

The College of Charleston
Department of Political Science

POLS 405: Capstone Seminar
**A Political Economy of Global Capitalism: Malaria, Corn, T-Shirts and
Power - Explorations in a World System**

Fall Semester, 2009

Syllabus

Dr. Jack Parson
114 Wentworth Street
Telephone 953-7662,
Email parsonj@cofc.edu,

Office Hours:
M,W,F 2-3:00 p.m.
or by appointment

Overview. The Capstone Seminar is taken at the end of the major to practice the application of skills, such as critical analysis, written and oral communication and independent research, introduced at the beginning of the major and developed as you moved through the middle of the major. The Capstone Seminar is designed to serve as a culminating experience in the major and should enable you to put into practice the knowledge of the discipline and its sub-fields and values and skills you have developed as a political science major. Therefore, although completing a capstone seminar is a requirement of the major, it is not a “weeding out” course or a final examination in the major.

The subject of capstone seminars varies each semester and with each professor. The present capstone revolves around the general topic of the political economy of global capitalism. This topic encompasses virtually all aspects of human life on the planet. Since we cannot possibly deal comprehensively and in detail with such a topic, we will be selective beginning with an overview of world-systems theory and then taking up four very specific and, I would argue, basic aspects of the global political economy: health, food, clothing and power. In this process we will be dealing with political theory, substantive elements of all of the sub-fields, and the relationship between political knowledge and practice as well as the relationship between political science and other disciplines in the social sciences.

The common reading we will all be prepared to discuss is contained in all or part of five books, four of which are available in the bookstore and detailed here:

1. Immanuel Wallerstein, World-Systems Theory: An Introduction (the selections from this work are available on Ereserve);
2. Fiametta Rocco, The Miraculous Fever Tree;
3. James C. McCann, Maize and Grace: Africa’s Encounter With a New World Crop 1500-2000;
4. Pietra Rivoli, The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy: An Economist Examines the Markets, Power, and Politics of World Trade, and;
5. Naomi Klein, The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism.

In addition, selections from Paul Farmer's Pathologies of Power (related to health), Mushita and Thompson's Biopiracy of Biodiversity (related to food), Ferguson's Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order (related to clothing and globalization) and Kinzer's Overthrow (related to disaster capitalism) are on Ereserve in the library. The password for Ereserve is "Liberation."

Our reading and discussion of world-system theory and the four selected substantive elements of it will be a foundation for your development of an individual research project resulting in a research paper and the presentation of your research in class in the latter part of the semester.

The outline following this introduction, and the timetable in a spreadsheet at the end of the syllabus, will provide detail on the common reading we will all discuss, the assignments you will complete, and an introduction to the formulation and execution of a research project.

I. A Frame of Reference

We begin with Wallerstein's overview of world-systems theory, a perspective that challenges a narrow view of disciplines and introduces an historical approach to understanding contemporary realities. A four-page paper, topic TBA, based on Wallerstein's work will be due on September 14.

II. Malaria

Rocco's book on quinine and malaria relates the specific story of the discovery of quinine and the development of synthetic prophylactics over a long period of time. This perspective allows us to test some of the propositions Wallerstein puts forward about the lengthy history of the current world system and the necessity of developing an interdisciplinary perspective. The supplementary reading from Paul Farmer's book (Chapter 5, "Health, Healing, and Social Justice," and Chapter 9, "Rethinking Health and Human Rights," pp. 139-159 and 213-246) broadens the discussion to encompass aspects of the global inequality of access to health care in our own era. A four page paper, topic TBA, based on Rocco and Farmer's books in relation to world-system theory will be due on September 28.

III. Corn

Jim McCann's history of the global expansion of maize production adds to the evidence for the development of the world system and its current effects on food as well as disease particularly on the African continent. Mushita and Thompson (Chapter 1, "The Ancient Future," and Chapter 2, "Biopiracy – Yesterday and Tomorrow," pp. 3-20 and 21-57) introduce a historical overview of the past, present and future attempt to harness the production of food for profit. A four-page paper based on this work in relation to world systems theory and global health will be due on October 5.

IV. Clothing and Globalization

Rivoli analyzes the current process of economic globalization by following the process of producing and distributing clothing, T-shirts in particular, and how national and global manufacturing and markets characterize the current period. Ferguson (Chapter 1, "Globalizing Africa? Observations from an Inconvenient Continent," and

Chapter 2, “Paradoxes of Sovereignty and Independence: ‘Real’ and ‘Pseudo-‘ Nation-States and the Depoliticization of Poverty,” pp. 1-25 and 26-49) introduces some of the impact of the general process of globalization on African countries. A four-page paper based on Rivoli and Ferguson’s work in relation to world systems theory, and the politics of food and health will be due on October 26.

V. Power

Naomi Klein explores the past thirty years in relation to how the United States has taken advantage of disasters in order to remake the world in its image and how this is resisted by the people upon whom it is imposed. Kinzer (Chapter 2, “Bound for Goo-Goo Land,” Chapter 8, “We’re Going to Smash Him,” and Chapter 13, “Thunder Run,” pp. 31-55, 170-194, and 281-299) most specifically analyzes cases where the U.S. Government effects forcible regime change in three cases: Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines at the time of the Spanish American War, the case of Chile and Augusto Pinochet, and the invasion of Iraq. A four-page paper based on Klein and Kinzer’s work in relation to world-systems theory, the politics of food and health, and the politics of globalization will be due on November 16.

VI. Research Project

Our exploration of these aspects of the political economy of global capitalism will cover the period from the beginning of the semester to approximately November 11. However, beginning with September 14 you will identify an aspect of the politics of the global political economy that is particularly important or interesting and that can form the basis for research and analysis. We will discuss this process regularly but in general the topic may be directly related to some part of our common reading or may be related to an aspect of human welfare and global political economy that we have not touched on. You will be encouraged to formulate a research project consistent with an interest in any of the sub-fields or in relation to your future professional plans. A first draft of a research proposal will be due on September 30, we will have individual meetings discussing the proposals the week of October 5 and reports on progress will be due on October 21 and November 11. The last section of the course, from November 16 to December 12 will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of research results in class.

I would emphasize that the theoretical orientation we will discuss and the four specific aspects chosen do not reflect the range of possibilities, perspectives, interconnections or the order of importance of all of the elements of the political economy of global capitalism. For instance, three areas of global human welfare not directly addressed in our reading could relate to gender, human rights and environmental welfare. And each or a combination of those can be related to malaria, corn, t-shirts and power. Your specialized research design will need to be very focused on answering a specific question involving elements and relationships related to relationships in the political economy of global capitalism.

In so far as it is possible to do so, the research topics should be compatible with the specific interest you have in one or more subfields of the discipline. In addition, it will be allowable for research projects to be collaborative, i.e. two or at most three students may work on a single project. This will have to be approved by the professor

and the group must understand that the grade given to the research paper/presentation will be a group grade. Therefore, each group, should you chose to conduct research in that way, will have to deal internally with the “free rider” problem.

From November 16 to the end of the semester class meetings will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of the research projects. Three projects will be presented and discussed each period. Draft research papers or summaries will hopefully be circulated in advance via email in order to facilitate both the presentation and discussion. Participation grades will depend in part on your preparation and participation in the discussion of your colleagues’ work. The final paper will be due on Friday, December 11.

The course will conclude with a discussion of our accomplishment in creating a framework for understanding the political economy of global capitalism reflecting back on our beginning in world-system theory and the four areas of human welfare with which we began.

Additional Course Information

Attendance. Students must attend and actively participate in class. Ten percent of the grade will be dependent on attendance and active participation.

Required Reading. Students will be held responsible for the content of all readings listed in the syllabus. Meeting this responsibility will be evident in the forms of class participation, in papers and in the research projects.

Timetable. The last page of the syllabus is a daily plan for the semester. It is subject to change depending upon our progress but indicates when reading should be done and also the due dates for written work.

Conduct of Class. Assuming that members of the class read the material to be discussed before the class meets, we will conduct the class as a seminar where I will guide the topics but members of the seminar will develop the discussion. However, I am a realist and when and if necessary, a lecture format will be used. The latter class process will be the least interesting and useful for both of us.

Outside Consultation. I am available via email most of the time, during posted office hours, by appointment and on a drop-in basis. I try to maintain an open door (virtual and physical) policy whenever possible to answer questions and discuss issues arising in the course.

Course Assessment.

The assignments to be graded and the proportion of the final grade attributable to each one are as follows:

- 1. World Systems Theory paper = 10%
- 2. Politics of Global Health paper = 10%
- 3. Politics of Food paper = 15%
- 4. Politics of Globalization paper = 15%
- 5. Politics of Power paper = 15%
- 6. Individual participation = 10%
- 7. Research project/paper/presentation = 25%

The numerical/letter grade equivalency used is the following:

94 - 100 = A	73-76 = C
90 - 93 = A-	70-72 = C-
87 - 89 = B+	67-69 = D+
83 - 86 = B	63-66 = D
80 - 82 = B-	60-62 =D-
77 - 79 = C+	0-59 = F

Special Circumstances. If you have any kind of special circumstances that I should be aware of, please let me know at your earliest opportunity. If you have SNAP accommodations of any kind, please make appropriate notifications and arrangements with the Center for Students with Disabilities within the first week of class. Alternatively, if you have any sort of undiagnosed learning disability, a physical impairment of any kind that will require special arrangements for exams or papers, if you are an athlete or member of any club or organization that will travel, let me know. I will keep the information you share with me strictly confidential, but in order to create the best environment for your academic success, I need to know if there are circumstances that may interfere with your performance in the course.

Academic Dishonesty. When you enrolled in the College of Charleston, you signed an Honor Code. I expect you to abide by that code and it is the only way for you to maintain the integrity and value of your degree. If you are found to have plagiarized any portion of any paper, you will fail my course and I will turn over the case to the Honor Board and vigorously pursue the maximum disciplinary action. If you have any questions or are unsure what constitutes cheating or plagiarism – ask. Ignorance is unacceptable as a defense.

This course outline, reading list, requirements, and course contents are subject to change, within reason, at the sole discretion of the professor.

POLS 405, FALL 2009				
Daily Plan				
Day	Date	Topic	Reading Assignment	Assessment
Wednesday	26-Aug	Intro Capstone		
Monday	31-Aug	World Systems Analysis	Wallerstein, chap. 2, then Intro,	
Wednesday	2-Sep	World Systems Analysis	Then 1, then 3, 4 & 5.	
Monday	7-Sep	World Systems Analysis		
Wednesday	9-Sep	Health: Malaria	Rocco, Miraculous Fever Tree	
Monday	14-Sep	Health: Malaria/Discussion of Research Project		World Systems
Wednesday	16-Sep	Health & Wealth	Farmer, Pathologies of Power, pp.	
Monday	21-Sep	Health & Wealth	139-159; 213-246	
Wednesday	23-Sep	Food: A World of Corn	McCann, Maize & Grace	
Monday	28-Sep	Food: A World of Corn		Pols of Global
Wednesday	30-Sep	Politics of Food	Mushita & Thompson, 3-57	Research Proje
Monday	5-Oct	clothing: global cotton/textiles	Rivoli, Travels of a T-Shirt	Pols of Food, 1
Wednesday	7-Oct	clothing: global cotton/textiles		Individual Mee
Monday	12-Oct	Fall Break - No Class		Research Proje
Wednesday	14-Oct	clothing: global cotton/textiles		
Monday	19-Oct	clothing & globalization		
Wednesday	21-Oct	clothing & globalization	James Ferguson, Global Shadows, 1-49	Research Proje
Monday	26-Oct	A Political Economy of Power	Klein, Shock Doctrine	Pols of Globaliz
Wednesday	28-Oct	A Political Economy of Power		
Monday	2-Nov	A Political Economy of Power		
Wednesday	4-Nov	The U.S. & Regime Change	Kinzer, 31-55, 170-195, 281-299	
Monday	9-Nov	The U.S. & Regime Change		
Wednesday	11-Nov	World Systems, Health, Food, Clothing & Power	Summary & Synthesis	Research Proje
Monday	16-Nov	Presentations (3)		Political Econo
Wednesday	18-Nov	Presentations (3)		
Monday	23-Nov	Presentations (3)		
Wednesday	25-Nov	Thanksgiving - no class		
Monday	30-Nov	Presentations (3)		
Wednesday	2-Dec	Presentations (3)		class participat
Monday	7-Dec	Presentations (3)		Research pape
Friday	11-Dec	Final Presentations (6) 4-7 p.m.		