

The Anthropology of Globalization and its Discontents

Anth 6591 (Fall Semester 2014)

Dr. Joshua A. Bell

Thursday 6.00 – 8.30 pm

National Museum of Natural History (NMNH)

10th and Constitution Avenue

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. 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 Smithsonian Collections and exhibits 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.

'Molotov'
Joy Garnett 2003

Assignments

1. **Class Participation and Attendance – 20%** 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 – 30%** 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 or the wider Smithsonian. 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), or something I have not even thought of. 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 the making, circulation and use of 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 15 pages. On **October 30** at the beginning of class an outline of the final paper is due. This outline is worth 25% of your final grade on the paper. This outline will provide in two pages of text a sketch of the aims, scope and method your intended paper along with a working bibliography of relevant sources. While you can and should draw on the material from this syllabus, I expect that you will have done research as to what exists on the given topic. 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, and 1.5 spacing. 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 18**. The final seminars 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.

- Mintz, S. W. 1985. *Sweetness and power: the place of sugar in modern history*. New York: Viking.
- Gordillo, G.R. 2014 *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Chu, J. Y. 2010. *Cosmologies of Credit: Transnational Mobility and the Politics of Destination in China*. Durham. Duke University Press.
- Pedersen, D. 2013. *American Value: Migrants, Money and Meaning in El Salvador and the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Peterson, K. 2014. *Speculative Markets: Drug Circuits and Derivative Life in Nigeria*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Smith, J.H. and Mwadime, N. 2014. *Email from Ngeti: An Ethnography of Sorcery, Redemption and Friendship in Global Africa*. University of California 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. 28) Orientations

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

Week 2 (Sept. 4) Theoretical Framing I: Global Beginnings

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 readings:

- Shalins, M. 1996. "The Sadness of Sweetness: The Native Anthropology of Western

Cosmology.” *Current Anthropology* 37(1): 395-428.

- 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.
- Mintz, S. and Thomas, J.T. 2014. “And the Rest Is History: A Conversation with Sidney Mintz.” *American Anthropologist* 116(3): 497 – 510.

Week 3 (Sept. 11) Theoretical Framing II: Centers of Calculation – Reassembling the world through museums

Within this seminar we will consider the museum as a site for the reassembly and representation of the world. Doing so we will consider the role museums in the formation of global knowledge of others whether through natural history or anthropology.

- Donna Haraway. 1989. ‘Teddy bear patriarchy: taxidermy in the Garden of Eden. New York City.’ *PrimateVisions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the Making of Modern Science*. Routledge. pages 26-58
- Jenkins, D. 1994. “Object lessons and ethnographic displays: museum exhibitions and the making of American anthropology.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 32(2): 242-270.
- Gordon, R. J., A. Brown, and J. A. Bell. 2013. "Expeditions, Their Films and Histories: An Introduction," in *Recreating First Contact: Expeditions, Anthropology and Popular Culture*. Edited by J. A. Bell, A. Brown, and R. J. Gordon, pp. 1-30. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press.
- Bell, J.A. 2014 “Specimen 125012: Rev. H.B. Tristram’s and Rev. W.G. Lawes’ Moustached Treeswift.” In *Trophies, Relics and Curios? Missionary Heritage from Africa and the Pacific*. Karen Jacobs, Chantal Knowles and Chris Wingfield (eds). Sidestone Press.

Further Reading:

- Foucault, M. 1984 [1967]. “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias.” *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité*. 1-6.
- Isaac, G and Bell, J.A. *In Press* “Smithsonian Contributions to Social and Cultural Anthropology.” In *Theory in Social Anthropology*, J. McGee, et. al. (eds). Sage.

Week 4 (Sept. 18) Theoretical Framing III: Some Scales and Effects of Global Capitalism

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 methods for understanding them.

- Marcus, G. 1995 "Ethnography in/of the World System: the Emergence of Multi-sited Ethnography." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24:95-117.
- Tsing, A. 2000 "The Global Situation." *Cultural Anthropology* 15(3): 327-360.
- 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. 25) In The Wake of Global Connections

Reading Gordillo's ethnography we will examine how the processes of globalization have affected communities in the Gran Chaco, and how these legacies are understood to play out in the present. Doing so we will reflect on issues of memory, history and ruin.

- Gordillo, G.R. 2014 *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Further Reading

- Farmer, P. 2004. "An Anthropology of Structural Violence." *Current Anthropology* 45:305-325.

Week 6 (Oct. 2) Traveling Technologies and Infrastructures

Within this seminar we will consider the effects, interpretations and uses of technology and infrastructure as it travels around the world and is locally understood. What desires and realities do these intersections create, destroy and remake?

- Lattas, A. 2006. "Technologies of Visibility: The Utopian Politics of Cameras, Televisions, Videos and Dreams in New Britain." *TAJA*, 17(1): 15-31.
- Appel HC. 2012. "Walls and white elephants: oil extraction, responsibility, and infrastructural violence in Equatorial Guinea." *Ethnography* 13:439–65.
- Von Schnitzler, A. 2013. "Traveling Technologies: Infrastructure, Ethical Regimes, and the Materiality of Politics in South Africa." *Cultural Anthropology* 28: 670–693.
- Larkin, B. 2004. "Degraded Images, Distorted Sounds: Nigerian Video and the Infrastructure of Piracy." *Public Culture* 16(2): 289-314.

Further Readings

- Star SL. 1999. "The ethnography of infrastructure." *Am. Behav. Sci.* 43(3): 377–91.
- B. Larkin 2013. "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42: 327-343.

Week 7 (Oct. 9) Value, People and Motion I: Global Finance and Nigeria's Pharmaceutical Markets

Focusing on Peterson's ethnography of Nigeria's pharmaceutical markets we will think about the impacts of global finance on local markets, property regimes, health and thus people's lives. What are the various effects and costs of structural adjustment, and how do people and thus markets respond to these conditions of inequality?

- Peterson, K. 2014. *Speculative Markets: Drug Circuits and Derivative Life in Nigeria*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Further Reading

- Hayden, C. 2010. "The proper copy: the insides and outsides of domains made public." *The Journal of Cultural Economy* 3(1): 85-102

Week 8 (Oct. 16) Value, People and Motion II: Transnational Destinations

Through reading Chu's ethnography of Fuzhounese desires to migrate, we will think through the transformations caused by transnational longings and circulations. What is the value of mobility, and how is mobility dreamed of and actualized in practice?

- Chu, J. Y. 2010. *Cosmologies of Credit: Transnational Mobility and the Politics of Destination in China*. Durham. Duke University Press.

Further Reading

- Keane, W. 2003. "Semiotics and the social analysis of material things." *Language and Communication* 23:409-25.

Week 9 (Oct. 23) Forms of Knowledge and their Global Transformations

Through a variety of case studies we will think about what forms knowledge takes, how these forms circulate, get translated and are used by various parties to different ends. Doing so we will think talk about indigenous knowledge, creativity, property rights, heritage, and what it means to call things "knowledge."

- Barth, F. 2002. "An Anthropology of Knowledge." *Current Anthropology* 43(1): 1-18.
- Marchand, T.H.J. 2009. "Negotiating License and Limits: expertise and innovation in Djenne's building trade." *Africa* 79 (1): 71-91.
- Cruikshank, J. 2012. "Are Glaciers 'Good to Think With'? Recognising Indigenous Environmental Knowledge." *Anthropological Forum* 22(3):239-50.
- Leach, J. 2012. "Leaving the Magic Out: Knowledge and Effect in Different Places." *Anthropological Forum* 22(3):251-70.

Further Reading

- Leach, J. and Davis, R. 2012. "Recognising and Translating Knowledge: Navigating the Political, Epistemological, Legal and Ontological." *Anthropological Forum* 22(3):209-223.
- West, P. 2005. "Holding the Story Forever: The Aesthetics of Ethnographic Labour." *Anthropological Forum* 15(3): 267-75.

Week 10 (Oct. 30) Value, People and Motion III: Migration and Transformations of Value

Reading Pedersen's ethnographic account of the movement of people, things and money between the El Salvadorean town of Intipucá and Washington DC, we will think through the issues involved in migration and the transformations of value it helps enact.

- Pedersen, D. 2013. *American Value: Migrants, Money and Meaning in El Salvador and the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Further Reading

- Singer, et. al. 2001. *The World in a Zip Code: Greater Washington, D.C. as a New Region of Immigration*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
- New Americans in Washington DC (American Immigration Council)
www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/new-americans-washington-dc

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

Week 11 (Nov. 6) Global Icon, Intimate Device – The Mobile Phone

With 6.5 billion cellphones estimated to be in use around the world, mobiles are one of the most diffuse and transforming technologies of our time. In this seminar we will think about how mobiles are iconic of globalization through the various stages of their making, what they enable us to do, and where they go.

- Hockenberry, M. Under Review “Material Epistemologies of the (Mobile) Telephone.” *Anthropological Quarterly* submitted as part of a special issue on the Materiality of Mobile Phones, Bell, Kuipers, Kobak and Kemble (eds).
- McIntosh, J. 2010. “Mobile Phones and Mipoho’s prophecy: The powers and dangers of flying language.” *American Ethnologist* 37(2): 337-353.
- Andersen, B. 2013 “Tricks, Lies and Mobile Phones: ‘Phone Friend’ Stories in Papua New Guinea.” *Culture, Theory and Critique* 54(3): 318-334.
- Bell, J.A. et. al. Under Review “We’re Almost Like Therapists for People with Electronics”: Fetishization, Cell Phones and Repair.” *Anthropological Quarterly* submitted as part of a special issue on the Materiality of Mobile Phones, Bell, Kuipers, Kobak and Kemble (eds).
- 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.

Further Reading

- Mazzarella, W. 2004. “Culture, Globalization, Mediation.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33: 345-67.
- Gershon, I., and Bell, J.A. 2013. “Introduction: The Newness of New Media.” *Culture, Theory and Critique* 54:259-264.

Week 12 (Nov. 13) Value, People and Motion IV – Global Africa Connections

Through Smith and Mwadime’s book we will discuss the nature of transnational friendship in the globalized twenty-first century, and reflect on the nature of local and global transformation and ethnography.

- Smith, J.H. and Mwadime, N. 2014. *Email from Ngeti: An Ethnography of Sorcery, Redemption and Friendship in Global Africa*. 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.

Week 13 (Nov. 20) New Assemblages and Beings

Within this seminar we will consider some of the various ways in which new assemblages of persons, animals, places and things are being created and imagined through the interconnections of globalization, and what anxieties they are creating as well as hopes.

- Scheper-Hughes, N. 2000. "The Global Traffic in Human Organs." *Current Anthropology* 41:191-224.

ANTH 6591 – Globalization and its Discontents
Thursday 6.00 – 8.30pm

Dr. Joshua A. Bell
(NMNH, Smithsonian)

- Lowe, C. 2010. "Viral Clouds: Becoming H5N1 in Indonesia." *Cultural Anthropology* 25(4):625-49.
- Kosek, J. 2010. "Ecologies of Empire: On the New Uses of the Honeybee."
- Moore, A. 2012. "The Aquatic Invader: marine Management Figuring Fishermen, Fisheries, and Lionfish in the Bahamas." *Cultural Anthropology* 27(4):667-688.

Further Reading

- Kirksey, E. and Helmreich, S. 2010. "The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography" *Cultural Anthropology* 25(4):545-576.

Week 14 (Nov. 29) Thanksgiving – No Seminar

Week 15 (Dec. 4) Final Class - Presentations

Week 17 (Dec. 18) Final Papers Due

Cover Image – Joy Garnett's painting *Molotov Man* based on a photograph by Susan Meiselas. See Garnett, J. and Meiselas, S. 2007. "On the Rights of Molotov Man: Appropriation and the art of context." *Harper's Magazine* February: 53-58.