

**Sociology 446**  
**The Modern World-System**

Fall 2015  
Tues/Thurs. 11:10-12:25 pm  
HSS 103A

Instructor: Dr. Paul K. Gellert  
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30-10:30 am, or by appointment  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines the historical emergence, contemporary structure and possible future(s) of the modern world – what some sociologists call the capitalist world-system. In other words, we will attempt to understand the historical roots and contemporary structures and practices of what is often called “globalization.” In doing so, we will examine the multiple processes – social, political, economic, cultural, and ideological – that connect disparate parts of the world in highly unequal ways.

While firmly footed in sociological theories of the modern world-system, the course embraces a multidisciplinary or, more accurately, what Immanuel Wallerstein calls a unidisciplinary perspective that includes history, geography, and social theory to build an historical social science. We will use this holistic perspective to study the world-system both historically and in more recent times.

Specific questions that this course will address include (among others):

- What are the structures of the world-system? How have they been produced and reproduced over time? What are the trends and cycles?
- How do consumers, laborers and capitalists interact to produce surplus value in the world-system?
- What are global commodity chains; how are they organized and shaped by gender, class, race, nation, etc.; how do they differ by commodity; and what are their social and environmental impacts?
- What is the legacy of colonialism on how we in the West see others in the world and how does our ideological construction of ‘the Other’ affect us?
- What are hegemonic powers and empires? How do transitions from one power to another occur? Is the USA exceptional?
- What are the likely and possible futures of the world-system? Who is working to create alternatives and how?

All of these questions are unified by a global, world-systems perspective, and empirical material will be taken from various parts of the world. Some emphasis may be placed on Indonesia and Southeast Asia more generally due to Dr. Gellert’s research expertise in that area of the world.

## **Course Goal and Learning Objectives**

The primary goal of the course is to provide students with a rigorous theoretical, historical and empirical understanding of poverty and development. Along the way, via class exercises, discussions and a final research project, students will be expected to apply what they learn.

Specific learning objectives for the course are that students should, by the end of this course:

- Know definitions and concepts of world-systems analysis, including core, periphery and semi-periphery; structural relations; hegemony; and anti-systemic movements
- Know the role of key actors (labor, corporations, nation-states, non-government organizations, etc.) and international institutions, such as the World Bank, in the world-system
- be able to connect the historical forces to contemporary efforts at national development poverty alleviation
- be able to apply world-systems analysis to their own analysis of countries, corporations, and social movements
- be able to collect and analyze cross-national data on trade and globalization indicators
- be able to design and write a sociological research paper on a global commodity chain
- be able to collaborate effectively with your peers

This course is a writing emphasis course. Students will be expected to write over 6000 words for Sociology 446.

## **Books and Readings**

There is LOTS of reading in Sociology 446, but I have decided not to require you to purchase any books for this class. All required readings will be made available via Blackboard. At the same time, I highly recommend the following textbooks if you are able to obtain them:

Robbins, Richard H. 2014. *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. Pearson Education (Allyn and Bacon).

Dicken, Peter. 2015. *Global Shift*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Guilford Press. [or previous edition].

Shannon, T. R. 1996. *An Introduction to the World-Systems Perspective*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2004. *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Duke University Press. See [here](#).

**AND**...also, take a look at the free online *Journal of World-Systems Research* here:

**[www.jwsr.org](http://www.jwsr.org)**



## REQUIREMENTS

### Course expectations:

Take this class seriously. This class demands that you, as a student, come to class prepared, engaged, and ready to move quickly and deeply into the main issues of our readings. It demands that you have advanced knowledge and understanding of sociology and globalization and are ready to synthesize your prior knowledge in relation to new work in this course.

It also demands that you develop a critical orientation to the material in the course. Probably everybody has an opinion (and assumptions) about poverty and development. **Being critical does not mean simply having an opinion**, and it is **not the same as being negative**. It means that you think through the material in course, beyond lecture, beyond reading, and develop innovative analytical connections between your own ideas and the new concepts you encounter. As a class, we will seek to develop a well-informed, critical foundation from which to think about poverty and development in today's world. This effort will include questioning where our assumptions come from, how they are enacted via policies and practices throughout the world, and most importantly, what alternative and more just paths might be possible.

### Learning Environment and Ground Rules:

*Student responsibility:* Your active attention is expected, and, therefore, *cell phones and other devices (e.g., iPads) should be turned off. Laptops may be used for note taking.* However, it is not appropriate to use class time to check email and social media. *Late entries and early departures are not permitted (unless otherwise approved) as they are disruptive to all.*

*Professor responsibility.* It is my responsibility to come prepared for each class, be available outside of class, and to lead us in the learning process in a respectful and thoughtful manner. I will be an active learner with you in the space we create.

### Reading

You should complete readings prior to the class period for which they are assigned. Students are responsible for all assigned readings whether they are discussed in class or not. Many of the reading in this course are aimed at an audience of professional social scientists. As a result, you may find some of them difficult. When reading these materials, you should focus on identifying the author's main theoretical points without getting lost in historical, statistical or other empirical details. If you have difficulty completing a reading, I advise skimming the whole reading rather than closely reading just a part of it.

### Classwork

*Participation* – I expect all students to participate fully in Sociology 442 across the semester. Please notify Dr. Gellert well in advance of any scheduled absences (athletic or other). I will take attendance, and more than 4 absences will negatively affect your grade.

*Group work* – Early in the semester, I will divide you into groups of 4 students (or in some cases 3 students). I have allocated significant class time to getting acquainted and establishing group norms. In addition, you will remain in these groups for multiple group

discussions. Importantly, these groups will conduct joint research projects (see research project below) and give a group presentation. At the end of the semester, you will be asked to complete a confidential peer and self-evaluation on the effort and quality of participation.

I recognize that some students are more comfortable with this group requirement than others, but expressing your ideas, having them challenged by your peers and instructor, and responding to such input are vital components of the learning process. In addition, learning how to cooperate and collaborate are important skills.

### **Homework**

There will be 2 short homework assignments. First, you will write a short paper about global structures of poverty at the beginning of the semester. Second, you will present data from the global trade data exercise and analyze it. Each assignment will be about 2 to 3 pages.

### **Exams**

There will be an in-class midterm and a take-home final exam. Both exams will be comprised of short answer or essay questions with some student choice.

### **Research project**

The research project for this course will be an investigation of a particular commodity using commodity chain analysis. In your group of 3 or 4 students, you will select a commodity of focus. Together, you will research the history of the commodity, its production, trade, and consumption. Then, individually you will research one aspect of the commodity such as its effects in a particular country, the financing of its expansion in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the environmental impact of the spatial expansion of the commodity, the handling of its waste stream, etc. At the end of the research you will have two major requirements:

*Group presentation* – each group will present their research to the class. Group presentations will last approximately 15 minutes and will be graded on 4 criteria:

- clarity of presentation
- depth of research and analysis
- creativity (incorporating data images, pictures, very short video clips, music, etc.)
- integration of presentation across group members (in other words, I would like you to offer not just 3 or 4 mini-presentations, but 1 integrated research project)

*Research paper* – each student will write an individual paper on a focused research question about your particular country. These papers will incorporate both research that has been conducted collectively in the group (including sharing of sources) and research conducted individually on the component that you have chosen. Final papers should be approximately 12 to 15 pages and include at least 8 academically credible sources (international data, academic journal articles, book chapters, NGO reports, etc.). With appropriate care and analysis, you may include – but should not rely on – blogs, questionable quality websites, and Wikipedia entries.

## **OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

### **UT Campus Syllabus**

Please refer to the University of Tennessee Campus Syllabus for information regarding: University Civility Statement, Academic Integrity, Disabilities that Constrain Learning, your role in improving teaching and learning through course assessment, and key resources for students. It is available here: <http://tenntlc-utk-edu.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/files/2012/11/CAMPUS-SYLLABUS1.pdf>

### **Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism is the presentation of others' ideas as if they were your own. When you write a paper, create a project, do a presentation or create anything original, it is assumed that all of the work—except for that which is attributed to another author or creator—is your own.

You are responsible for keeping your work/actions from having even the *appearance* of plagiarism or cheating. “Plagiarism is using the intellectual property or product of someone else without giving proper credit” (e.g. [HILLTOPICS: Student Handbook](#)). Examples include copying the work of someone else (an author, someone who is taking/has taken the class, or anyone else) and turning it in as your own work or looking at someone else's exam to get answers. Any evidence of academic dishonesty on a paper/exam will result in a zero for that assignment and possible failure of the course.

I am serious about plagiarism and have caught – and failed – students in the past. Unfortunately, some of you do not know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate copying and pasting. I will discuss examples of paraphrasing, quoting, and proper citation during the semester. If you have any questions, please ask!

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 2227 Dunford Hall (telephone/TTY 974-6087; e-mail [ods@utk.edu](mailto:ods@utk.edu)) to ensure that you are properly registered for services. I also recommend that you notify me of your situation so that I can make necessary accommodations.

### **Help with your writing**

The Writing Center provides individual assistance to any student needing help with writing. They do not edit your papers for you, however. Please see <http://writingcenter.utk.edu/> for more information, useful handouts, hours of operation, etc.

### **Class Schedule**

*This schedule and required readings are still tentative and subject to change. I may alter dates, topics, or assignments based on course progress or outside circumstances. I will provide notification of changes as far in advance as possible via Blackboard and e-mail. Readings are available via the class Blackboard website. Please complete the readings **before** the relevant class sessions.*

Color codes indicate the following:

Homework and Research Papers

Exams

Small group discussions

Films

Group presentations

#### **8/20 Introduction: What is World-Systems Analysis?**

##### **READ:**

Robbins, Richard H. 2014. *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism*,

- Introduction to Part I, pp. 1-11.

Aguirre Rojas, Carlos Antonio. 2012. "Introduction: Immanuel Wallerstein and the Critical 'World-Systems Analysis' Perspective." Pp. vii-xl in *Uncertain Worlds: World-Systems Analysis in Changing Times*, edited by I. Wallerstein, C. Aguirre Rojas, and C. Lemert. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

#### **8/25 & 27 Ending poverty? Historical and future global relations**

8/25 **Meet @ Hodges Library Room 213**

Film *The End of Poverty?*

8/27 No class (Dr. Gellert traveling)

**Homework: Reading and film response paper due by midnight on Thursday 8/27!**

##### **READ**

Babones, Salvatore. 2015. "What is World-Systems Analysis?" *Thesis Eleven* 127(1): 3-20.  
Sackery et al: "The Political Economy Challenge to Mainstream Economics" Pp. xx in *Introduction to Political Economy*. Dollars & Sense / Economic Affairs Bureau.

#### **9/1 & 3 Class Overview and Establishing Groups**

9/1 What is world-systems analysis? Terms, definitions, and key questions

9/3 Establishing groups: introductions for rest of semester's class discussions and group projects

##### **READ**

Aguirre Rojas [see above under 8/20]

Babones, Salvatore [see above under 8/25]

Hall, Thomas D. *World-Systems Reader*.

- Chapter 1, WSA: Small Sample from a Large Universe

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2000 (1974). "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis." Pp. 71-105 in *The Essential Wallerstein*. The New Press.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2004. *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Duke University Press.  
See [here](#).

- Chapter 1 and Glossary

### **Optional**

Hall, Thomas D. *World-Systems Reader*.

- Chapter 2, Recent Research on World-Systems

Babones *Handbook of World-Systems*

- Introduction

## **9/8, 10, 15 Consumer, Laborers, and Corporations in the World-System**

9/8 Constructing the Consumer

Film excerpt "*Happiness Machine*"

9/10 Laborers in the World-System

9/15 Corporations in the World-System

Film excerpt "*The Corporation*"

Small group discussion

### **READ:**

Robbins, Richard H. 2014. *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism*.

- Chapter 1 "Constructing the Consumer"
- Chapter 2, "The Laborer in the Culture of Capitalism"

Schor, Juliet. 1999. "The New Politics of Consumption." *Boston Review* Retrieved January 22, 2014 (<http://new.bostonreview.net/BR24.3/schor.html>).

Dicken, Peter. 2015. *Global Shift*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Guilford Press. [or previous edition].

- Chapter 5, TNCs: The Primary 'Movers and Shapers' of the Global Economy

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2004. *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Duke University Press.  
See [here](#).

- Chapter 2

## **9/17, 22, 24 Global Commodity Chains (GCCs)**

9/17 Explaining GCCs

9/22 Dark Value, gender and GCCs

9/24 Indonesia, timber, environment and GCCs

Small group discussion

### **READ:**

Gereffi, Gary, Miguel Korzeniewicz and Roberto P. Korzeniewicz. 1994. "Introduction: Global Commodity Chains." Pp. 1-14 in *Commodity Chains and Global Capitalism*, edited by G. Gereffi and M. Korzeniewicz. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Hopkins, Terence K. and Immanuel Wallerstein. 1986. "Commodity Chains in the World-Economy Prior to 1800." *Review* X(1):157-70.

Dicken, Peter. 2015. *Global Shift*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Guilford Press. [or previous edition].

Nevins, Joseph and Nancy Lee Peluso. 2008. "Introduction: Commoditization in

- Southeast Asia.” Pp. 1-26 in *Taking Southeast Asia to Market*. Commodities, Nature, and People in the Neoliberal Age, edited by J. Nevins and N. Peluso. University of California Press.
- Chase-Dunn, Christopher, Hiroko Inoue, Teresa Neal and Evan Heimlich. 2015. The Development of World-Systems.” *Sociology of Development* 1(1): 149-172.
- Clelland, Donald A.. 2014. "The Core of the Apple: Dark Value and Degrees of Monopoly in Global Commodity Chains," *Journal of World-System Research* 20(1).
- Wilma A. Dunaway. 2014. *Gendered Commodity Chains: Seeing the Hidden Women's Work and Laborer Households in Global Production*. ed. Wilma A. Dunaway. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Dunaway “Introduction.” Pp. 1-25
  - Collins, “A Feminist Approach to Overcoming the Closed Boxes”
- Bair, Jennifer. 2014. “Editor’s Introduction: Commodity Chains in and of the World-System.” *Journal of World-Systems Research* 20 (1):
- Gellert, Paul K. 2003. "Renegotiating a Timber Commodity Chain: The Politics of the Indonesia-Japan Plywood Link." *Sociological Forum* 18(1):53-84.
- Bair, Jennifer and Palpacuer, F. 2015. “CSR beyond the corporation: contested governance in global value chains.” *Global Networks* 15: S1–S19.  
doi: 10.1111/glob.12085

**9/29 and 10/1      Research paper overview; review for exam**

**10/6 MIDTERM EXAM (in class)**

**10/8      Library Research: Global commodity data**

**Meet @ Hodges Library, Room 128.** Bring laptops! If you do not have a laptop, you can check one out from the library.

**READ:**

- Babones, Salvatore J. 2006. "Conducting Global Social Research." Pp. 8-30 in *Global Social Change: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, edited by C. Chase-Dunn and S. J. Babones: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Lange, *Comparative Historical Sociology*, Ch. 1

**10/13 Commodity data homework due by midnight!**

**10/13 & 20      Colonialism, Orientalism, Seeing ‘the Other’ and Seeing the World**

10/13 Orientalism

**Film “Edward Said On Orientalism”**

10/15 **FALL BREAK** ... and Department of Sociology Conference at UTK on “Ecologically Unequal Exchange”

10/20 Seeing the Other

**Small group discussion**

**READ:**

Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. Excerpt.

Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, Ch 2; also skim Ch 3, 8, and 9

**Optional**

Go, Julian. 2000. "Chains of Empire, Projects of State: Political Education and U.S. Colonial Rule in Puerto Rico and the Philippines." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42(2):332-62.

Gellert, Paul K. 2014. "Optimism and Education: The New Ideology of Development in Indonesia." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 45(3): 371-393. **DOI:** 10.1080/00472336.2014.978352

**10/22 & 27            On empires and American exceptionalism**

10/22 Research paper workshop; Introducing empire

10/27 Empire and exceptionalism

Film excerpt from "Why we Fight"

**READ:**

Go, Julian. 2011. *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present*. Cambridge University Press.

- Introduction and Chapters 1, 2 and 4.

Johnson, Chalmers.

- Excerpts from his trilogy on "blowback" and US empire

**Optional**

McCoy, Alfred. 2012. *Torture and Impunity (Critical Human Rights)*. University of Wisconsin Press.

See also videos of McCoy lecture: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgazW9sRrW4> and of Democracy Now! Interview

[http://www.democracynow.org/blog/2012/9/21/alfred\\_mccoy\\_torture\\_and\\_impunity\\_the\\_us\\_doctrine\\_of\\_coercive\\_interrogation\\_pt\\_2](http://www.democracynow.org/blog/2012/9/21/alfred_mccoy_torture_and_impunity_the_us_doctrine_of_coercive_interrogation_pt_2)

**10/29, 11/3 & 5            GROUP RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS**

**11/10 & 12            Systemic Cycles of Accumulation and Hegemony**

Film *The Ascent of Money, Pt. I*

**READ:**

Arrighi, Giovanni. 1994. *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times*. London: Verso.

- Ch. 1

**FRIDAY 11/13 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PAPERS DUE BY 5 pm!!!!**

**11/17 China and the future of the modern world-system**

**READ**

Li, Minqi. 2008. *The Rise of China and the Demise of the Capitalist World Economy*. New York: Monthly Review Press. Excerpt TBA.

**11/19, 24 Anti-Systemic Movements and Altering the World-System**

Film Excerpt from “Manufacturing Consent”

Film Excerpt on social movements (TBA)

**READ:**

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2014. “Anti-systemic Movements, Yesterday and Today.”  
[http://www.jwsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Wallerstein\\_Vol20\\_no2.pdf](http://www.jwsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Wallerstein_Vol20_no2.pdf)

Smith, Jackie and Dawn Wiest. 2012. *Social Movements in the World-System: The Politics of Crisis and Transformation*. American Sociological Association, Rose Series in Sociology (Russell Sage Foundation).

1 more reading TBA

**11/26-27 Thanksgiving Break**

**12/1 FINAL DISCUSSION: Futures of the world-system?**

**12/7 TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM DUE by 12:15 pm (end of assigned final exam time)**