

SOC345H1F: Global Inequality
Department of Sociology
University of Toronto at St George

Term: Summer 2021

Classes: Tuesdays and Thursdays 6:10 – 8 p.m.

Tutorials: Tuesday/Thursday 8:10 – 9 p.m. (see class schedule for details)

Room: online via Zoom (see Quercus for link)

Instructor: James Braun

E-Mail: james.braun@mail.utoronto.ca

Teaching Assistants: Catherine Yeh and Noam Keren

Emails: (Catherine) catherine.yeh@mail.utoronto.ca

(Noam) noam.keren@mail.utoronto.ca

Course Website: Quercus

Office Hours: Mondays 2:30 – 4:30 p.m. on Zoom (see Quercus for link)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

According to Forbes, as of 2021 there are 2755 billionaires in the world, collectively worth USD \$13.1 trillion. This is 660 more people (with \$5 trillion more wealth) than the year before.¹ At the same time, the World Bank estimates that roughly 850 million people live in extreme poverty, defined as living on less than USD \$1.90 per day.² The economic disruptions of the covid-19 pandemic have pushed nearly 150 million people into extreme poverty, a reversal of decades of worldwide poverty reduction.

There's no doubt we live in a profoundly unequal world. Looking around us we can see massive disparities in income, in well-being, in rights and freedoms. Our incomes, our racializations, our genders, our citizenship and other social locations largely determine where we stand in those disparities. But why does inequality exist? Is it getting worse or better? How does a global society decide--and justify--who gets what? How is creating new billionaires related to creating extreme poverty? This class will answer these questions through examining Global Commodity Chains. We will trace the production and consumption of everyday goods to understand how they link people and communities around the world and allocate the risks and rewards of a globalized economy.

FORMAT

This is an online synchronous class, meaning that we will have live lectures and group discussions over Zoom. The class is designed to encourage participatory learning: I will open and close the class with mini-lectures to contextualize key concepts and offer some food for thought. But most of the classroom time will be devoted to small and large group discussion of issues raised by the reading materials.

¹ Dolan, K. 2021. "Forbes' 35th Annual World's Billionaires List: Facts and Figures 2021" Forbes.com

² World Bank. 2020. *Reversals of Fortune: Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020*. Washington DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Field Code Changed

Tutorials are also online synchronous (i.e., live on Zoom) and will provide skills-based instruction to support you through the Object Biography assignment. Accommodations will be made for students who cannot attend lectures or tutorials because they are in other time zones. **If this applies to you, please contact me in the first week of class.**

PREREQUISITES

The prerequisite to take this course is SOC201H1, SOC202H1, SOC204H1 & two of SOC251H1, SOC252H1, SOC254H1. Students without these requirements will be removed from the course without notice.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completing this course, students will be able to do the following:

- Identify key theories of global inequality (modernization theory and world systems theory) and describe debates between them over why global inequality exists, whether its necessary, whether its improving or worsening.
- Explain the uses and limitations of Global Commodity Chain analysis to investigate global inequality.
- Discuss how global commodity chains connect people around the world and distribute risks and rewards of production unequally along the chain.
- Synthesize secondary research sources to answer a research question.
- Present research findings orally to a collegial audience.
- Write a research essay, using evidence from secondary materials to defend an argument.

COURSE MATERIALS

Weekly assigned readings are detailed in the course schedule below. All required materials will be made available through Quercus.

Course Schedule:

Date	Topic	Assigned readings	Tutorial
May 4	Introduction: Getting to know each other and the class	Syllabus	
May 6	Global Commodity Chain analysis	Bair, J. 2014. "Editor's Introduction: Commodity Chains in and of the World-System" <i>Journal of World-System Research</i> 20(1): 1 – 10 Knowles, C. 2015. "The flip-flop trail and fragile globalization" <i>Theory, Culture and Society</i> 32(7-8):231-244.	Choosing a commodity chain

May 11	Is the world flat?: Theories of globalization and inequality	Friedman, T. 2007. "While I was sleeping" (Chapter one) <i>The World is Flat</i> 3ed New York: Picador King, T. 2013. "As Long as the Grass is Green" (Chapter nine) <i>The Inconvenient Indian</i> . Toronto: Anchor Press	Research help (guest presentation from liaison librarian)
May 13	Theories of social stratification	Goesling and Baker. 2008. "Three Faces of International Inequality" <i>Research in Social Stratification and Mobility</i> 26(2): 183-198. Dorius, S and Firebaugh, G. 2010. "Trends in Global Gender Inequality" <i>Social Forces</i> 88(5): 1941-1968.	
May 18	Economies of extraction	Hough, P. 2011. "Disarticulations and commodity chains: cattle, coca and capital accumulation along Colombia's agricultural frontier" <i>Environment and Planning A</i> 43: 1016-1034. Leonard, L. 2016. "Pharmaceutically-Made Men: Masculinities in Chad's emergent oil economy" <i>Qualitative Sociology</i> 39(4): 421-437.	How to make an argument
May 20	The Global Assembly Line	Raworth, K and Kidder, T. 2009. "Mimicking 'Lean' in Global Value Chains: It's the workers who get leaned on" (chapter eight) Bair, J. (ed) <i>Frontiers of Commodity Chain Research</i> . Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Gunawardana, S. 2014. "Reframing employee voice: A case study in Sri Lanka's export processing zones" <i>Work, Employment and Society</i> 28(3): 452-468.	
May 25	Labour migration and Global Care Chains	Gammage, S. 2006. "Exporting People and Recruiting Remittances: A Development Strategy for El Salvador?" <i>Latin American Perspectives</i> 33(6): 75-100. Strauss, K and McGrath, S. 2017. "Temporary migration, precarious employment and unfree labour relations: Exploring the 'continuum of exploitation' in Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program" <i>Geoforum</i> 78: 199-208.	Writing a research essay

May 27	Global cities I: Commanding and controlling commodity chains	Parnreiter, C. 2010. "Global cities in Global Commodity Chains: Exploring the role of Mexico City in the geography of global economic governance" <i>Global Networks</i> 10(1): 35-53. Csomós, G. 2013. "The command and control centers of the United States (2006/2012): An analysis of industry sectors influencing the position of cities" <i>Geoforum</i> 50: 241-251	Guest presentation: Kate Klein, Mining Injustice Solidarity Network
June 1	Global cities II: Life and inequality in the global city	Fernandez, R. et al. 2016. "London and New York as a safe deposit box for the transnational wealth elite" <i>Environment and Planning A</i> 48(12): 2443-2461. Dupont, V. 2011. "The Dream of Delhi as a Global City" <i>International Journal of Urban and Regional Research</i> 35(3): 533-554.	Academic Presentations 101
June 3	Consuming global commodities and the making of a global middle class	Koo, H. 2016. "The Global Middle Class: How is it made, what does it represent?" <i>Globalizations</i> 13(4): 440-453. Wheary, J. "The Global Middle Class is Here: Now What?" <i>World Policy Journal</i> 26(4): 75-83.	
June 8	Student showcase	No readings	Student showcase
June 10	Student showcase	No readings	Student showcase

HELP AND RESOURCES

Online classes can be particularly challenging for students. There are proactive steps you can take early in the course to make sure you start and finish strong in this class:

1) Scheduling: Set aside a regular, predictable time to review assigned readings and complete assignments. Plan to attend class regularly. Look ahead and if there are classes you might miss, plan accordingly. If there are significant issues in your schedule, or if you are in a time zone which makes attending class difficult, please contact me as soon as possible

2) Create a work space: Set aside an uncluttered, dedicated space for studying. A table or a desk will help you stay focused and alert. Reading or logging into classes from your bed can disrupt both your attention to class and your sleep.

3) Minimize online distractions: Consider turning off your phone or putting it away while you're studying or in class. Log out of social media accounts. Apps are available ([link here](#)) which will temporarily block distracting websites from your devices.

If you feel lost or overwhelmed there are supports available to help you succeed in the course:

1) Come and see me: Talk with me in office hours to discuss questions you have about the material or the assignments. The class will schedule a regular office hour (online) in our first seminar to make it accessible to as many students as possible. If you can't meet during regular office hours, we can schedule an appointment or resolve questions via email.

2) Use the Writing Centre: The U of T writing centres exist to provide extra support and guidance to students that want to improve their writing and research skills. All of the downtown writing centres are open (online) over the summer. You will find links to specific resources in the assignment guidelines, but the centre also offers skills workshops and one-on-one online consultations. <https://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science/>

3) Get Library Help: On May 11, the sociology liaison librarian will visit our class to show you to use the library effectively for this class. Beyond his help, the Ask a Librarian chat (<https://onereach.library.utoronto.ca/ask-librarian>) can help you find sources for your Object Biography and use the library system more effectively.

4) Get Wellness Help: It's hard to perform your best in class if you're struggling with mental or physical health. [Navi](#) is an anonymous wayfinder that can guide you to specific [academic and wellness supports](#) provided by the university. The [Student Support Program](#) provides real-time and/or appointment-based confidential, 24-hour support (in 35 languages) for any school, health, or general life concern at no cost to you. You can call or chat with a counsellor directly from your phone whenever, wherever you are.

5) Consult your registrar: The Registrar's Office is here to help if difficult or unexpected situations are getting in the way of your academic success. <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/college-registrars-offices>

ASSESSMENT:

Evaluation Format	Due Date	Weight
Participation	Self-assessed	10%
Submitted discussion questions	Ongoing	5%
Critical response essays (3)	May 16, May 29, June 6	30%
Object Biography proposal (group)	May 18	10%
Object Biography stage presentation (individual)	June 8	10%
Object Biography stage research essay (individual)	June 14	35%

Participation (10% self-assessed)

The classroom is a learning community where we will develop ideas in an environment of mutual respect. Your participation grade reflects your engagement with the class: making an effort to understand the readings, participating in class discussions, asking questions, setting and achieving goals for your own learning.

Especially in an online classroom, you are the best judge of the effort you put into this class. In our first class, we will develop a rubric together to evaluate your participation. In the final week, you will give yourself a grade out of 10 based on the effort and progress you made towards your learning. **I reserve the right to adjust the grade (up or down) if I have good reason to disagree with your assessment.** You will receive a written explanation from me if this is the case.

Submitted discussion questions (5%)

24 hours before each class you should submit one (1) discussion question based on the assigned readings. I will choose (possibly modified) questions from the class each week to take up in discussion. Each week's submission is worth 0.5% of your grade.

Critical response essays (10% each, total 30%): Throughout the term, you will write a total of three reflective responses (2-3 pages) to the assigned readings for the week. A prompt will be provided during the live class to guide your reading and thinking.

Which classes you choose to write on are up to you. There are three scheduled deadlines for responses:

Response 1: May 16 (9 p.m.) Write about EITHER class 2, 3 or 4.

Response 2: May 29 (9 p.m.) Write about EITHER class 5, 6 or 7.

Response 3: June 6 (9 p.m.). Write about EITHER class 8, 9 or 10.

Object Biography project (total 55%): You will explore the consequences of globalization on people around the world by performing a Global Commodity Chain analysis – tracing a product (i.e., A Starbuck's latte, a designer shoe, a model 3 Tesla, etc.) through its production, sale and consumption. The goal of this is to examine how making this product connects workers and communities around the world, and how the risks and rewards of making this product are distributed: how does it contribute to a more (un)equal world? **You will choose and propose a product in groups of 5-6. Subsequent assignments are individual, although I encourage group members to share research and talk about your project as it proceeds.**

Object Biography proposal (10%): As a first step to your analysis, you will submit a 1-2 page proposal detailing: 1) Your choice of product (be creative!) and why it is a good candidate for an object biography 2) Different stages of production and consumption, where they occur in the world and which group member will research each link.

Proposals are due on May 18 by 9:00 pm, to be submitted via Quercus.

Object Biography stage presentation (10%): The last two classes (June 8/10) are student showcases of your Object Biography projects. Each of you will create a short presentation (5-7 minutes) summarizing your research into a stage of your group's Object Biography and how it

either improves or degrades the well-being and life chances of people in that area. Think of this presentation as a rough draft of your final paper.

This presentation should include some kind of visual component, such as PowerPoint or Prezi slides.

You should upload a video of your PowerPoint presentation (this is easier than it sounds; instructions will be provided in class) to Quercus by **June 8 at 6 p.m.** You have the option of presenting live or showing your video on your assigned showcase date, where we will watch and discuss the Object Biographies as a class.

Object Biography stage research essay (35%): Building on feedback from your presentation and reflection on the student showcase, your final paper will detail your research into a stage of your group's Object Biography and how it either improves or degrades the well-being and life chances of the community. As part of your analysis, you should consider how your own research reflects on theories of globalization and social stratification. Your paper should include a mix of scholarly articles and "grey literature" (i.e., corporate or NGO reports, investigative media). Papers are due June 14 at 9:00 p.m., to be submitted on Quercus

SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS:

All assignments should be uploaded to Quercus by 9 p.m. on the due date. Assignments submitted by email will not be accepted.

Assignments submitted to Quercus will automatically be screened for originality through Turnitin.com.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The University of Toronto is dedicated to fostering an academic community in which the learning and scholarship of every member may flourish, with vigilant protection for individual human rights, and a resolute commitment to the principles of equal opportunity, equity and justice.

1. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

2. Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the AccessAbility Services Office as soon as possible. I will work with you and AccessAbility Services to ensure you can achieve your learning goals in this course. Enquiries are confidential.

Please consult <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services> for more information.

3. Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources (see <http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesforstudents.html>).

4. Turnitin

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

5. Communications policy

In most cases, the TA and I will respond to emails within 48 hours of receiving them. Please note that we do not usually check email after 7 pm, so emails sent in the evening will be considered received the following morning. We will not respond to emails that can be answered by reading the syllabus.

Do not submit assignments via email. Email submissions will be ignored and will not count against deadlines.

It is important that any email you send complies with the following standards:

- You must use a valid “utoronto” email address. If you do not have a valid “utoronto” email address, you will not receive email correspondence sent from Quercus. (Instructions for getting an address are available on ACORN).
- Please include the course code (SOC 345) in the subject line.

I will periodically make announcements on Quercus. Please be sure to check the email address you have registered on ACORN or on Quercus. Failing that, you should regularly monitor the “Announcements” section on Quercus.

6. Classroom Etiquette

By attending classroom meetings, you are signaling your commitment to refrain from disruption. Disruptions include entering or exiting the classroom during an ongoing lecture or discussion, talking out of turn during presentations, and using personal devices for purposes other than consulting assigned readings or note-taking. Cellphones should be turned off or to vibrate.

7. Quercus

The course website is a Quercus site. Visit the site frequently to check announcements, to download the course materials, and to submit written assignments.

8. Assignments/late penalties

Assignments submitted after the deadline will be subject to a 3% penalty per day. Late assignments will not be accepted more than 7 days after the deadline without a prior arrangement with me.

In most cases, I can be flexible with extensions but they **must be arranged in advance**. Contact me by email or visit my office hours with an explanation of why the deadline can’t be met and a proposed timetable for submitting the assignment.

Absence Declaration: The University is temporarily suspending the need for a doctor’s note or medical certificate for any absence from academic participation. Please use the Absence Declaration tool on ACORN found in the Profile and Settings menu to formally declare an absence from academic participation in the University. The tool is to be used if you require consideration for missed academic work based on the procedures specific to your faculty or campus. If a personal or family crisis prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must get a letter from your college registrar (it is a good idea anyway to advise your college registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies). **In addition to this declaration, you are responsible for contacting me to request the academic consideration you are seeking.** You will be notified by the University if this policy changes.