

**Anthropology of Globalization and its Discontents**  
**Anthropology ANTH 6591**  
**Fall 2012**

Instructor: Dr. Joshua A. Bell  
Time: Thursday 6.10 – 8 pm  
Location: Cooper Room, National Museum of Natural History (NMNH)  
10<sup>th</sup> and Constitution Avenue  
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Office Location: NMNH Rm 318  
Office Hours: Thursday 2-4pm or by appointment

A ubiquitous term within academic and popular usage, globalization remains a much debated and misunderstood process. Often portrayed as merely a post-World War II phenomenon, within this seminar we will take a longer view of the transformations of communities, places, things and subjectivities that globalization entails. Set within a historical trajectory we will examine the ways in which the processes labeled globalization have been theorized, and the anthropological methods used to understand them. Through reading ethnographies and engaging exhibits at the Smithsonian we will examine the various ways in which people's everyday lives are impacted by these processes, what does and doesn't circulate as part of them and how people are engaging globalization along different scales, temporalities and through different practices and things.

**Assignments**

1. **Class Participation and Attendance – 25%** Students will participate in each seminar discussion. This means speaking in class, saying reasonably well thought-out things that demonstrate that you have done the assigned readings. Non-participation will result in a lower final grade in the course.
2. **Leading Seminar Discussion, Critical Analysis & Questions – 25%** Each student will lead one seminar discussion. This does not mean that you will summarize the readings for the seminar, rather you will prepare a three page critical analysis of the readings (to be e-mailed to the instructor no later than 9 am on the day of the seminar) and a set of discussion questions (to be e-mailed to the entire seminar no later than 9 am on the day of seminar). Your three page critical analysis and questions will provide grounds for the beginning of our discussion. **Please feel free to bring hand-outs and or a power-point to help lead the discussion.**

***The second seminar (Sept. 6) you will select the week you will lead seminar.***

3. **Paper – 50%** Each of you will do a research paper examining globalization narratives and realities explicitly or implicitly present in NMNH. For this paper you will choose a display in the museum (i.e., Butterfly Exhibit, IMAX theater), an aspect of a display (i.e., fish tank in the Ocean Hall, the Donor List), particular object (i.e., totem pole, giant squid) or something sold in the store or cafeteria (i.e., geodes, replica jewelry, Smithsonian water). Having chosen a topic, using the readings for the

seminar, as well as other sources, you will research and write a paper that explores the various global dimensions of this 'object'. Aspects to consider are how globalization is manifest in this 'object'?; how is this narrative presented or not?; what actors are involved in the creation of this object (i.e., what is the commodity chain of this thing)? Are these actors acknowledged? What values are being created, suggested or ignored by the presence and presentation of this object?

These papers should be 20 – 25 pages. On **October 18** at the beginning of class an outline of the final paper is due. This outline is worth 10% of your final grade on the paper. No late outlines will be accepted. **To have a successful paper I strongly advise you meeting with me to discuss your project as the semester unfolds.**

**General guidelines for written assignments:** Please submit assignments on time. Late work will not be accepted. All written assignments should be typed in standard fonts (12 point Times, Palatino, or Courier are recommended) with 1-inch margins. Please staple & paginate papers and put your name on each page. Please follow the citation/bibliographic format used in Current Anthropology.

I strongly advise you to read Orwell's 1946 essay "Politics and the English Language" before you begin this and the other written assignment. Good writing takes time and thought: <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/orwell46.htm>

The final paper is due on **December 20**. The final two seminars before this due date, students will present their paper to the seminar for 20 minutes. We will discuss this presentation in the seminar, but it is a chance for you to share your work and practice presentation skills. While this presentation is not graded, this is a chance for each of you to solicit feedback from the group for your final paper. I encourage you all to use powerpoint in your presentation.

4. Attendance to this seminar is mandatory and absences must be accompanied with a valid excuse (e.g. death in the family, documented illness, natural disaster).

### **Other Information**

**Email Policy:** Email is a necessary evil, but it creates a false sense of social relations and allows us to become increasingly alienated from our colleagues and students. Please make every effort to call me or come by my office hours if you have questions about this class, and its assignments.

**Required texts** are available for purchase at **GWU bookstore** and will be made available in the **GWU library**. Assigned articles and chapters will be available via e-mail as PDFs. The readings are divided between **required** and **further reading**. **Further readings** are intended to help provide further context for the assigned reading, and should be read by those of you leading a seminar discussion.

- Blaser, M. 2010. *Storytelling Globalization from the Chaco and Beyond*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ferguson, J. 1999. *Expectations of modernity: myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt. Perspectives on Southern Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fortun, K. 2001. *Advocacy After Bhopal: Environmentalism, Disaster, New Global Orders*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

- Mintz, S. W. 1985. *Sweetness and power: the place of sugar in modern history*. New York: Viking.
- Tsing, A. L. 2005. *Friction: an ethnography of global connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- West, P. 2012. *From modern production to imagined primitive the social world of coffee from Papua New Guinea*. Durham: Duke University Press.

**Expectations:** I expect you to come to the seminar having done the readings and ready to actively discuss the topics at hand.

### **Week 1 (Aug. 30) Orientations**

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During this initial meeting we will discuss the syllabus and seminar's goals.

### **Week 2 (Sept. 6) Theoretical Framing I – Frictions and Movements**

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Examining Tsing 'frictions' of globalization, we will focus on the framing and ethnography of globalization in its different forms, scales and temporalities.

- Tsing, A. L. 2005. *Friction: an ethnography of global connection*.

#### *Further Reading:*

- Marcus, G. 1995 "Ethnography in/of the World System: the Emergence of Multi-sited Ethnography." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24:95-117.

### **Week 3 (Sept. 13) Theoretical Framing II: Global Beginnings**

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Reading Mintz's classic ethnography about the interconnections of place, food and people, we will focus on global interconnections and disconnections made through sugar.

- Mintz, S. W. 1985. *Sweetness and power: the place of sugar in modern history*. New York, NY: Viking.

#### *Further Reading*

- Sahlins, M. 2005 [1992]. "The Economics of Develop-Man in the Pacific." In *The making of global and local modernities in Melanesia*, Robbins, J., and H. Wardlow eds. Aldershot: Ashgate. Pp. 23-42.
- Cooper, Frederick 2009. "Space, Time, and History: The Conceptual Limits of Globalization." In *Empirical futures : anthropologists and historians engage the work of Sidney W. Mintz*. G. Baca, A. Khan, and S. Palmié, eds. University of North Carolina Press. Pp. 31-57.
- Errington, F., T. Fujikura, and D. B. Gewertz. 2012. "Instant Noodles as an Antifriction Device: Making the BOP with PPP in PNG." *American Anthropologist* 114:19–31.

#### **Week 4 (Sept. 20) Theoretical Framing III: Some Scales and Effects of Global Capitalism**

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This week we will consider some of the larger processes and connections that inform the present political and social states that define globalization, as well as the inequalities of this situation, and methods for understanding them.

- Farmer, P. 2004. "An Anthropology of Structural Violence." *Current Anthropology* 45:305-325.
- Mitchell, T. 2002. "Can the Mosquito Speak?" In *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. University of California Press: Berkeley. Pp. 19-53.
- Harvey, D. 2005 "Notes towards a theory of uneven geographic development." In *Spaces of neoliberalization: towards a theory of uneven geographic development*. Franz Steiner Verlag. pp. 53-89.
- Tsing, A. 2009. "Supply Chains and the Human Condition." *Rethinking Marxism* 21(2): 148-176.

##### **Further Reading**

- Marx, K. 1976 [1867]. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One*. London: Penguin Books. Chapters 26-33. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/>
- Harvey, D. 2010. "Capital Evolves, The Geography of It All and Creative Destruction on the Land." In *The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 119-214.

#### **Week 5 (Sept. 27) The Commodity Chains and Value of Coffee (Room TBA)**

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The growing, production and consumption of coffee connects people to Papua New Guinea in various ways. We will consider the imaginaries and values that are created along coffee's commodity chain.

- West, P. 2012. *From modern production to imagined primitive the social world of coffee from Papua New Guinea*. Durham: Duke University Press.

##### **Further Reading**

- Kopytoff, I. 1986. 'The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process.' In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (ed.) A. Appadurai, pp. 64-94. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- West, P. 2005. "Translation, Value, and Space: Theorizing an Ethnographic and Engaged Environmental Anthropology." *American Anthropologist* 107(4): 632 – 642.

#### **Week 6 (Oct. 4) Gender and Bodies of Globalization**

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Within this seminar we will look at a set of articles that discuss the making of gendered selves and bodies in the factory, office, military and through the illegal trade of organs.

- Ong, A. 1988. "the production of possession: spirits and the multinational corporation in Malaysia." *American Ethnologist*, 15: 28–42
- Freeman, C. 1993. "Designing Women: Corporate Discipline and Barbados's Off-Shore Pink-Collar Sector." *Cultural Anthropology* 8: 169–186.
- Scheper-Hughes, N. 2000. "The Global Traffic in Human Organs." *Current Anthropology* 41:191-224.
- Dvorak, G. 2008. "The Martial Islands": Making Marshalllese Masculinities between

American and Japanese Militarism. Special issue, *The Contemporary Pacific* 20 (1): 55-86.

*Further Reading*

- Ong, A. 1991. "The Gender and Labor Politics of Postmodernity." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 20: 279-309.
- Mills, M.B. 2003. "Gender and Inequality in the Global Labor Force." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32: 41-62.

**Week 7 (Oct. 11) Globalization and waste: The trouble E-waste**

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One of the defining features of the contemporary is our interconnection and disconnection through things. Within this seminar we will look at the materiality and connections made through e-waste.

- Gabrys, J. 2011. *Digital Rubbish: A natural history of electronics*. University of Michigan. (<http://www.digitalculture.org/books/digital-rubbish/>) **This book is free online.**

*Further Reading*

- Douny, L. 2007. "The Materiality of Domestic Waste The Recycled Cosmology of the Dogon of Mali." *Journal of Material Culture* 12:309-331.
- Lepawsky, J. and Billah, M. 2011. "Making chains that (un)make things: waste–value relations and the Bangladeshi rubbish electronics industry." *Geografiska Annaler* 93 (2): 121–139.

*Online Materials*

- <http://www.fastcodesign.com/1664571/what-if-e-waste-could-report-information-back-about-itself>
- <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/ghana804/map/map.html>

**Week 8 (Oct. 18) Decline**

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What happens when modernity and global interconnections are understood to fail? Within this seminar we will look at Ferguson's ethnography of the Zambia and consider the project of modernity and the wake of its failure.

- Ferguson, J. 1999. *Expectations of modernity: myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt. Perspectives on Southern Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

*Further Reading*

- Comaroff, J., and J. L. Comaroff. 1999. "Occult economies and the violence of abstraction: notes from the South African postcolony." *American Ethnologist* 26: 279–303.
- Walsh, P. 2004. "In the Wake of Things: Speculating in and about Sapphires in Northern Madagascar." *American Anthropologist* 106, 225-37.

\*\*\*\* Research Paper Outlines Due\*\*\*\*

### **Week 9 (Oct. 25) Indigenous Ontologies and Global Struggles**

Within this seminar we will consider how different ways of being in the world are challenged by global forces, and used by communities to challenge them.

- Blaser, M. 2010. *Storytelling Globalization from the Chaco and Beyond*. Durham: Duke University Press.

#### *Further Reading*

- Rose, D. 2005. "An Indigenous Philosophical Ecology: Situating the Human." *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 16:294–305.
- Graham, L. R. 2005. "Image and instrumentality in a Xavante politics of existential recognition: The public outreach work of Ete'nhiritipa Pimentel Barbosa." *American Ethnologist* 32:622–641.

### **Week 10 (Nov. 1) Disaster and Advocacy [Room TBA]**

What fault lines do environmental disaster and its management reveal in the global economy? Looking at the Bhopal disaster in Fortun's book we will consider these fissures, as well as how knowledge circulates and advocacy is performed.

- Fortun, K. 2001. *Advocacy After Bhopal: Environmentalism, Disaster, New Global Orders*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

#### *Further Reading*

- Kirsch, S. 2007. "Social relations and the green critique of capitalism in Melanesia." *American Anthropologist* 110(3):288-298.
- Carr, E.S. 2010. "Enactments of Expertise." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39:17-32.

### **Week 11 (Nov. 8) Cultural property, Heritage and Copyright**

Discourses about copyright and heritage pervade discussions of property along different scales and in various sites. Within this seminar we will consider different contexts and issues involved in these concepts deployment.

- Christen, K. 2005. "Gone Digital: Aboriginal Remix in the Cultural Commons." *International Journal of Cultural Property* 12:315–345.
- Geismar, H. 2005. 'Copyright in context: Carvings, carvers, and commodities in Vanuatu.' *American Ethnologist* 32:437-459.
- Lynn Meskell 2010. "Human Rights and Heritage Ethics." *Anthropological Quarterly* 83(4): 839-859
- Basu, P. 2011. "Object Diasporas, Resourcing Communities: Sierra Leonean Collections in the Global Museumscape." *Museum Anthropology* 34(1): 28-42.

#### *Further Readings*

- Brown, M. 2005 "Heritage Trouble: Recent Work on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Property." *International Journal of Cultural Property* 12: 40-61.
- Coombe, R.J. 2009 The Expanding Purview of Cultural Properties and Their Politics *Rev. Law Soc. Sci.* 5:393–412

**Week 12 (Nov. 15) Global Media**

The adoption and transformation of media through various uses have come to define and redefine communities as they engage in the various connections and disconnections of globalization. In this seminar we will look at the affordances and anxieties that new media forms generate.

- Meyer, N. 2004. "Praise the Lord': Popular cinema and pentecostalite style in Ghana's new public sphere." *American Ethnologist* 31:92-110.
- Silvio, Teri 2007. "Remediation and Local Globalizations: How Taiwan's "Digital Video Knights-Errant Puppetry Writes the History of the New Media in Chinese." *Cultural Anthropology* 22(2): 285-313
- Halvaksz, J. 2010. "The Photographic Assemblage: Duration, History and Photography in Papua New Guinea." *History and Anthropology* 21:411-429.
- Macintosh, J. 2010. "Mobile phones and Mipoho's prophecy: The powers and dangers of flying language." *American Ethnologist* 37:337-353.

*Further Reading*

- Mazzarella, W. 2004. "Culture, Globalization, Mediation." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33: 345-67.
- Gershorn, I. 2010. 'Breaking Up Is Hard To Do: Media Switching and Media Ideologies'. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 20:389–405.

**Week 13 (Nov. 22) Thanksgiving – No Seminar**

**Week 14 (Nov. 29) Realities and Contradictions of Capitalism**

- Maurer, W. 2000. "Alternative Globalizations: Community and Conflict in New Cultures of Finance." *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 23(1): 155 – 172.
- Ho. K. 2009. "Disciplining Investment Bankers, Disciplining the Economy: Wall Street's Institutional Culture of Crisis and the Downsizing of "Corporate America". *American Anthropologist* 111(2): 177–189.
- Graeber, D. 2011. "Shock in Victory" and "Against Kamikaze Capitalism." in *Revolutions in Reverse: Essays on Politics, Violence, Art, and Imagination*. Minor Compositions. Pp. 11-30, 107-114.

**Week 15 (Dec. 6) FINAL PRESENTATIONS (NOT COOPER)**

**Week 16 (Dec. 13) FINAL PRESENTATIONS (NOT COOPER)**

**Week 17 (Dec. 20) Final Papers Due**

ANTH 6591 – Globalization and its Discontents  
Thursday 6.10 – 8pm

Dr. Joshua A. Bell  
(NMNH, Smithsonian)