

HTS 4823: Globalization: History, Theory, Aspects

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Course Description:

This upper-level seminar course is designed to provide students with the tools of critical analysis to navigate the epochal changes that are taking place in the world around them. To do so, the course combines a strong historical framework with insights from social theory and political science (especially international relations). Through close reading of key texts and in-depth class discussion, as well as individualized research, the course will present students with a range of viewpoints on pressing issues facing the contemporary world. The goal throughout will be on developing a critical lens on the present through a close historical understanding of the past.

The post-Cold War era has been hailed as a new era in human history, inaugurating an age of unprecedented prosperity and global unity. The historical convergence of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the bipolar world order, the rise of worldwide computerized telecommunications (the Internet ‘revolution’), and the spread of neoliberal orthodoxy brought a contemporary sense of both historical exceptionalism and inevitability. The concept of ‘globalization,’ popularized at Harvard Business School in the early 1980s, has become a buzzword to reference these monumental sets of changes in the contemporary landscape. For its promoters and enthusiasts, ‘globalization’ became not merely a descriptive term, but an ‘ideal type’ and an end-state, characterized by the spread of liberal democracy and capitalism on a world scale. The withering of the nation-state and triumph of the global market heralded a period of universal human progress, indeed ‘the end of history’ (Francis Fukuyama).

Unlike the vision of its apologists, the course will show that ‘globalization’ is neither an inevitable, immutable, nor inherently benign process. To raise critical awareness, the course will begin in Part I by placing the contemporary phase of globalization within an historical framework. The post-Cold War era shares significant continuities with both the long-term and more immediate past, which are masked by much of the current celebratory rhetoric. By appreciating the historical contours of contemporary globalization, Part II of the course will enable students to perceive how discussions of globalization inevitably involve questions of *ideology* and *power*. As an explicit political project with an underlying ideological agenda, ‘globalization’ forms part of the larger historical movement of neoliberalism that posits the market as the ideal model for human interaction. Because of its history and idealization of the market, ‘globalization’ is thus far from an even, ‘flat,’ or neutral process. Instead, it contains geographic unevenness (or ‘lumpiness’) and built-in social inequities, and produces structurally skewed impacts, rather than merely coincidental side effects. Finally, unlike the rhetoric of its promoters, ‘globalization’ is not a singular condition or entity. Rather, ‘globalization’ contains multiple dimensions, which both reinforce and undercut each other. During Part III of the course, we will examine five key areas of global interaction

in turn: technology, economics, geopolitics, environment, and culture. In each case, the goal will be to show how forces of ‘globalization’ paradoxically involve two simultaneous impulses that work in dialectical opposition to one another, producing both global integration and diversification.

The course will thus address the following core questions (taken up in the units below):

1. How do we best understand the period of contemporary history, or the post-Cold War era?
2. What is the phenomenon we refer to by shorthand as ‘globalization’? Is it a single trend or multiple, closely related phenomena?
3. Is ‘globalization’ a new development, or merely the most recent manifestation of longer-term processes?
4. What drives the process of ‘globalization’? Does it have single, or multiple, causes?
5. Who promotes and benefits from ‘globalization’? What are the impacts of ‘globalization’? Who pays the costs?
6. Is the world becoming more homogenous or more diverse as a result of ‘globalization’?

Course Objectives:

- Students will develop historical thinking and understand the concept of periodization by situating the contemporary post-Cold War era within longer-term chronological frameworks.
- Students will enhance critical awareness of ‘globalization’ as a highly uneven process and as an explicit ideological and political project with profound implications for the organization of world polity and society.
- Students will increase analytical skills through class discussions, news analyses, research reports, and written responses on examinations.
- Students will develop appropriate written and oral communication skills through examinations, news summaries, and preparation and public presentation of reports.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will demonstrate the ability to describe the social phenomenon of “globalization” in the twentieth century, including more dense cultural and economic connections between nations.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to describe the historical context in which globalization (greater economic and social interconnectedness) occurred in the second half of the twentieth century.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the social, economic, and political forces that contribute to closer cultural and economic ties among nations.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the social, economic, and political aspects of globalization that influence social behavior.

Course Assessments:

Students will be evaluated through five means: class discussions, news summaries, tests (midterm and final), written research reports, and oral presentations. The course is

designed as an upper-level seminar. It will therefore depend heavily on class discussions, to which students are expected to contribute on a regular and substantial basis. Students will be expected to keep up with contemporary developments related to ‘globalization’ by monitoring an online newspaper, magazine, or website on a weekly basis. Summaries of weekly findings will be turned in class on a weekly basis, noting key events. Students will also conduct two in-depth research reports. One report must relate to an aspect of European integration, while the second should provide in-depth analysis of an aspect of contemporary globalization. Students will choose a report for presentations at the end of the semester. Students may collaborate on the final report and presentation.

I will complete grades using the following formula:

Participation	20%
News summaries	10%
Research reports	20%
Oral presentation	10%
Exams	40%

Field Trip

The course will include a field trip to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The trip will be conducted as part of GTL 2000.

Required Readings:

- Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2005)
- Frederick Cooper, ‘What is the Concept of Globalization Good For? An African Historians Perspective’ *African Affairs* 100 (2001): 189-213
- Francis Fukuyama, ‘The End of History?’ *National Interest* Summer 1989
- David Held and Anthony McGrew et al., *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Stanford, 1999)
- Jurgen Osterhammel and Niels P. Petersson, *Globalization: A Short History* (Princeton, 2005)
- Samuel Huntington, ‘The Clash of Civilizations?’ *Foreign Affairs* 72:3 (1995) and ‘The Clash of Civilizations Revisited,’ *New Perspectives Quarterly* 24:1 (2007)

Units:

- I. Theories of Globalization (2 Weeks)
 - a. The Globalization Debate
 - b. Globalization as Ideology: Neoliberalism
- II. Globalization: Historical Frameworks (2 Weeks)

- a. Early Modern ('Archaic') Globalization
- b. Modern Globalization
- c. Contemporary Globalization

III. Aspects of Contemporary Globalization (6 Weeks)

a. Technology

Topics: Computing, space and satellites, telecommunications (Internet)

b. Economics

Topics: Financial markets, free trade (GATT), multilateral institutions (World Bank, IMF), MNC's and global production

c. Geopolitics

Topics: Nation-state, international order (unipolar vs. multipolar), military power, regional integration (EU)

d. Environment

Topics: Environmental and anti-globalization movements, global climate change, food production and famine, global civil society and NGO's

e. People and Culture

Topics: Migration, 'Americanization' (fast food, films), global culture and media flows (world music), religious fundamentalism and the 'clash of civilizations'

Important Dates:

Field trip to European Parliament	May 28
Research report 1 (EU) due	June 5
Midterm exam	June 18
Research report 2 due	July 16
Presentations	July 21
Final	July 24-28 (TBD)