

**Wealth and Culture (070:303), Fall 2017**  
Tues. 2:15-5:15 p.m., Ruth Adams Bldg., Rm. 302

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## **WEALTH AND CULTURE**

In 2017 there are more than 2,000 billionaires in the world. The richest one percent of the planet's people own more wealth than the other 99 percent combined. More than one billion people live on less than \$1.25 per day.

What do these numbers mean? What are the origins of today's great divide between rich and poor? How are wealth and poverty experienced? How do cultural understandings of wealth differ in North America, Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe? How do ideas about wealth and the purpose of the economy shape perceptions of self, family, society, nation, and citizenship?

This course introduces students to key concepts, theories, and debates in the study of wealth and culture. Themes we will explore include what constitutes wealth, why it is accumulated, how competition for it is institutionalized; how it is won, lost, exchanged, and displayed; and what moral and social obligations people believe its possession entails. The class draws on readings in anthropology as well as other fields, and it is intended to help students develop critical analytical skills for interpreting today's global wealth divide as it is portrayed in both mass media and scholarship. The class format is a mix of lectures, discussion, and films.

### **Core Curriculum Goals**

Group I: 21st Century Challenges

- a. Analyze the degree to which forms of human difference shape a person's experiences of and perspectives on the world.
- d. Analyze issues of social justice across local and global contexts.

### **Department Learning Goals Met by this Course**

Identify, explain, and historically contextualize fundamental concepts, modes of analysis, and central questions concerning the anthropological study of wealth, and demonstrate proficient use of this knowledge. Students will be able to demonstrate proficiency in their use of critical thinking skills; and will be able to express themselves knowledgeably and proficiently in writing and speaking about central issues in this area of scholarly inquiry.

This interdisciplinary course will enable students to probe popular conceptions of the economy, demystify its workings, understand historical reasons for today's great divide between affluence and poverty, explore how people cope with increasing economic precariousness, analyze how rules of economic competition are defined and institutionalized, and assess competing notions of economic justice in a world where the incomes of the wealthiest individuals exceed those of entire nations.

### **Course Objectives**

- To provide students with concrete knowledge about historical reasons for today's great divide between affluence and poverty, and to examine how people cope with economic precariousness.
- To explore how ideas about wealth and the purpose of the economy shape perceptions of self,

family, society, nation, and citizenship.

- To introduce students to key concepts and debates in the study of consumption, production, and exchange; and to analyze the place of culture in those debates.
- To help students develop critical analytical skills for interpreting today's global economic challenges as they are portrayed in both mass media and scholarship.

**Anthropology Department Learning Goals Met by this Course:**

1. Students gain knowledge that will allow them to identify, explain, and historically contextualize the primary objectives, fundamental concepts, modes of analysis, and central questions in their major field and demonstrate proficiency in their use of this knowledge.
2. Students are able to demonstrate proficiency in the use of critical thinking skills.

**Pre-requisites:** None. If you have not taken any anthropology courses, and you would like to learn about the field's core concepts and theories, see Kenneth J. Guest's introductory textbook: *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age*. WW. Norton Publishers. (Copies are available in Rutgers libraries.)

**Required Texts:** Articles and book chapters will be available on the Sakai course site or through databases such as Wiley Online Library that are accessible through Rutgers libraries. Supplemental materials (such as ethnographic, documentary, and popular films) will be available online or on reserve in the Douglass Library Media Center.

**Requirements** include regular attendance, completing assigned readings on time (so that students are prepared to discuss them in class the week they are assigned), two in-class exams during the semester, a 30-minute quiz during week 13, pop quizzes, and short in-class oral presentations. Quizzes and exams will cover assigned readings, lectures, and films. There will be no final exam.

**Grades** will be determined as follows:

Pop quizzes = 20%  
Exam #1 (Oct. 17) = 25%  
Exam #2 (Nov. 14) = 25%  
30-minute quiz (Dec. 5) = 15%  
Attendance, participation, in-class presentations = 15%

**Make-ups of the two exams and 30-minute quiz will *not* be allowed except in cases of serious illness.** If you miss an exam or the 30-minute quiz, please notify the professor of the reason no more than 24 hours later. (Be sure to notify the professor by both voice mail and email.)

*\*Travel plans are **not** an acceptable reason for missing a quiz.\** Make your travel arrangements so that you will be in class when quizzes are given.

Pop quizzes cannot be made up, but the lowest score will be dropped when calculating grades.

**Office hours** will be announced during class. Please feel free to drop in or make an appointment, and please let the professor know if you would like any assistance with course material.

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend all classes. (See information below about required advance notification for a necessary absence due to a religious holiday.)

If you miss a class, please use the University absence reporting website

<https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. **\*\*Students are required to see a Dean of Students for assistance in verifying the circumstances of any absence longer than one week, or when an exam is missed.\*\***

Points will be deducted for class absences as follows: 20% of the total possible points for the attendance and participation portion of the grade will be deducted if two classes are missed; 65% will be deducted if three classes are missed; 100% if four classes are missed. Anyone who misses three or more class meetings is advised to drop the course.

**Religious Holidays:** Please notify the instructor during the first two weeks of the semester if you will observe a religious holiday that will prevent you from attending a class meeting. You may arrange to make up the missed session and any required work (sometimes through an oral quiz on assigned readings)—if you ***notify the instructor during the first two weeks of the semester.***

**Lateness:** To avoid disrupting the class, students should arrive on time.

**Classroom atmosphere:** We are all responsible for creating a friendly, relaxed, and productive classroom atmosphere. That requires listening respectfully to everyone, phrasing comments constructively and politely, turning off cell phones and other electronic devices, coming to class on time, and refraining from reading the newspaper or working on other assignments during class. (***No recording devices may be used during class.***)

**Communication:** Students are responsible for timely attention to email and Sakai postings for this course and therefore should check the Sakai site and their Rutgers email accounts regularly. Dates and assignments may change; all changes will be announced in class or posted on Sakai or both. To access Sakai, go to <http://sakai.rutgers.edu>, log in with your Rutgers userid and password, and use the course membership tool to access class materials.

**Students with disabilities** requesting accommodations: Please follow the procedures outlined at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html>.

**Ethics/Academic Integrity:** Read the Rutgers academic integrity policy at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>. Violations include cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity. You are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is. For tips about how to consult sources without plagiarizing, and how to take notes so that you don't plagiarize by accident, see [http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid\\_plagiarism](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism).

### **Additional Course Resources (Optional):**

--Mona Chalabi. 2015. "Meet the 80 People Who Are As Rich as Half the World." *FiveThirtyEight*. Available at:

<http://fivethirtyeight.com/datalab/meet-the-80-people-who-are-as-rich-as-half-the-world/>

--Michael Lambek and Janice Boddy. 1997. "Introduction: Culture in Question." *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 41(3):3-23.

--Robert Borofsky, Fredrik Barth, Richard A. Shweder, Lars Rodsdeth, and Nomi Maya Stolzenberg, 2001, "WHEN: A Conversation about Culture." *American Anthropologist* 103(2):432-446.

--Lila Abu-Lughod, 1991, "Writing against culture." In *Recapturing Anthropology*, Richard G. Fox, ed., pp. 137-162. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research.

--Current and historical data on income inequality in the United States, by economists Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez: <<http://elsa.berkeley.edu/~saez/>>

### **Schedule of Topics and Readings**

## Week 1/Sept. 5 ~ Introduction

--(3-minute video) United for a Fair Economy. "How much do the wealthiest own? A 3-minute demonstration in sand." <http://www.faireconomy.org/videos>

--"Forbes 2017 Billionaires List: Meet the Richest People on the Planet." Browse: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kerryadolan/2017/03/20/forbes-2017-billionaires-list-meet-the-richest-people-on-the-planet/>

--Film: "Born Rich." Approx. 75 minutes. Available online at various places, including YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maWdDl\\_OjIQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maWdDl_OjIQ)

While he was a student at NYU, Jamie Johnson (heir to the Johnson & Johnson fortune) made this documentary film about his wealthy twenty-something friends. It includes interviews with Ivanka Trump, Georgianna Bloomberg, Josiah Hornblower, S.I. Newhouse, Cody Franchetti, Stephanie Ercklentz, Christina Floyd, and Juliet Hartford.

**Optional:** A 2013 *Daily Mail* (UK) article looks at what the individuals interviewed in Johnson's film were doing a decade later: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2451031/Jamie-Johnson-documentary-A-decade-Johnson--Johnson-heir-lifted-lid-growing-millions-HBO-documentary-got-sued-MailOnline-looks-films-precocious-stars-doing-now.html>

## Week 2/ Sept. 12 ~ Culture and the Great Wealth Gap

--Robert L. Frank, 2007, *Richistan: A Journey Through the American Wealth Boom and the Lives of the New Rich*, pp. 1-36. New York: Crown Publishers.

--Paul Krugman, 2002, "The End of Middle-Class America (and the Triumph of the Plutocrats)." *New York Times Magazine*, 20 October, pp. 62-68, 76, 78, 141-142.

**Week 3/Sept. 19 ~ Wealth Across Time and Space:** How much inequality in the Roman Empire, 19-century England, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Kenya, and the contemporary European Union and United States?

--Branko Milanovic. 2011. *The Haves and the Have-Nots*. Excerpts: "Romance and Riches" (pp. 33-36), "How Unequal Was the Roman Empire?" (pp. 46-52), "How Unequal Is Today's World?" (pp. 115-119), "The Three Generations of Obamas" (pp. 135-140), "How Different Are the United States and the European Union?" (pp. 176-181). New York: Basic Books/Perseus.

--Ezra Klein. 2015. "10 Startling Facts About Global Wealth Inequality." *Washington Post*, January 22. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/01/22/10-startling-facts-about-global-wealth-inequality/>

--Emma Seery and Ana Caistor Arendar. 2014. "Extreme Inequality: A Story That Needs Ending," pp. 27-54 in *Even It Up: Time to End Extreme Inequality*. Oxford: Oxfam GB. Available at: [https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/cr-even-it-up-extremeinequality-291014](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/cr-even-it-up-extremeinequality-291014)

## **Week 4/Sept. 26 ~ The Migration “Crisis” at Europe’s Africa Frontier and the Illegality Industry**

--Ruben Andersson. 2014. *Illegality, Inc.: Clandestine Migration and the Business of Bordering Europe*, excerpts TBA. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

## **Week 5/Oct. 3 ~ Media Matters: The False-Equivalence Struggles**

--James Fallows. 2015. “Today’s Hero of the False-Equivalence Struggles: *On the Media*.” *The Atlantic*, September 26.  
<http://www.theatlantic.com/notes/2015/09/todays-hero-of-the-false-equivalence-struggles-on-the-media/407557/>

--National Public Radio (NPR) / WNYC. 2015. “Those Who Reject Mainstream Climate Science.” 2015. *On the Media*, September 25 (8-minute podcast).

## **Week 6/Oct. 10 ~ Beyond the “Culture of Poverty” Debates**

--Ta-Nehisi Coates. 2015. “The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration.” *The Atlantic*, October. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/10/the-black-family-in-the-age-ofmass-incarceration/403246/>

--Brett Williams, 2010, “Body and Soul: Profits from Poverty,” pp.224-237, in *The Insecure American*, Catherine Besteman and Hugh Gusterson, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Video: “In Conversation With Ta-Nehisi Coates.” *The Atlantic*, October 16, 2015.  
<http://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/410815/in-conversation-with-ta-nehisi-coates/>

Reference (optional):

--Daniel Geary. 2015. “The Moynihan Report: An Annotated Edition.” *The Atlantic*, September 14.  
<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/the-moynihan-report-an-annotatededition/404632/>

**Week 7/Oct. 17 ~ EXAM #1** (mixed format: fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, true/false, short narrative answers)

## **Week 8/Oct. 24 ~ The Great Risk Shift**

----Jacob S. Hacker. 2006. *The Great Risk Shift: The Assault on American Jobs, Families, Health Care, and Retirement and How You Can Fight Back*, pp. ix-60. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

--Reed Hastings (CEO, Netflix), 2009, “Please Raise My Taxes.” *New York Times*, February 6, p. A27.

## **Week 9/Oct. 31 ~ Wall Street and the Economy of Appearances**

--Anna Tsing, 2000, "Inside the Economy of Appearances." *Public Culture* 12(1):115-144.

--Karen Ho, 2005, "Situating Global Capitalisms: A View from Wall Street Investment Banks." *Cultural Anthropology* 20(1): 68-96.

---Michael G. Powell, 2010, "Anthropologist as Prognosticator: Gillian Tett and the Credit Derivatives Market." *American Anthropologist* 112(1):142-143.

[To access Powell's article, go to <http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/cms/findarticles> and then to "search indexes and databases." Log in with your netid, and then go to "indexes and databases" and then to Wiley Online Library and enter search terms for the Powell article.]

Film: *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* (excerpts)

## **Week 10/Nov. 7 ~ Global Financial Crisis**

--Michael Lewis and David Einhorn, 2009, "The End of the Financial World as We Know It," *New York Times*, January 4. (includes part 2, "How To Repair a Broken Financial World")

--Simon Johnson, 2009, "The Quiet Coup." *The Atlantic*, May.

Film: *Inside Job*

### **EXTRA CREDIT/OPTIONAL:**

--Ho, Karen. 2012. "Occupy Finance and the Paradox/Possibilities of Productivity." Theorizing the Contemporary." *Cultural Anthropology* website, May 15. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/340-occupy-finance-and-the-paradox-possibilities-of-productivity>

## **Week 11/Nov. 14 ~ Success Narratives**

### **EXAM #2 (includes this week's readings)**

--United for a Fair Economy. 2012. "Born on Third Base: What the Forbes 400 Really Says About Economic Equality and Opportunity in America."

--Chuck Collins, Mike Lapham and Scott Klinger. 2004. *I Didn't Do It Alone: Society's Contribution to Individual Wealth and Success*. Boston: United for a Fair Economy.

**\*\*THANKSGIVING RECESS, Nov. 23-26. Note change in designation of class days on Tuesday, Nov. 21: Thursday classes meet on Tuesday during the holiday week.**

## **Week 12/Nov. 28 ~ Beyond Empowerment: Micro-loans, NGOs, Culture**

--Julia Elyachar, 2002, "Empowerment Money: The World Bank, Non-Governmental Organizations, and the Value of Culture in Egypt." *Public Culture* 14(3):493-513.

### **Week 13/ ~ Dec. 5 ~ How To Think Ethnographically About an Economy**

--**30-minute quiz** (includes Hannah Appel reading)

--Hannah Appel. 2017. "Toward an Ethnography of the National Economy." Cultural Anthropology 37(2):294-322. <https://doi.org/10.14506/ca32.2.09>.

### **Week 14/Dec. 12 ~ Final Thoughts**

--Readings TBA.

--Short presentations by students.

[30-minute quiz if Dec. 5 is a snow day]