CULTURE AND GLOBALISATION (IR115)

Course duration: 54 hours lecture and class time (Over three weeks)

Summer School Programme Area: International Relations, Government and Society

LSE Teaching Department: Department of Anthropology

Lead Faculty: Professor Laura Bear (l.bear@lse.ac.uk) and Professor Matthew Engelke (m.engelke@lse.ac.uk) (Dept. of Anthropology)

Pre-requisites: None.

Course Content:

Globalisation is one of the most important dynamics of contemporary social life. The world is increasingly interconnected, and some pundits even talk of life in a ‘global village’. But what does globalisation really entail? And what are the cultural forces that shape it? This course explores these key questions, largely from the vantage point of anthropology—the social science that has done the most to help us understand culture. We begin by considering the relationship between the culture concept and globalisation, since it is so often a concern with culture that animates the debates about globalisation. Is a ‘clash of civilisations’ inevitable in our globalised world? Does the emergence of a ‘global village’ spell the end of cultural difference?

As an introductory course, students need not have a background in anthropology. After considering the basic tenets of the culture concept in relation to globalisation, the lectures move on to consider a number of related topics, including: economic development and transnational corporations; corporate social responsibility; the influence of the internet on politics and identity; the role of cultural knowledge in the ‘global war on terror’; war and cultural identity in a geo-political perspective; and global media networks. There will also be a lecture on the global River Thames past and present, and what this tells us about current and older forms of international connection.

Readings for the course are organised around a set of important anthropological pieces, but also include perspectives from sociology, political science, media studies and journalism. The readings are complemented by interactive on-line exercises as well as the discussion and analysis of film, news clips, and other media sources. The class also takes a field trip to the old docklands and communities of East London, to complement readings in the course on globalisation and migration.

Readings:

All of the readings will be available on-line, either in an e-pack (listed as EP below), or via the LSE library electronic collections.
Course structure

- Twelve 3-hour lectures (broken into two segments, with a short break in between)
- Twelve 1.5-hour discussion sections.

Assessment

- Formative work (2 pieces); this is unmarked but allows students to gauge their progress and strengths and weaknesses. Exact details of formative work to be confirmed at the start of the course
- One exam (worth 50% of the course grade; covering materials in lectures)
- One assessed essay (worth 50%; 2000 words; due 28 June; addressing the culture concept—details confirmed at the start of the course).

Course Outline:

June 18th Day 1, Lecture 1: The Culture Concept

In this lecture we introduce what anthropologists generally mean when they refer to “culture” and how it relates to current interests in globalisation. By then moving on to more recent perspectives on world history, such as “the clash of civilisations,” we set the groundwork for the course as a whole.

Required reading

- Adam Kuper, “Culture Wars”, EP

June 19th Day 2, Lecture 2: Culture and Social Evolution

This lecture begins by addressing the idea of social evolution and how it has influenced our understandings of development and civilisation. Connecting back to issues raised in the first lecture on the clash of civilisations, here we move on to consider the practice of labelling societies as “civilised,” “barbaric,” or “primitive.” These discussions are then applied to the case of a development project in rural Uganda run by The Guardian.

Required reading

- E.B. Tylor, excerpts from Primitive Culture EP
- Various blog postings, the Katine Project, http://www.guardian.co.uk/katine (to be confirmed in lecture)
June 20th Day 3, Lecture 3: Cultural Relativism
One of the most difficult issues raised by globalisation is the extent to which we should accept (or even adopt) the ideas and lifestyles of others. As the discipline that did the most to develop and articulate the principles of cultural relativism, anthropology provides a good lens though which to understand these issues. In this lecture we focus in particular on debates about whether the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is indeed universal, or, as some argue, culturally relative.

Required reading


June 21st Day 4, Lecture 4: Global Flows
Another way to understand the universalism vs. relativism debate is to ask if globalisation, as represented in such documents as the UDHR, is making different cultures more alike. This question of “cultural homogenisation” has been central to globalisation theory from the start. In this lecture we examine some of the key anthropological interventions on this topic, turning in particular to the idea of “global flows.”

Required reading

- Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy.” Available via LSE at http://tcs.sagepub.com.gate2.library.lse.ac.uk/content/7/2/295.full.pdf+html
- Ian Condry, “Japanese hip-hop and the globalisation of popular culture” EP

June 22nd Day 5, Lecture 5: Families in Flux: Kinship, Migration, and the Movement of People
Part of what distinguishes globalisation from other conceptions of “world systems” is the scale of movement—migrations and travels at unprecedented levels. In this lecture, we focus on one of the most important effects of such movements, which is how it reconfigures the family and personal networks.

Required reading


June 25th Day 6, Lecture 6: Commodities and Commercials (More Global Flows)
Commodities and media texts circulate at rates much faster even than people, with digital technologies making it possible to transmit information, ideas, and even desires in an instant. In this lecture we focus on the questions posed to globalisation theory by two key examples of this: food and advertisements.
Required reading

- James Watson, “McDonald’s in Hong Kong” EP

June 26th Day 7, Lecture 7: The Internet, Social Media and Identity

The rise of the ‘knowledge economy’ has produced new forms of work and leisure, but how could anthropology help us to understand if, and how, it has changed our connections with each other? What are the social, economic and political potentials of social media?

Required reading


June 27th Day 8: Classes in the morning (on lecture 7) but no lecture in the afternoon (to give students time to finalise the assessed essay)

***THE ASSESSED ESSAY IS DUE BY 2 PM ON DAY 9 (THURSDAY 28TH JUNE 2018)***

June 29th Day 9, Lecture 8: Corporations and Neo-Liberalism

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to claims of neo-liberalism’s rise—an argument weakened but not defeated by the global financial crisis. In this lecture, we explore the meaning of neo-liberalism and its relation to processes of globalisation, looking in particular at the increasing importance of corporations and any challenge they pose to the power of the nation state. We then turn to some classic anthropological discussions on economic relations.

Required reading

- David Harvey, “Freedom’s Just Another Word” EP
- Carla Freeman, “Designing women: Corporate discipline and Barbados’ off-shore pink-collar sector,” available online via the LSE electronic journals: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.gate2.library.lse.ac.uk/doi/10.1525/can.1993.8.2.02a00030/epdf

July 2nd Day 10, Lecture 9: Corporations for the Good?

In this lecture we look at ideas and practices of the ethical global corporation. Critiques of corporations by activists have produced a second wave of globalisation based around ideas of corporate social responsibility.
Do we have a new era of compassionate, ethical corporations emerging or in some cases are these projects undermined by practices of audit?

**Required reading**


**July 3rd Day 11, Lecture 10: Global Rivers and Seas: the Thames**

We think of globalisation as flows, but rarely consider the physical networks of rivers, seas and trade that tie us all together. How might understanding the history of the waterscape of the Thames give us a different perspective on contemporary globalisation debates? What are the global changes afoot on rivers such as this one now, and how are they affected by circulating ideas of regeneration, the threats of the Chinese ‘One Belt, One Road’ initiative and sovereign wealth fund investments.

**Required reading**


**July 4th Day 12, Lecture 11: Globalisation, Cultural Knowledge, and the War on Terror**

Recent shifts in the nature of modern warfare have led to an emphasis on the importance of cultural knowledge. The idea of counter-insurgency, which has roots in the colonial policies of the British Empire, have become central in the “war on terror” campaigns in such countries as Iraq and Afghanistan. In this lecture we connect our lessons on the culture concept to this controversial development in military policies.

**Required reading**

- Roberto González, “The Myth of a ‘Gentler’ Counterinsurgency” CP

**July 5th Day 13, Lecture 12: Anti-Globalisation and Alter-Globalisation**

Needless to say, as the course will have shown thus far, globalisation has not gone unchallenged in the academy or on the streets. To conclude this course we use some of the major critiques of globalisation as a way of summing up what we have covered and suggesting how students might apply and further their studies.

**Required reading**

- Joseph Stiglitz, “Globalism’s Discontents” EP
Credit Transfer: If you are hoping to earn credit by taking this course, please ensure that you confirm it is eligible for credit transfer well in advance of the start date. Please discuss this directly with your home institution or Study Abroad Advisor.

As a guide, our LSE Summer School courses are typically eligible for three or four credits within the US system and 7.5 ECTS in Europe. Different institutions and countries can, and will, vary. You will receive a digital transcript and a printed certificate following your successful completion of the course in order to make arrangements for transfer of credit.

If you have any queries, please direct them to summer.school@lse.ac.uk