
Short Assignment #2 (Sunday, October 11)**

UNIT 4: GLOBALIZATION AND POPULAR CULTURE

October 12 – October 25

Readings

Ghosh, *"Con-fusing" Exotica*
Lipsitz, *Diasporic Noise: History, Hip Hop and the Post-Colonial Politics of Sound*
Narayan, *Eating Cultures*

Due

**Participate in Unit 4 Discussion (Initial posting by Sunday, October 18)
Short Assignment #3 (Sunday, October 25)**

UNIT 5: ISSUES IN ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION

October 26 – November 8

Readings

Klein, *The Brand Expands*
Klein, *The Discarded Factory*
Schirato & Webb, *Global Capitalism*

Films (all available on <http://www.freedocumentaries.org>)

Disney Labor in China
Mark Thomas on Coca-Cola
The Slow Poisoning of India

Due

**Participate in Unit 5 Discussion (Initial posting by Sunday, November 1)
Essay #2 (Sunday, November 8)**

UNIT 6: GLOBALIZING HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

November 9 – November 22

Readings

Servaes & Malikhao, *Development Communication Approaches in an Int'l Perspective*
Chang, *Globalization in Living Color*
Willing, *From Orphaned China-Dolls to Long-Distance Daughters*

Films

Invisible Children
Slavery: A Global Investigation

Due

**Participate in Unit 6 Discussion (Initial posting by Sunday, November 15)
Short Assignment #4 (Sunday, November 22)**

UNIT 7: "OTHER" GLOBALIZATIONS ARE POSSIBLE

November 23 – December 13 (Note: This unit spans 3 weeks in order to accommodate the Thanksgiving Break)

Readings

Scampini, *Reflections on the World Social Forum*
Waterman, *The Global Justice and Solidarity Movement and the WSF*
Ericson, *The Conscious Consumer*
Brecher et al., *Draft of a Global Program*
Featherstone, *The New Student Movement*
The Grameen Bank

Due

**Participate in Unit 7 Discussion (Initial posting by Wednesday, December 2)
Essay #3 (Sunday, December 13)**