

MONT 104C-01
Fall 2016
Room: Stein 118A
W, F: 12:30-1:45

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Office: Beaven 223
Office Hours: **W:** 10- 11:30, **F:** 10:30- 12:00 or by appt.
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Global Change and Inequality

The Magic of Modern Life



Blue jeans makers featured in the film *China Blue*

Course Overview

If you interviewed someone in their nineties about the most phenomenal social changes they have lived through, they would have much to say. They would likely tell you that the quality of life you enjoy is drastically improved from that of their youth. They might describe modern life as a luxurious life, with the average North American having easier and greater access to goods from all around the world. They might describe technological advances that simply make modern living much easier, more comfortable, and more convenient. They would likely discuss how much faster modern life has become, in travel, in communication, and in commerce.

In this course we examine the full structure of the ‘magic’ of modern life exploring how and why some peoples in the world enjoy greater conveniences and luxuries while others struggle to survive.

Magic is understood as what happens when mysterious or unknown forces create fantastical changes. Sociology, as the science of society, allows no magical thinking. Rather, the social sciences aim to ‘disenchant’ us of (or reveal) unknown and unseen social forces. In discussing the relationship between modern life and global inequality we will employ a key approach in social theory- that of uncovering the hidden structures of social behavior- and learn how social scientists explore the unseen or hidden causes and effects of global inequality. Beginning with our own privileged perspective as individuals living in the United States we ask, how and why have our lives become so phenomenal and what has been the cost? We will survey some of the most taken for granted

conveniences of modern life and investigate how these privileges are derived from global and unequal relationships.

As part of a year-long Montserrat course, we will generally explore the study of global inequality and, in this first semester, we will focus on how global inequality is related to those things we enjoy and depend on daily but the social costs of which we are largely or entirely unaware. We will explore the phenomenal convenience and quality of the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the comfortable ways we live and travel, and the fantastical ways we have become connected in an ever-expanding virtual world. And we will interrogate the ways in which these privileges are linked to hidden social structures of global poverty and suffering.

Course Objectives

As a Montserrat first-year seminar, this course is aimed at introducing you to the study of a salient and intriguing intellectual topic while also imparting crucial college-level learning skills. The course objectives are therefore twofold. By the course's end you should have gained **sociological knowledge** of:

- Key concepts and analytical frameworks in global analysis and the study of global inequality and global social problems and,
- An understanding of how our daily activities depend on global and often hidden social structures and outcomes.

You will have also gained new skills for enhanced success in **college-level critical thinking, research, writing, and public presentation**.

Montserrat Cluster Theme

Our course will fold into a broader Montserrat objective of fostering interdisciplinary inquiry on a topic of Contemporary Challenges. This year our cluster theme is *Insiders and Outsiders: How and Why do Social Divisions Exist and Persist?* As a cluster, we will ask some common questions, which we will explore more closely through the specific topic of our class. Our cluster questions are:

What divisions within society, or among different countries, are right and necessary? How are our ideas of “right” and “necessary” shaped by politics and culture, and how have they changed over time? Throughout our common events and individual class meetings, our discussions will focus on understanding how this fundamental tension between groups of “insiders” and “outsiders” both creates contemporary challenges and can be leveraged to overcome them.

Course Materials

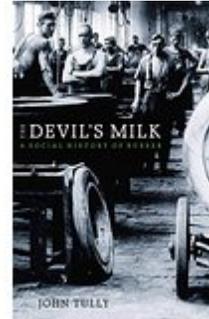
Two books are required for the fall semester and one of these will be partially read in the spring semester, too.



- 1) *American Wasteland: How America Throws Away Nearly Half of Its Food* by Jonathan Bloom

And,

- 2) *The Devil's Milk: A Social History of Rubber* by John Tully



These books are available in the college bookstore and online through Amazon marketplace, Alibris, or any online venue for new and used textbooks. I will also place one copy of each in the library on course reserves where you may check it out for a period of no more than two hours at a time. *Should you depend on this library lending option, be mindful to read ahead of class meeting time as other students will be using these books.*

Additional Readings: Additional articles and book excerpts as noted in the syllabus will be posted on the Moodle site organized into folders for each class period. Please familiarize yourself with the Moodle site early on. The course materials are well-organized here including additional resources and assignments.

Grading

Your total grade will be broken up into in-class and out-of-class learning exercises.

In-class Learning

Attendance and participation	15%
In-class assignments and small group exercises	15%

Out-of-class Learning

Course assignments (short essays/papers)	30%
Exams/Presentation	40%

Attendance I take attendance daily. This is for my records and for yours, should you struggle with some of the course material- we can look at what in-class learning you may have missed. Attendance is key to doing well. Foundational material is given in class lecture, discussion, and in-class application exercises and your engagement with the material depends in large-part on your regular attendance.

Participation As a social science course, I invite you to see this classroom as a laboratory. I consider each of you my social science apprentice. I do not want you to approach learning the material as an exercise in memorization; rather, this course should be experienced as an exercise in training that will enable you to become analysts of

knowledge on your own. I cannot teach you to *do* social science unless you practice in the classroom, through discussion, written responses, and other learning exercises we will undertake. I invite you to be comfortable to participate, even when you are not sure of the best application of a concept or the most effective way to interpret course materials. To this end, I strive to make classroom discussion as comfortable and open a space as possible.

I typically have an interactive teaching style- I like to facilitate a discussion with you as junior scholars. This is so we can “practice” social scientific thinking together and I can help you to refine your analytical skills. If you are quieter I will call on you from time to time. This is not meant to put you on the spot but is an invitation to bring you into the conversation.

That stated, good participation does not simply come from talking a lot. Some students are chattier than others. Note that freely voicing your opinion is not quite as valuable as having meaningfully engaged with the assigned materials beforehand and offering insights or questions about them in discussion (see my participation grading rubric posted in Moodle). Dominating discussion can even sometimes be distracted to the collective learning of others. If you tend to be quitter, I will therefore encourage you to confidently speak up. If you tend to be chattier, I ask that you try to be more selective about your participation to allow others to join in the conversation.

In class-exercises In-class exercises will consist of short question and answer and some written response papers as well as group discussions and group-written responses. Although most in-class activities will be assigned a low-stakes value, together they will comprise your in-class assignments and small group exercises grade.

Exams The biggest percentage of your grade will come from two **exams**, a midterm and a final and a **final presentation** for which instructions will be given on the Moodle site. Following my attendance guidelines, no exams may be rescheduled without a recommendation from your Dean or Disability Services.

Assignments You will also have a few **out-of-class assignments**. I will go over these assignments in class and post instructions on the Moodle site. These assignments will help you process the main lessons from the readings and give me an idea of where clarification of key concepts is needed.

Engagement Guidelines

Classroom Etiquette: No laptops, iPads, iPhones or personal screen devices of any kind are accepted in the classroom unless accompanied by a note from the Office of Disability.

Sociology is an exercise in weighing many points of view and comparing different beliefs and practices. Others’ opinions and beliefs can be challenging to our own personal, deeply held beliefs. It is imperative that we engage in critical discussions while

maintaining respect for others' points of view. The starting point for each discussion should be the material we have read or the data we are considering. Keeping it scientific is the point of the class. As you will learn about sociology, anecdotal experiences and personal opinions are rooted in a particular sociological experience. The point of engagement in this class is not to deny that personal experience but to call it into question, to think analytically about the phenomena we discuss. Furthermore, such discussion should be done in a way that is fair and respectful to all involved. Disrespectful comments and tones will not be tolerated.

Special Needs

If you need any special classroom or testing accommodations please let me know in the first week of class by bringing in a letter from the Office of Disability Services. <http://www.holycross.edu/health-wellness-and-access/office-disability-services>.

Course Schedule

As we move through material, the nature of Montserrat's program means we will at once 1) build on substantive knowledge in the field of sociology pertaining to our theme of global inequality, 2) work on crucial critical thinking and college-level learning skills weekly and sometimes twice a week, and 3) frequently attend events or participate in common readings and thematic discussions organized under the framework of our particular Montserrat Cluster: Contemporary Challenges and the problem of who gets defined as an insider and an outsider.

Once you have read this syllabus in its entirety, send me an email which notes your agreement to the guidelines and expectations outlined in the syllabus, which presents any questions you may have about content or logistics, and which will act as your first participation grade points.

Syllabus Key: Please note that I have neatly organized the syllabus into day, topic, Montserrat events, readings, lecture discussion, and assignment due dates. The topic notes the general concept we will explore in each assigned reading and during discussion and lecture. All readings or films assigned are to be read or viewed in advance of class lecture. Montserrat events held outside of class time (**noted in blue**) are required. Montserrat Learning Skills topics (**noted in green**) will be imparted during class lecture and discussion. Assignments are due at the beginning of the class for which assignment due dates are **noted in red**.

Section I. Globalization and the Global Food Economy

Day/Date	Topic	Readings/Assignments Due
8/31 Wednesday		
9/2 Friday	Course Overview and Introduction, What's magical about sushi?	Moodle: "Global Food and the History of Globalization"

		Watch: <i>The Global Catch</i>
9/7 Wednesday	Global Change and You LS: Reading for Topic and Structure	Moodle: “Sugar Changed the World” “How to Study Hidden Structures in Sociology (And what is magical about modern life?)”
9/9 Friday	Global Change and Others LS: Theory-data-analysis	Moodle: “The New Globalization: The Case of Fresh Produce”
9/14 Wednesday	Waves and Stages of Change LS: Identifying and measuring ‘variables’	Moodle: “Pre-Industrial revolution” and, “The Industrial revolution begins” and, “The Effects of the Industrial Revolution”
9/16 Friday	What about Worcester? <i>Sunday 9/18: Worcester Walking Tour, Attendance Required!</i>	Moodle: “Currents of Industry” (YouTube video on the History of Worcester), “Worcester Celebration 1972” “Understanding Refugees in Worcester”
9/21 Wednesday	The Magic of Consumption LS: Reading for Topic...efficiently	Textbook: <i>American Wasteland</i> , Chapter 4 Worcester History reflection due
9/23 Friday	Magic, From Farm to Table LS: Mapping an argument (test preparation), understanding a theory	Textbook: <i>American Wasteland</i> , Chapter 5 and 6

9/28 Wednesday	Local Experiences, Global Outcomes LS: Testing an argument (paper preparation)	Textbook: <i>American Wasteland</i> , Chapter 7 and 8
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Section II. Clothing and Global Inequality

9/30 Friday	Midterm	Exam!
10/5 Wednesday	Colonialism and its Legacy	Moodle: “Colonialism and Imperialism, 1450-1950” and, “British Occupation of India” and, View maps from <i>The Times Concise Atlas of the World</i> Lab day: Analysis: <i>Behind the Label</i>
10/7 Friday	Distant Realities, Historical and Global Connections	Moodle: Excerpts from <i>Cotton</i> , “Changing Fortunes” (Ch. 8) and. “Two Horse Power” (Ch. 9) Lab Day: Analysis: <i>China Blue</i> Paper Topic and Outline Due
10/12 Wednesday	FALL BREAK	Enjoy!
10/14 Friday	FALL BREAK	Enjoy!
10/19 Wednesday	Slicing up the Value Chain LS: Understanding a theory, testing a hypothesis	Moodle: “The Global Economy, Organization, Governance, and Development” and, “Where am I Wearing?”
10/21 Friday	Slicing up the Value Chain, cntd. <i>Preparatory panel "Beyond 'East vs. West': Challenging Assumptions" in Seelos on Monday, Oct. 24 at 7:30 Attendance Required</i>	Moodle: T-Shirt travels Moodle: “Clash of Ignorance”, “Clash of Civilizations” Paper Topic History Due

Section III. Travel and Connection

10/26 Wednesday	<p>Depending on Global Inequality, Economy</p> <p><i>"Othello in the Seraglio: The Tragedy of Sumbul the Black Eunuch" on some evening Oct. 27 in Brooks Concert Hall, Attendance Required</i></p>	<p>Moodle: "The Modern World System as a Capitalist Economy"</p> <p>"The Absurd Primacy of the Car in American Life"</p>
10/28 Friday	<p>Depending on Global Inequality, Culture</p>	<p>Textbook: <i>Devil's Milk</i>, Chapters 3, 4, and 5</p>
11/2 Wednesday	<p>Depending on Global Inequality, Politics</p>	<p>Textbook: <i>Devil's Milk</i>, Chapter 7-8</p> <p>Paper Draft #1 Due</p>
11/4 Friday	<p>Depending on Global Inequality, cntd.</p>	<p>Textbook: <i>Devil's Milk</i>, Chapter 12, Chapter 14</p> <p>Moodle: Photo montage from <i>Material World</i></p>
11/9 Wednesday	<p>Depending on Global Inequality, cntd.</p>	<p>Textbook: <i>Devil's Milk</i>, Chapter 17, 18, 19, and Epilogue</p>
11/11 Friday	<p>Depending on Global Inequality, cntd.</p>	<p>Moodle: "Smart Phones, Smart Chemistry" and "Our Smart phone addiction is costing the earth"</p>
11/16 Wednesday		<p>Moodle: Excerpt from <i>Blood and Earth</i>, and HC Student Papers, Smartphone Analyses</p>
11/18 Friday	Final Exam	Exam!
11/23 Wednesday	Thanksgiving Break!	Enjoy!
11/25 Friday	Thanksgiving Break!	Enjoy!
11/30 Wednesday		In-class Presentations

12/2 Friday		In-class Presentations
12/7 Wednesday		In-class Presentations
12/9 Friday		In-class Presentations
12/14 Wednesday	Exam Period	
12/16 Friday	Exam Period	Final Papers Due, 5pm on Moodle