

SOC 23534 - Globalization, Coffee and the Fair Trade Movement

Spring 2009, Notre Dame

Instructor: Robert Brenneman

Course Meeting Time: MWF 10:40-11:30

Proper economic prices should be fixed not at the lowest possible level, but at the level sufficient to provide producers with proper nutritional and other standards in the conditions in which they live. . . . It is in the interests of all producers that the price of a commodity should not be depressed beyond this level, and consumers are not entitled to expect that it should.

John Maynard Keynes, "The International Control of Raw Material Prices"

There are collective and qualitative needs which cannot be satisfied by market mechanisms. There are important human needs which escape its logic.

Pope John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, 1991

Background:

Globalization has been defined in a variety of ways by sociologists and economists alike. Some globalization theorists use the concept to show the great benefits to human societies offered by increased trade and communication, while other scholars decry what they see as a massification (or "McDonaldization") of culture and an imperialistic approach to economic dominance by the world's largest economies. In this course we will examine several of the most common approaches to understanding the increase in global interconnections that make up globalization. These interconnections are economic, cultural and political in nature. Our emphasis, though, will be on understanding the impact of free-market policies and new technologies that have increased economic trade across borders. The course will pay special attention to the impact of globalization on people at the global "margins," especially in economically depressed Central America. As the world's most highly traded food commodity, coffee offers an excellent lens through which to consider economic relations and globalization. Coffee is a highly "social" drink, and the context, grade, and style of coffee consumption holds considerable meaning for those who drink it. Finally, the "commodity chain" leading from mountainside to cafe is relatively simple compared with other food commodities making coffee an ideal subject for analyzing producer-consumer relations.

This course will examine how lifestyle choices and consumption habits in the U.S. affect farmers and artisans in the global South. In addition, we will examine one result of this realization about global interconnectedness -- the international fair trade movement. In part a result of globalization itself, the fair trade movement uses new communication technologies and certification labeling to provide artisans and farmers in the global South with a decent wage for their labor.

Theory. This class will use conceptual tools from global sociology for understanding global economic structures and their impact on diverse societies. Borrowing theory from the sociology of economic life will help students understand how global economic structures are socially constructed and how individual choices about consumption are embedded in social relations and cultural conceptions of "legitimate" exchange. Social movement theory will help us to understand how and why the fair trade

movement emerged where it did and when it did. Thus, the course will advance students' understanding of several sub-fields of social theory and give students practice in the understanding of social problems in their social context.

Course Content and Pedagogy

Content. The content of the course is divided into four sections. The first portion of the calendar is devoted to the study of globalization and global inequality. The second portion of the course is theoretical, focusing on the relationship between economic behavior and social relations. In this section we review traditional approaches to “rational” economic behavior and the market in light of economic sociology’s insistence that all economic behavior is socially “embedded.” In the third section of the course, we will focus specifically on the fair trade movement as one attempt to promote economic justice. A cross-cultural trip to Guatemala is included in this section. The final section of the course examines other social movements aimed at enhancing economic justice.

Social concerns.

- **Consumption.** North Americans’ lifestyles and purchases have a direct impact on quality of life and opportunities for the poor in distant parts of the world.
- **Global poverty.** The widening reign of the global free market has increased inequality throughout most of Latin America. How can we address issues of labor and trade in ways that look beyond narrow nationalist interests and recognize the broader impact on social equality for all?

Pedagogy. The aim of this course is not necessarily to persuade all enrolled students to take up the cause of fair trade since intelligent, committed voices have argued both for and against the fair trade movement as a means of promoting justice. But all students will be encouraged to see and examine the links between global processes and structures on the one hand, and local habits and individual consumption patterns on the other. Regular course instruction will include instructor-facilitated instruction on Mondays and Fridays and student-led discussion on Wednesdays. All students will co-lead one Wednesday class using the readings for the assigned day to generate questions and discussion. Because identifying *the question* is, in most contexts, more important than finding the “right” answer, reading responses will consist of two, type-written “Critical Questions” responding to the readings and submitted on eight occasions throughout the course. Each question will consist of a paragraph or two and will include appropriate context. The aim is to generate thoughtful discussion. Critical Questions must be sent to the instructor by midnight on the night before class. I will choose two or three questions for class discussion. I will provide a model before the first Critical Questions are due. The research paper is a major component of the work required for this class. I expect you to have a topic by the middle of the semester. I will provide a detailed prompt by week four.

Community engagement. Students will engage both the community in Guatemala and in South Bend. An experiential learning component is built into the course via the 8-day cross-cultural trip. The trip to Guatemala is *not* a service project of

the kind in which students are led to believe that they are “solving” global problems with bricks and mortar. Rather, the cross-cultural encounter is intended to raise students’ commitment to engage in service *upon their return* by incorporating responsible consumption habits and promoting fairer economics on the campus and in their own communities.

Course Calendar

All readings due on day of posting. Critical Questions due by midnight before the day they are listed.

Week One: Introduction to Class, Coffee

Wednesday: Introduction to class, assignment format, etc.

Friday: Coffee Reading

Week Two: Global Inequality

Monday: Sernau: Chapters 1, 2

Wednesday: Sernau: Chapters 3, 4

Friday: UNDP Data (<http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/>)

Week Three: Global Production and Sustainability

Monday: UNDP Data (cont.) (Comparative Development Project Due)

Wednesday: Sernau 9, 10

Friday: Sernau 11, 12 (Critical Questions Due)

Week Four: Globalization Theories

Monday: The World Is Flat (NYT: 4/3/05)

Tuesday: “Globalization: A View from Below”; Essays by Farmer and Sachs (in Rothenberg)

Friday: Giddens Chapter (Critical Questions Due)

Week Five: Globalization Theories (cont.)

Monday: Ehrenreich and Hochschild, Ch. 1-2

Wednesday: Ehrenreich and Hochschild, Ch 3, 4, 7

Friday: Ehrenreich and Hochschild, Ch 15 (Sassen) (Critical Questions Due)

Week Six: Economic Relations—Rational or Social?

Monday: Adam Smith, excerpt from “The Wealth of Nations”

Wednesday: Mark Granovetter: “Economic Action and Social Structure” (in Biggart);

Charles Smith: “The Search for a Fair Price” (in Biggart)

Friday: Paula England: “The Separative Self” (Critical Questions Due)

Week Seven: Fair Trade Coffee

Monday: “Tasting Justice” (Brenneman); “Absolution in Your Cup” (*Reason Magazine*)

Wednesday: Jaffee, 1-3

Friday: Jaffee, 4-6 (Critical Questions Due)

Week Eight: Fair Trade Coffee (cont.)

Monday: Jaffee, 7-9

Wednesday: Readings on Guatemala (TBA)

Friday: Readings on Guatemala (TBA) (Final Project Research Topic Due)

Week Nine: Travel to Guatemala (see tentative itinerary)

Wednesday: Discussion

Friday: Critical Questions Due

Week Ten: No Class--Rest, Catch Up

Week Eleven: Social Movements

Monday: Intro to Social Movements

Wednesday: Snow: Framing Processes

Friday: C. Smith, *Disruptive Religion* (Introduction) (Critical Questions Due)

Week Twelve: Social Movements/Research

Monday: J. Smith: Globalization and Social Movements, ch. 1-2

Wednesday: J. Smith: Globalization and Social Movements, ch. 3-4

Friday: Smith, ch. 5-6 (Critical Questions Due)

Week Thirteen: Research Progress Updates

Monday: Smith

Wednesday: Meetings with Instructor

Friday: Meetings with Instructor

Week Fourteen: Final Project Presentations

Week Fifteen: Final Project Presentations

Monday: Hand in Written Final Project

Assignments:

1. Comparative Development Project: 20 Points
2. Critical Questions: 10 Points Each/80 points total
3. Wednesday Discussion Facilitation: 30 Points
4. Final Project: 70 points
 - a. Oral Presentation 20 Points
 - b. Written Paper: 50 Points

TOTAL: 200 Points (To calculate your grade just divide your total points in half to get your percent.)

Grading Scale (by percent):

93-100=A

90-92 =A-
88-89 =B+
83-88 =B
80-82 =B-
78-79 =C+
73-77 =C
70-72 =C-
68-69 =D+
63-67 =D
60-62 =D-
59 or below =F

Final Research Project

All students must complete a final research project by which they engage the issue of fair trade from a particular discipline or in a particular context. Although students are welcome to come up with their own project ideas, some examples of good final project topics are listed below:

- The Economics of Fair Trade: The Economic Impact of Fair Trading on Local Producer Communities
- The Economics of Fair Trade: The Macro-economic Impact of Fair Trade on the Coffee Industry
- The Cultural Impact of Fair Trade: The Cultural Impact of Fair Trade Practices on Local Producer Communities
- The Fair Trade Student Movement in the U.S.
- A Comparison of Fair Trade Movements in the U.S. and Europe
- The History and/or Viability of Fair Trade Groups in Northern Indiana
- The History and/or Viability of Fair Trade on the Notre Dame Campus
- The Catholic Church and Fair Trade
- Fair Trade and Ecological Sustainability
- Comparison of Two Fair Trade Groups
- Fair Trade and Economic Development: Conflict or Congruence

NOTE: You do not need to be “sold out” to the principles or the model of fair trade in order to prepare the final project. For example, if you examine the fair trade movement and find it unsustainable from a macro-economic or development perspective, I will NOT give you a lower grade so long as you make solid claims backed up with strong research.

All students will be required to present their project formally in class or in a public setting (such as the undergraduate Spring research symposium) via a 10-15 minute presentation of research and findings. Multi-media images are encouraged but not required. More information on the criteria for assessing this presentation will be available later in the course.

Appendix A

Pedagogical Tools:

Texts:

- Jaffe, Daniel. 2007. *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability and Survival*. Berkely: University of California Press.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara and Arlie Hochschild. 2003. *Global Woman*. New York: Metropolitan Press.
- Sernau, Scott. 2009. *Global Problems: The Search for Equity, Peace, and Sustainability, 2nd edition*. New York: Allyn and Bacon.
- Rothenberg, Paula. 2006. *Beyond Borders: Thinking Critically about Global Issues*.
- Smith, Jackie. 2008. *Social Movements for Global Democracy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.
- Smith, Christian. 1996. *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social-Movement Activism*. Routledge.
- Biggart, 2002. Selected chapters from *The Handbook of Economic Sociology*,
- Benford and Snow, 2000. "FRAMING PROCESSES AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology*.

Film, video and Internet:

- Website of the United Nations Human Development Programme. Country comparison of Human Development Index. <http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/>
- "How Flat is the World?" Debate between Joseph Stiglitz and Thomas Friedman, NYT 2008
- *Black Gold*, 2007

Appendix B

Tentative Schedule for Guatemala Cross-cultural Trip “Globalization and the International Fair Trade Movement”

Saturday, March 7

- Arrival; Settle in to CASAS guesthouse
- Orientation

Sunday, March 8 (Faith in the City)

- a.m. Attend Mass in two groups; one a popular service (e.g. Zona 6, Padre Prudencio), the other an upper-middle class parish (e.g. El Zapote)
- p.m. Visit Historic Downtown
- Evening; Sharing-reflection

Monday, March 9 (Pilgrims’ Progress: Immigration in Guatemala)

- a.m. Visit ANACAFE (Guatemalan Coffee Growers Consortium)
- p.m. Tour of Guatemala City’s Contrasting Economic Realities
- Evening; Sharing-reflection

Tuesday, March 10 (Life in El Campo)

- Visit a Coffee plantation (Close to Lake Atitlan)
- Evening at Santiago, Lake area

Wednesday, March 11 Fair Trade Coffee

- Visit Beadwork Chonita, artisans’ cooperative
- P.m. Visit a Fair Trade Coffee Cooperative
- Evening: Student-led Discussion
- Critical Questions Due

Thursday, March 12

- Visit Ten Thousand Villages Artisan’s Group, Ruth y Nohemi
- Return to city

Friday, March 13

- Talk with COVERCO, labor group; visit maquila

Saturday, March 14

- Talk: The Impact of Globalization (Guatemalan Sociologist of Development)
- Closing Reflection

Sunday, March 15

- Leave for South Bend