

# GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURE

<http://cult320sp15.cwillse.net/>

Cultural Studies: CULT 320  
George Mason University  
Spring 2015  
Wednesday, 4:30 – 7:10pm  
Classroom: Planetary Hall 122

Instructor: Craig Willse  
Office: Robinson A 253D  
Email: [cwillse@gmu.edu](mailto:cwillse@gmu.edu)  
Office Hours: Wednesday, 3:00 – 4:00pm  
and by appointment

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

What does it mean to say we live in a global world? Can we be both local and global, at the same time? Maybe even in the same place? How is modern global society a break from the past, and what historical continuities can we trace? In this course we will tackle these and other questions by exploring globalization as a set of connected social, economic, and political processes. While these processes can be linked in many ways, here we will link them through “culture” – shared (or not) ways of being, feeling, knowing, and communicating. While culture might sound innocent, this course will approach the links between culture and globalization in terms of the rise and spread of capitalist modes of production as well as colonial and neo-colonial systems of race-making and racialized subordination. In addition, we will look to culture as a site to challenge forms of power and domination, a location from which alternate global meanings and ways of living are made.

The course is organized into five units. We will start with an introductory unit on the links between globalization, capitalism, and colonialism. This unit will also introduce us to the historical origins of today’s globalized world. We will then move into focused studies of four topics: labor and consumption, war, environment, and prisons. These topics illustrate how flows of money and people across space and place are produced by, and productive of, globalization. In each unit, we will also examine social movement challenges to globalized forms of inequality and injustice.

## COURSE PROMISES (aka learning objectives)

In return for your active engagement with this course – which means keeping up with reading, reading to understand and not simply to get through the pages, and putting your best efforts into assignments and class discussions and activities – this course will:

- introduce you to critical approaches to globalization and its cultural manifestations;
- provide you the opportunity to apply critical, theoretical models to the world around you;
- develop your understanding of global power structures and inequalities;
- expand your comprehension of the links and exchanges between the global and the local;
- challenge you to think about the relationships between theory and practice, or how social change comes about;
- and help you improve and expand a variety of essential skills, including critical reading comprehension, written/visual/verbal communication, and time-management.

## GRADING AND REQUIREMENTS

Participation and attendance	150 points (15%)	<b>A</b>	930 – 1000
Reading responses	200 points (20%)	<b>A-</b>	900 – 929
Midterm	200 points (20%)	<b>B+</b>	870 – 899
Social movement study group	100 points (10%)	<b>B</b>	830 – 869
Research proposal	300 points (30%)	<b>B-</b>	800 – 829
Learning reflection essay	50 points (5%)	<b>C+</b>	770 – 799
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000 points</b>	<b>C</b>	730 – 769

### **Participation and attendance – 150 points (15%)**

This course covers a lot of material, and we will have new reading assignments for almost every class meeting. You are required to keep up with the readings and to come to class prepared to discuss the material for that day, as well as material covered in previous class meetings. This means you must complete all reading assignments and bring to class that day's readings as well as notes with questions and comments for class discussion. I may give pop quizzes to assess your progress with readings.

Regular attendance is required to successfully complete this class. You are allowed no more than one absence for the entire semester. If you miss more than one class, you will have to meet with me to discuss if you are allowed to continue in the class. You are responsible for any material we cover in class, so please get contact information from a few of your classmates. You should check with your peers before you check with me about missed material. Finally, we will start class on time, so do not be late. If you are frequently and/or excessively tardy, lateness will start to count as absence, putting your ability to complete the course in jeopardy. This policy is to prevent the disruption of people coming and going at all times, and to make sure you are not missing essential material covered in class meetings.

### **Reading responses – 200 points (20%)**

Throughout the semester, I will post discussion questions and prompts on our course website, for a total of 10 posts; you are required to respond to 9 of these – you get one freebie. Responses must be no less than 400 words and must be posted by 1pm the day of class. **They are evaluated credit/no credit. You must meet all requirements to get any credit.** These are an opportunity for you to reflect on readings, connect readings to our previous discussions, apply concepts and theories to your own personal experiences and observations, and synthesize material toward your own original analyses. You are also required to comment on at least two of your classmates' posts by 1pm of the following Wednesday. Further instructions are posted on the course website.

### **Midterm – 200 points (20%)**

We will have an in-class midterm to assess your progress with course material. You will be allowed to use notes during the exam, but no readings. A study guide will be provided.

### **Social movement study group – 100 points (10%)**

To delve more deeply into social movement responses to global systems of inequality and injustice, we will form social movement study groups. In these groups, individuals will together study various political responses to related social issues. The group will be a way to develop your own interests toward the development of your research proposal, while also supporting your peers through the development of a collective understanding of the issues as well as the range of ways communities seek social change.

### **Research proposal – 300 points (30%)**

Students will produce a research proposal based on their work in their social movement study group. This will be divided into a four stages: topic and research question (50 points); annotated bibliography (100 points); presentation (50 points); research plan (100 points). Detailed instructions and guidance materials will be provided for each stage.

### **Learning reflection paper – 50 points (5%)**

At the end of the semester, you will submit a reflection paper that addresses key themes from the course and assesses your development as a student over the semester.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

- Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Ecological Narrative* (New York: Roman & Littlefield, 2002).
- Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003).
- A blank exam book for the midterm.

All other required readings are available to download from: <http://cult320sp15.cwillse.net/>

## **CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**

It is important that this classroom be a respectful learning environment in which everyone can participate. In order to facilitate this, please learn your classmates' names, pronounce them correctly, and refer to them by the pronouns they prefer. It is okay for us to disagree with one another in class discussion, but let's do so with kindness and compassion to keep the conversation as open and informative for everyone as possible. If you feel our classroom is not meeting your needs in these regards, please let me know.

## **EMAIL**

GMU faculty and students are required to use GMU email accounts to communicate. You must regularly check your GMU email address, as important updates will be sent that way. I will not announce any major changes to the syllabus with less than 24 hours notice. I will respond to emails within 24 hours. I do not respond to emails on the weekends; an email sent on Friday will receive a response by Monday.

## **LAPTOPS AND CELL PHONES**

Laptops are not allowed in class, unless as part of an accommodation provided by the Disability Resource Center, or through special arrangement with me.

Cell phone use is also not allowed. This includes texting, Facebooking, Tweeting, Instagramming, playing 2048, and anything else you might do with a cell phone outside of class. If you use a cell phone during class, you will be required to turn your phone in to me at the start of every class meeting for the remainder of the semester. This will be embarrassing and annoying for both of us. If you are anticipating a special circumstance in which you might need access to your phone during class, just check in with me.

## **RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOU**

**Writing Resources:** You may wish to use the Writing Center to assist you with an assignment. Tutors at the Writing Center can help you brainstorm, structure, and revise your written work. The Writing Center is located in Robinson A 114; 703-993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>.

**Disability Resource Center:** The staff members of the DRC assist students with learning differences or any other conditions that may impact academic performance. DRC is located in SUB I, Rm.222; 703-993-2474; <http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc>.

**Counseling Services:** Professional counselors provide individual and group sessions for personal development and assistance with a range of emotional and relational issues. Counseling Services are located in SUB I, Rm.364; 703-993-2380; <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/csdc>. In addition, the Learning Services Program (703-993-2999) offers academic skill-building workshops as well as a tutor referral service.

**Student Technology Assistance and Resource Center (STAR):** The STAR Center is available to help students with technology needs, such as video, multimedia, desktop publishing, and web skills. The STAR Center is located in Johnson Center, Rm.229; 703993-8990; <http://media.gmu.edu>.

**Division of Instructional and Technology Support Services (DoIT):** If you have any difficulties with accessing the campus network or on-campus computers, please contact the help desk. DoIT is located in Innovations Hall, Rm.416; 703-993-3178; <http://www.doit.gmu.edu>

Last but not least, **me**. I am available during office hours and by appointment to discuss and support any and all aspects of your learning and development in this course. We can go over assignments before and after you've turned them in, we can review concepts from class, we can extend discussions just because you're interested and curious. If you are struggling with readings, assignments, and/or meeting deadlines, come to me for assistance before you fall behind. I will be glad to match your efforts.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

George Mason University students are expected to adhere to the Honor Code; please familiarize yourself with the Honor Code if you have not already done so. Cheating and/or plagiarism – passing off work as your own that is not your own – will result in an F for your final grade in this class. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes plagiarism. If you are unclear, talk to me. The official GMU policies are available from the Office of Academic Integrity: <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/>.

**Like everything in life, this syllabus is subject to change.**

Updated information on readings, assignments, etc. will be on our course website.

I will communicate any changes with enough advance warning.

You are responsible for keeping up with these changes.

If you miss class, be certain to ask your peers if any changes to the syllabus were announced.

---

## COURSE SCHEDULE

**All readings and assignments are found on that week's page on our course website.**

<http://cult320sp15.cwillse.net/>

### **Week 1: Mapping Globalization**

*Wednesday, 1/22*

Course plan, intro to globalization

### **Week 2: Social Movements in a Global Age**

*Wednesday, 1/29*

Neocolonialism, people power, the internet

### **Week 3: Capitalism & Colonialism I**

*Wednesday, 2/4*

Colonialism, capitalism, globalization

- Topic/initial research questions due

### **Week 4: Capitalism & Colonialism II**

*Wednesday, 2/11*

Neocolonialism, Marxism, slavery

### **Week 5: Labor & Consumption I**

*Wednesday, 2/18*

Travel, tourism, global wealth inequality

- Research Group assignment 1 due

### **Week 6: Labor & Consumption II**

*Wednesday, 2/25*

Informalization, contingent labor, service industries

### **Week 7: Midterm**

*Wednesday, 3/4*

- In-Class Midterm

### **Week 8: Spring Break**

*Wednesday, 3/11*

- No class

### **Week 9: War I**

*Wednesday, 3/18*

War, militarism, military industrial complex

- Revised research question and annotated bibliographies due

### **Week 10: War II**

*Wednesday, 3/25*

Occupation, diplomacy, war

### **Week 11: Presentation Meetings**

*Wednesday, 4/1*

- Presentation groups work session
- Research Group assignment 2 due

### **Week 12: Environment**

*Wednesday, 4/8*

Native sovereignty, disaster complex, environmental racism

### **Week 13: Prisons I**

*Wednesday, 4/15*

Prisons, slavery, globalization, prison abolition

### **Week 14: Prisons II**

*Wednesday, 4/22*

Prison industrial complex, sex work

- Research Group assignment 3 due

### **Week 15: Presentations**

*Wednesday, 4/29*

- Group presentations
- Research plans due

**Learning reflection essays are due by 5pm, Wednesday, May 6.  
Late assignments will not be accepted.**