Course Instructor: Dr. Geoff Kennedy
Email: gkennedy@uoregon.edu
Office: PLC 371
Office Hours: M 2:00-4:00
Phone: (541)346-8976
Email: gkennedy@uoregon.edu

Course Description

Over the last several centuries a specific culture or “way of life” centering on the expansion of trade and markets, the escalation of mass consumption and the growing belief that material features are the key indicators of wellbeing has emerged in the West and spread wildly across the globe. As is widely acknowledged and celebrated, this “culture of capitalism” has seen a great many successes and witnessed scores of amazing achievements. Tremendous technological advances have been made, exceptional riches have been acquired, and breakthroughs in science and the arts have been truly remarkable. At the same time, however, the growth of the culture of capitalism has been accompanied by the appearance and expansion of some of the most disturbing problems facing the global community. Alongside its many accomplishments, the culture of capitalism has been associated with unprecedented scales of social and economic inequality, environmental degradation, human rights abuses, deadly disease, poverty and conflict. However, as insiders within this way of life, we typically have a hard time seeing and appreciating the significance of these less successful elements of our shared culture.
In this class we will draw on key lessons of the anthropological and historical traditions in order to develop an outsider’s perspective on the culture of capitalism. Using a combined cultural and historical approach this course explores the development of the culture of capitalism and explores the connections between this culture and a suite of contemporary global problems. By adopting a critical perspective that approaches capitalism as a cultural phenomenon with a particular place in the span of human history we will be better able to appreciate its uniqueness.

**Learning Outcomes**

- A historical understanding of the unique nature of capitalism as a socio-economic form of organization in economic, social and cultural terms
- A historical and empirically based understanding of the mutual interaction between culture and capitalism
- An understanding of key concepts pertaining to the understanding of the dynamics of capitalist development
- An historical understanding of how capitalism has changed fundamental aspects of modern culture, including conceptions of property, citizenship, money and debt, labor, the environment and food

**Course Requirements**

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection Piece</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movie Reviews</td>
<td>10% (5% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Group Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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**Grading Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-97.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92.9</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>80-82.9</td>
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<td>63-67.9</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;60</td>
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**Readings and Texts**

There are no textbooks for this course. The majority of the essential readings are available on Canvas in PDF format. The remainder are available at the reserve desk at the library for 90 minute intervals. It is recommended that students photocopy the material put on reserve.

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**Lectures**

Lectures will present a structured overview of key aspects of the essential readings as well as important concepts, debates, etc., that are relevant for an understanding of the topic yet not covered in the readings. Questions will be taken in the lecture, but due to
the nature of the lecture format, there will be little room for any substantive discussion. Students will have ample opportunity to discuss the material with their classmates in their respective discussion groups. Complex or personal questions should be asked either at the end of the lecture or during office hours. It is advised that students complete the essential readings prior to attending the lectures.

Discussion Groups
Students will have the opportunity to discuss the course material during their weekly discussion session. Being able to critically discuss the material in a smaller group setting such as this is a very important part of a university education. Please come to the discussion groups having read the essential readings. And please keep in mind that the role of the GTF is not to continue or supplement the lecture, but rather to facilitate group discussion amongst the students. The more you put into the discussion session, the more you will get out of it.

Attendance and Participation
Participation and attendance in the discussion groups will be recorded and included in the final grade.

Course Website
The course site will provide you with copies of an assortment of course documents, including a copy of this syllabus, lecture notes, and readings.

Exams
Students will be assessed by way of two exams during this course. Tests are designed to assess students’ comprehension of the essential readings. Tests are not cumulative. The mid-term will take place during regular class time. The final will be scheduled during the finals period. Students MUST bring at least one green exam booklet to both exams.

Assignment
Students are required to submit a written assignment for the course (750 words) that reflects on their understanding of capitalism. The assignment consists of two components. The first part of the assignment will begin in the context of group work during the first class. Students will discuss and document their understanding of capitalism with classmates and submit a written copy to their GTF in the first discussion group. We will be returning to these reflection pieces in the second last discussion group, where students will again discuss their reflections on capitalism in small groups. Students will be expected to bring the initial draft of their assignment to this session and use it as the basis of further discussion and reflection in light of what they have learned in the course. Each student will write up their final reflection piece and submit it on the last day of class. Students will be assessed on their ability to reflect on what they have learned by commenting on their initial ideas in light of what they have learned in the course (with reference to at least one specific topic from the course). Students will also be assessed on their writing ability. Please include a word count on your final submission.

Movie Reviews
Students are required to write two reviews (500 words each) of the films marked with
an asterisk (*). Students will be assessed on their ability to provide a succinct, yet informative synopsis of the film as well as some limited commentary about what they found interesting about the film.

What is expected of Students
Read! Read before the lecture; think of questions or comments while you are reading that you may want to raise in class
Attend – Pretty self-explanatory.
Plan – Do not wait until the last minute to begin planning your written assignment. Life has a way of disrespecting our schedules. If you leave your work until the last minute, the greater the likelihood that the slightest inconvenience can prevent you from getting that assignment done on time.
Speak up – You probably are not the only one who has questions, so ask them. I promise I’ll try to answer them as best I can.
Engage – Learning happens outside of the classroom too. Keep up with current events and it will supplement your learning process and help with your assignment.

Phones and Laptops:
While in class, it is expected that all students will turn off and put away their phones. While laptops can be used, research has demonstrated that students who rely on laptops in class do not retain as much information as students who do not use laptops. In other words, contrary to what you may have been told in high school, laptops are NOT a helpful pedagogical tool for a course such as this. Given that all lectures will be posted on the Canvas, it is strongly recommended that students refrain from using their laptops as much as possible.

Netiquette
Once upon a time, students had to visit professors during their office hours in order to discuss any concerns with the course or regarding their academic progress. E-mail has made contact more convenient, but not necessarily more effective. I have a number of e-mail rules of which students need to be aware:

1. In the interest of work-life balance, I only answer e-mails between the hours of 9am to 5pm during the work week. If you e-mail me on a Friday evening at 10pm, do not expect a response until Monday morning.

2. Please refer to the syllabus before e-mailing me regarding the course. If your question can be answered by reading this syllabus, do not expect a response. Responding to numerous individual queries that can be addressed by reading the syllabus is very time consuming.

3. If you have missed a class, please do not e-mail me after the fact asking me if you missed something important. Of course you did! All of my classes contain important information. If you have missed a class, ask a classmate for their notes and catch up on the readings.

4. When you e-mail me, please identify yourself and the course you are taking, use proper spelling and punctuation (I'm not fluent in Textese), and include a salutation
and valediction (e.g., ‘Hello’ and ‘Regards’). This is not the only class I teach!

5. Questions regarding substantive issues (e.g., discussing the course material, ideas for your assignments, etc.), or sensitive issues (e.g., problems affecting your academic progress, etc.) are best discussed in person during office hours.

Cheating and Academic Dishonesty
All assignments in this class are designed to assess your individual knowledge and understanding of the material covered in the course. Thus, cheating or plagiarism - in any form - will not be tolerated. The work you present must be entirely your own. All individuals involved in an act of academic dishonesty will fail the course.

Discrimination
The University of Oregon is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity institution. Discrimination on the basis of any of the categories covered in the University’s anti-discrimination policy will not be tolerated in this class. If you have a concern in this regard, please contact the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity at 346-3123.

Special Needs
If you have a condition that inhibits learning or evaluation under customary circumstances, please request a letter from Disability Services that verifies your situation and states the accommodations that can be made to improve your learning environment.

~Lecture Schedule~

9/26: Introduction
Readings:
Michael Sandel, ‘What isn’t for sale?’ *The Atlantic*
http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/04/what-isnt-for-sale/308902/

I. The Making of Capitalism

9/28: The Making of a Consumer Society
Essential Readings:
Sarah Berning, ‘Consumption does not make us happy, say experts’, *Deutsche Welle*

Video: No Logo

10/3: ‘All that is Solid Melts into Air’: What is Capitalism?
Essential Readings:
Karl Marx, ‘Bourgeois and Proletarians,’ in *The Communist Manifesto*
Karl Polanyi, ‘The Making of the Liberal Creed,’ in *The Great Transformation*
Sean McElwee, Marx was Right: Five Surprising Ways Karl Marx Predicted 2014,’ *Rolling*
10/5: Protestants and Possessive Individualists: Is there a Culture of Capitalism?
Essential Readings:
Neal Wood, ‘Avarice Disguised and Legitimized,’ in Tyranny in America
Paul Verhaeghe, ‘Neoliberalism Has Brought Out the Worst in Us,’ The Guardian

10/10: Moral Economies and Embedded Markets
Essential Readings:
Karl Polanyi, The Great Transformation, chapter 4
Heather Horn, ‘Pope Francis’ Theory of Economics,’ The Atlantic

10/12: Time, Labour and Work Discipline
Essential Readings:
Michael Perelman, The Invention of Capitalism, chapter 1
Lynn Stuart Parramore, ‘Why a medieval peasant got more vacation time than you,’ Reuters

10/17: The Rise of the Corporation and Corporate Social Responsibility
Essential Readings:
Joel Bakan, 'The Corporation's Rise to Dominance,' in The Corporation
Milton Friedman on Corporate Social Responsibility,

II. The Era of Globalization

10/19: Understanding Globalization
Essential Readings:

10/24: The Financialization of Everyday Life
Essential Readings:
Randy Martin, 'What in the World is Financialization?' in The Financialization of Daily Life

10/26: Labor and ‘Human Capital’ in the Age of Precarious Work
Essential Readings:
'ILO warns of widespread insecurity in the global labour market,' International Labor Organization

10/31: Mid-term Exam – In Class

11/2: Valuing Nature: Capitalism and the Environment:

**Essential Readings:**
John Barry, 'The Role of the environment historically within social theory,' in *Environment and Social Theory, 2/e.*
Naomi Klein, 'Hot Money,' in *This Changes Everything*

**Video:** 'Pope Francis Plea for Climate Action Revives Concept of “The Commons” to Rethink Economy & Society,' *Democracy Now*

11/7: The Cultural Economy of Industrial Farming and World Agriculture

**Essential Readings:**
David Nally, 'More calories from fewer sources means more profit and less nutrition,' *The Conversation* [http://theconversation.com/more-calories-from-fewersources-means-more-profit-and-less-nutrition-24313](http://theconversation.com/more-calories-from-fewersources-means-more-profit-and-less-nutrition-24313)

11/9: Documentary: Food Inc.*

**III. Cultures of Resistance**

11/14: Global Capitalism and the Double Movement

**Essential Readings:**

**Due Date:** Food Inc. film review

11/16: Towards a New Labor Activism

**Essential Readings:**

11/21: Indigeneity, Stewardship, and the Rights of Nature

**Essential Readings:**
Thomas D. Hall and James V. Fenelon, 'Indigenous Peoples: Global Perspectives and Movements,' in Hall and *Indigenous Peoples and Globalization*
Ben Price, 'What are rights, and how can nature 'have' rights?' *Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund*

11/23: Reclaiming the Commons: Via Campesina, Food Sovereignty and the Land

**Essential Readings:**
Saturnino M. Borras, 'La Via Campesina and its Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform,' in *Transnational Agrarian Movements Confronting Globalization*
11/28: Documentary – The Take*
**Due Date:** Reflection Assignment

11/30: Conclusion and Review
Return of assignments
**Due Date:** The Take film review