

## Modernization, Imperialism, Globalization (MIG)

History 243/Human Sciences 205  
Rome 663  
Monday, 6:10-8 PM  
Office Hours: Monday 2-4 and by appointment

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### Course Description

*Globalization* is perhaps the master signifier of the past decade, having united scholars, activists, stooges, intellectuals, and journalists commenting on fields from mass culture to high culture to politics to economics and beyond. In the master narrative of the ages of mankind, globalization is what comes after the cold war. This course rejects that master narrative (along with the concept of ages of mankind), placing globalization alongside two apparently older master signifiers, *modernization* and *imperialism*, that similarly described world-wide processes encompassing economics, politics, and culture. By tying the history of the west to a universal of notion of time, theorists of modernization suggested that features they identified as “western” might be distributed over the space of the globe. Modernization was the most important ideology of imperialism, at least since the decline of the slave-based plantation complex and the rise of the new imperialism in the nineteenth century. One might say that modernization is a euphemism for imperialism and imperialism is a dysphemism for modernization. What does the concept of globalization add to this unhappy couple? That is one of the questions we will consider.

Our readings will focus on critical theories of modernization, imperialism, and globalization. We might, with equal profit, have read apologetics, from Cecil Rhodes to Frederick Lugard to W.W. Rostow to Thomas Friedman. The advantage of focusing on critical theories is that they will help us, as analysts, understand rigorously what has been described variously as modernization, imperialism, and globalization. Most of the theorists we will read believe that the three concepts make sense in terms of a fourth: capitalism. For that reason, we will also focus on Marxist and non-Marxist theorists of capitalism.

### Course Requirements and Grading

Attendance and active class participation .....	30%
Two-page critical abstract of reading every week (you may miss one with no penalty).....	30%
20 pp. Final Paper (topic to be decided in consultation with me) .....	40%

### Blackboard

If you are enrolled in this course, you should have automatic access to the history 243 blackboard site. Just go to <https://blackboard.gwu.edu/> and login. Your NetID and password are the same ones you use for GW mail (if you don't have a GW mail account, you'll have to get one). From this site you will be able to download all the paper handouts from class (syllabus, assignments, etc.). Those readings marked with an asterisk (\*) on the outline below can be downloaded from blackboard in the electronic reserves section. You should download these and print a copy for yourself. I may also use blackboard to broadcast messages to the entire class. All documents on blackboard are in .pdf format. You can download a free .pdf reader by following the link under the “files” section on blackboard.

### **Texts**

All books listed for each week have been ordered through the GW bookstore. You should not wait until the last minute to get books. If you cannot get a book at the bookstore three weeks before it is due to be read, you should order it from an online book store.

You may wish to follow these Reading Recommendations:

- Always print up on-line readings.
- Make many underlines and margin notes in all that you read (thus pens are better than highlighters).
- Always bring all the reading for the day assigned.
- Do not get bogged down in details of the reading. We are reading for argument, methods, big themes.

### **Critical Essays**

Every week you should bring with you to class a 2-3 pp. critical essay on the reading. The essay should focus on the major themes, questions, and problems posed by the reading for the week. For each week in the syllabus I have a short statement that you can use to guide your reading, if you wish.

- These are short essays. Therefore you should focus only on the most important aspects, not on the details or minor aspects.
- These essays will be the basis for our class discussion. I will likely call on you to share insights from your essay with the rest of the class.
- Like all scholarly writing, these should have no errors of grammar, usage, etc. Your essays must be stapled hard copies (no e-mail attachments).
- I will not make many comments on the essays after the first few weeks, but I still do enjoy reading them. I grade them as pass or fail (I sometimes ask people to rewrite them).
- You may miss one essay with no penalty.

### **Course Outline**

#### 1. Introduction

#### 2. Modernization Beyond Modernity: Marxist Perspectives on MIG

This week we will study Marx's and Lenin's theories of capitalism as an inherently modern, global, and imperialist phenomenon. Pay special attention to what capitalism does to tradition, time, and space in these texts. Marx's writing on British rule in India is usually invoked to dismiss Marx as an "orientalist." While this caricature is more polemic than insightful, it does get at an essential truth about Marxist understandings of tradition, that which capitalism destroys. Read this next to section III of the Communist Manifesto and you will understand Marx's dialectical theory of modernity, which was resolutely anti-romantic. Gallagher and Robinson's article is not written from a Marxist perspective, but is a classic interpretation of imperialism connecting it with capitalism.

Marx and Engels, "The Manifesto of the Communist Party," in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), pp. 469-500.

Marx, "The British Rule in India" and "The Future Results of British Rule in India," in Tucker, pp. 653-664.

V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (New York: International Publishers, 1939), chs. 1, 4-5, 7-10.

\*J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *Economic History Review* 6 (1953): 1-15.

### 3. Modernity from the Outside: Max Weber on Capitalism, Modernity, and the Iron Cage

Weber's account of capitalism, rationalization, and demystification is among the most profound analyses of modernity. Ethnocentric neoliberals who wish to claim that US and European global hegemony is a result of a superior, Protestant culture often flatter themselves by imagining they are Weberians. Weber, however, does not valorize Protestantism, capitalism, rationalism, or modernity. A second common trap is to think that Weber argues that religion causes capitalism and is thus the opposite of Marx who thinks that capitalism causes religion (both of these assertions are incorrect, although they do help explain why cold war sociologists like Parsons liked Weber so much). Pay careful attention to what Weber means by capitalism: it isn't the 'free' market. Read the text as a critical theory of modernity. If you are familiar with Foucault, you will see much in common between the two thinkers.

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism* (1920), Talcott Parsons, trans. (New York: Routledge, 2001).

### 4. The Conservative Critique of Modernization and Capitalism: Karl Polanyi

Polanyi is precisely the sort of critic of capitalism that Marx dismissed as a "feudal socialist" in chapter III of the Manifesto:

...half lamentation, half lampoon; half an echo of the past, half menace of the future; at times, by its bitter, witty and incisive criticism, striking the bourgeoisie to the very heart's core, but always ludicrous in its effect, through total incapacity to comprehend the march of modern history.

When you understand why Polanyi is not a Marxist you will understand both thinkers. Yet Polanyi's truly great and insightful text about capitalism is not put on the reading list simply as a straw man whose destruction will help us understand Marx. The conservative critique may be better than the Marxist critique; it certainly embraces tradition and rejects modernity and capitalism more than Marx does. Furthermore, the commonalities between Marx and Polanyi may in fact indicate something about both writers that neither would wish to acknowledge.

Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944).

#### 1. The Anthropology of MIG

Of the authors this week, only Fabian and Ferguson are in anthropology departments. Latour is a sociologist of science and Dirks is an historian of India. All of them seek to understand modernity a part of a European imaginary. Fabian and Dirks understand modernity, and the culture/history and anthropology/history divisions, as part of the imperialist project. Latour seeks to provide a vocabulary for thinking about modernity without committing to its

narratives. Ferguson seeks to understand how narratives of modernity make possible both the neocolonialist project and resistance to that project.

- \*Johannes Fabian, "Culture, Time and the Object of Anthropology," *Time and the Work of Anthropology: Critical Essays, 1971-1991* (Reading: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1991), pp. 191-206.
- \*Bruno Latour, "Postmodern? No, Simply Amodern! Steps Towards an Anthropology of Science," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 21 (1990): 145-171.
- \*Nicholas B. Dirks, "History as a Sign of the Modern," *Public Culture* 2 (1990): 25-32.
- \*James Ferguson, "preface," "The Anti-Politics Machine" and "Epilogue" in *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development,' Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (1990; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. xiii-xvi, 251-288.
- \*James Ferguson, "Global Disconnect: Abjection and the Aftermath of Modernism," ch. 7 in *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 234-257.

## 6. Karl Marx

While Marx's work is the foundation of much of what we have read already, we are returning to the classical texts of Marxism in the middle of the semester so that we can read them in light of what theorists of MIG have (and have not) made of Marx. We are already in a good position to avoid two common mistakes in reading Marx. 1) Viewing Marx as a merely polemical author whose texts are designed to "convert" unsuspecting readers to the cause of "socialism" or "economic determinism." 2) Viewing Marx as an economic determinist who tried to reduce everything to "the economy." (Marx's critiques of the discipline of economics, of course, directly refute the idea, common today in economics textbooks, that there is something called "the economy" consisting of quasi-natural laws that humans dare not break.) We want to read Marx as a critical social thinker with much to tell us about MIG. We also want to subject Marx to the same critical reading to which we have subjected other theorists. As the first reading will make clear, Marx would have wanted it that way.

We will read the excerpts from the following works (I suggest in the following order) given in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Norton, 1978).:

1. "For a Ruthless Critique of Everything Existing" (12-15)
2. Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific," (683-717)
3. "Wage Labour and Capital" (203-217)
4. "The Coming Upheaval" (218-219)
5. "Class Struggle and Mode of Production" (220)
6. *Capital*, Vol. I (294-438)
7. *Capital* Vol. III (439-442)
8. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (734-759)
9. Engels, Letters on Historical Materialism (760-768)

## 7. Modernization: Capitalism and the State

Each of these thinkers considers how capitalist modernization impacts the state. Gerschenkron considers the advantages of economic backwardness to national economies. Moore proposes a scheme comparing the political effects of economic modernization. Mitchell takes a radical position skeptical of the state/capital distinction upon which Gerschenkron and Moore base their theories.

\*Alexander Gerschenkron, "Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective," in *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966; Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), "Preface and Acknowledgements," ch. 1 (England), ch. 6 (India), Part III, pp. xvii-xxv, 3-39, 314-508.

\*Timothy Mitchell, "Society, Economy, and the State Effect," in George Steinmetz, eds., *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 76-97.

## 8. Dependency Theory

So when formal imperialism ended after the Second World War global inequality came to an end, right? O.k., but it was just a question of the newly created "Third World" catching up to the equally novel "First World," right? Dependency theory and world systems theory, whose most important theorists are excerpted in this volume, try to explain the problem of underdevelopment as a result of capitalism, rather than as a lack of capitalism. This was probably the most important turn in Marxist theories of capitalism and globalization since Lenin's *Imperialism*.

"Introduction: The Lost Promise: Explaining Latin American Underdevelopment," Part 2: Dependency and Marxism," and "The Promise of Theory," in Peter F. Klarén and Thomas J. Bossert, eds., *The Promise of Development: Theories of Change in Latin America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 1-33, 109-193, 303-334.

## 9. After colonialism: Subaltern studies and postcolonial studies

Subaltern studies and postcolonial studies both have in common that they seek to understand global processes without presupposing essential distinctions between colonizer and colonized. The subaltern studies collective published articles by historians of and in South Asia that sought to write a history from below (inspired in part by E.P. Thompson) that repeated neither the narratives of the colonizers nor the narratives of the postcolonial elites. Guha was the first editor of *Subaltern Studies* and Spivak an important interlocutor of the project. Postcolonial studies, or postcolonial theory, is harder to define, but tends to focus more on cultural questions than subaltern studies does. Both share an interest in getting beyond the narratives of colonialism and nationalism. Arjun Appadurai's text is a classic in this tradition. The journal *Public Culture* is a great place to look at what is happening in postcolonial studies these days. Of course, like all academic labels, these terms conceal differences as much as they reveal similarities.

\*Ranjit Guha, "On the Prose of Counter-Insurgency," in *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 45-86.

\*Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 271-313.

Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

#### 10. Conservative Critiques of Globalization: Carl Schmitt

Carl Schmitt was probably the most important critic of attempts after the First World War to create an international political order safe from war and conflict. As a firm believer in a strong state and an enemy of liberalism and internationalism, Schmitt joined the Nazi party in Germany. Despite this troubling past, Schmitt's incisive critiques of international political orders have become essential touchstones in contemporary debates around globalization, and he is widely recognized across the political spectrum as one of the great political theorists of the twentieth century. In the 1920s and 30s Schmitt warned that international bodies like the League of Nations would either simply legitimate the acts of their strongest member states or create a depoliticized, bureaucratic world. Do his criticisms still apply today, or do they simply reflect the extreme nationalism of a thinker who would soon join the Nazi party?

Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (1932; U. of Chicago Press, 1996).

#### 11. From MIG to PIG (Postmodernity, Imperialism, and Globalization)

Look at how Harvey connects postmodernity to processes of globalization. In doing so he both points to the novelty of globalization but also its roots in earlier processes of MIG.

David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

#### 12. Schmitt + Deleuze + Marx + St. Augustine = From Imperialism to Empire, from Proletariat to Multitude

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

For Hardt and Negri, imperialism is over. Empire is a new world order not ruled from a single nation state. This book has generated much debate, and it is one of the most important interventions in the globalization discussion. Notice how they use Carl Schmitt. Also notice how they use Augustine's *City of God*, if you're familiar with that text.

preface xi-xvii, pp. 1-8, 16-21, 34-38, 42-46, 59-63, 102-103, "subaltern nationalism" 105-109, 127-129, 132-134, 150-154, 160-182, 198-203, 205-218, 221-225, 231-234, 240-254, 260-279, 309-314, 336-339, 348-350, 396-400.

I also recommend you read some of the critical reviews that I've found linked here:

<http://struggle.ws/global/issues/empire.html>

#### 13&14. Globalization, edited

In the last two weeks of this course we will look at two edited volumes that bring together a selection of texts meant to teach the reader what globalization is. Our first goal is to use the readers as a quick way to get a range of perspectives on globalization. Our second goal is to decipher the editorial (and therefore intellectual and political) agendas of each reader. How

does the selection of texts attempt to define the set of concepts linked together under the heading “globalization”?

13. David Held and Anthony McGrew, eds., *Global Transformations Reader: An Introduction to the Globalization Debate*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003). chs. 2, 3, 7, 25, 27, 36, 39, 48, 50.
14. Frederic Jameson and Masao Miyoshi eds., *The Cultures of Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), essays by Diawara, Subramani, Kapur, Miyoshi (pp. 247ff), and comment by Benjamin Bertram, 372-374.