Sociology 26

Introduction to Global Social Change

Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:00–1:00
Pound Hall 201

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the development of global capitalism with a focus on changing relationships between markets, states, and civil societies. Questions of power and inequality will be central to our approach, as will various forms of resistance to globalization. We will begin from a macro political economy perspective, exploring global social change through the lens of world-system theory, neoliberalism, deindustrialization, and ‘flexible accumulation.’ We will then turn to globalization “on the ground” in a variety of local contexts —from Seattle to Chiapas, Pittsburgh to Porto Alegre and beyond. How are social relations shaped in the global north and south in the context of global capitalist development? How can we understand the relationship between global capitalism and democracy? And how can we conceptualize the different forms of resistance to globalization and their significance? Throughout the course we explore the possibilities for and limitations of global social change through a variety of cases of both transnational and community-based activism. We will consider mobilizations of workers and students and the global justice movement. The course ends with a discussion of Internet activism, social media, and the Arab Spring.
As an introduction to sociology this course explores stability as well as conflict and change; it examines both social structure and resistance to inequality. The course demonstrates the strengths of sociology’s interdisciplinary perspective with its attention to economics, politics, history, and culture. Students will explore sociological approaches at multiple levels of analysis, from macro structures to micro interactions. Through considering the topic of global social change, students will be exposed to sociology’s rich and fruitful analytical lens for understanding social relations at local, national, and international scales.

**REQUIREMENTS**

*Students are expected to do each week’s readings in advance of class, and to attend each lecture and section meeting. Your attendance and participation, and your level of engagement with the readings, are crucial to the quality of your experience as well as your success in the course.* There are six major components of the course, all of which are required:

1) Participation and Attendance in Lecture  
2) Participation and Attendance in Section  
3) Analytical Questions on the Course Readings (6 submissions)  
4) Unit 1 Paper (5-6 pages) – DUE FRIDAY FEBRUARY 28TH AT 5:00 PM  
5) Unit 2 Paper (5-6 pages) – DUE FRIDAY APRIL 4TH AT 5:00 PM  
6) Final Paper (6-8 pages) – DUE TUESDAY MAY 6TH AT 5:00 PM

There may be additional exercises or assignments throughout the course.

Final grades will be determined as follows:

- Participation and Attendance in Lecture: 5%  
- Participation and Attendance in Section: 10%  
- Analytical Questions on the Course Readings: 5%  
- Unit 1 Paper: 25%  
- Unit 2 Paper: 25%  
- Final Paper: 30%

**Participation:** Sections will be run in a discussion format, and lectures will include discussion as well. Please come prepared to discuss the readings, lectures, assignments, and your own analytical questions.
**Attendance:** To ensure that your attendance is accounted for there will be a sign in sheet every lecture. Please make sure to sign in each time. **Attendance will be taken beginning the second week of the course.** Absences from lecture and section will be excused for medical reasons or for religious observance. In these cases you must email the TF in advance unless there is a medical emergency, in which case you should contact them within 24 hours. Other than excused absences you can miss lecture two times without penalty and you can miss section once without penalty. Please be aware, however, that your attendance has everything to do with your success on course papers, and so there is a strong incentive to attend all lectures and sections.

**Analytical Questions on the Course Readings:** You will submit an analytical question on the course readings for two weeks of each unit—which will amount to submitting questions six times. On a week that you choose to submit a question you will do so via email, copied to both the instructor (meyer2@fas.harvard.edu) and the TF (cassandrarobertson@fas.harvard.edu) (subject line: global social change question). Questions are due at 9:00 PM on Monday evenings before lecture. (The only exception to this is the first week of class, when you would submit them on Wednesday evening at 9:00 PM.) These questions should demonstrate a critical engagement with the material. Focus on something you find particularly interesting, enlightening, or troubling about the reading. Perhaps you discover a contradiction, or there is something that you find confusing. You may relate the readings to other material that has been covered in class or to something you observed in your everyday life. You can give some context or offer some framing for your question, but please attempt to keep questions short and to the point. (They should not exceed one paragraph.) While some great questions may emerge from a deep reading of a single text, many of the best questions will aim to treat multiple readings and their relationship to each other. **Please bring your analytical questions to class, and be prepared to share and discuss them.**

**Grading System and Standards:** The course will follow the grading system for Harvard College. The complete Harvard College grading system can be found online in the *Handbook for Students* and on the course website, but please make sure to review the following, which will be adhered to:

- **A, A–** Earned by work whose excellent quality indicates a full mastery of the subject and, in the case of the grade of A, is of extraordinary distinction.

- **B+, B, B–** Earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student’s full engagement with the course requirements and activities.
If you have any problems—understanding the material, completing assignments, attendance, etc.—contact the teaching fellow or instructor as soon as possible. If we know about problems ahead of time we will be better able to solve them.

The Sociology Department’s Departmental Writing Fellow is available to meet with students to discuss their papers. Please also remember that the Harvard College Writing Center is available to assist in any stage of the writing process. Information about both can be found online.

COURSE POLICIES

Late Policy for Papers: One partial grade will be deducted from papers that are turned in late (for example, an A-paper would be given a B+). Another partial grade will be taken off for each additional day that the paper is late. Extensions can be given in the case of medical emergency or religious observance. All requests for extensions should go directly to the professor and must be made in advance of the relevant deadline (if at all possible).

Electronic Devices: Students are not permitted to use electronic devices—including laptops, tablets, or cell phones—during either lecture or section. Violation of this policy will strongly affect your participation grade due to the pedagogical importance of the policy and out of fairness to your fellow students.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND COLLABORATION

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practice in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc.), you must also acknowledge this assistance.
READINGS

All readings are required, and it is expected that each week’s readings will be completed before Tuesday’s lecture. The readings are a crucial part of the course, and they are essential to your learning and success in the class. All readings will be available on the course website. Additional readings may be assigned as needed.

SCHEDULE

UNIT 1: GLOBAL CAPITALISM

WEEK 1 (JANUARY 28 & 30) – COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE VS. WORLD-SYSTEM THEORY


WEEK 2 (FEBRUARY 4 & 6) – CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRACY


WEEK 3 (FEBRUARY 11 & 13) – FLEXIBLE ACCUMULATION, DE-INDUSTRIALIZATION AND THE GREAT U-TURN


WEEK 4 (FEBRUARY 18 & 20) – GLOBAL LABOR AND LABOR MOVEMENTS


UNIT 2: GLOBALIZATION ON THE GROUND

WEEK 5 (FEBRUARY 25 & 27) – POST-MODERNITY

**UNIT 1 PAPER DUE: FRIDAY FEBRUARY 28TH AT 5:00**


WEEK 6 (MARCH 4 & 6) – LOCAL CONTEXTS


WEEK 7 (MARCH 11 & 13) – WOMEN WORKERS, PRECARIOUS WORKERS


***SPRING BREAK WEEK***
UNIT 3: RESISTING GLOBALIZATION

WEEK 9 (APRIL 1 & 3) – TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

**UNIT 2 PAPER DUE: FRIDAY APRIL 4TH AT 5:00**


WEEK 10 (APRIL 8 & 10) – GLOBAL SOLIDARITY, GLOBAL DEMOCRACY


WEEK 11 (APRIL 15 & 17) – CONTESTING PRIVATIZATION


WEEK 12 (APRIL 22 & 24) – INTERNET ACTIVISM AND SOCIAL MEDIA


WEEK 13 (APRIL 29) – CONCLUSIONS AND REVIEW

READING PERIOD

**FINAL PAPER DUE: TUESDAY MAY 6TH AT 5:00 PM**