In 2015, there are more than 1,800 billionaires in the world. They possess an aggregate net worth of $7.05 trillion. Their private jets, vacation homes, mansions, cars, yachts, and attire are objects of both desire and envy. While globalized images that fuel fantasies of luxurious consumption are ubiquitous, the possibility of living out those dreams of vast wealth remains minimal or nonexistent for most of the world’s people.

How are wealth and poverty experienced, and how does the global economic crisis register in the daily lives of people in North America, Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe? Why do some anthropologists find the notion of crisis itself to be problematic? What do economic experts say about the crisis and why do some normalize it? Looking beyond media headlines, how do precariousness, austerity programs, and economic crisis shape new political subjectivities and debates among citizens about the compatibility of wealth and democracy, and about what constitutes a fair economy? Why has the gap between the ultra-rich and the rest widened to historically unprecedented levels? How has the nature of wealth changed over time? How do people cope with increasing economic precariousness? Course themes 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 format of class meetings includes lectures, group discussions, films, in-class writing exercises, and work groups. Readings are drawn from anthropology as well as other disciplines.

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.

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.

Course Objectives

• Help students develop critical analytical skills for interpreting today’s global economic crisis as it is portrayed in both mass media and scholarship.
• Provide students with concrete knowledge about historical reasons for today’s great divide between affluence and poverty, and examine how people cope with economic precariousness.
• Introduce students to key concepts and debates in the study of consumption, production, and exchange; analyze the place of culture in those debates; and analyze how rules of economic competition are defined and institutionalized.
• Explore how ideas about wealth and the purpose of the economy shape perceptions of self, family, society, nation, and citizenship.
• Assess competing notions of economic justice in a world where the incomes of the wealthiest individuals exceed those of entire nations.

**Required Texts:**

Articles and book chapters will be available on the Sakai course site or through databases such as AnthroSource that are accessible online through Rutgers libraries. Readings are drawn from anthropology, economics, political science, history, sociology, psychology, journalism, and literature. Supplemental materials include ethnographic and popular films.

**Requirements** include regular attendance, completing assigned readings on time (so that you are prepared to discuss them in class), participation in class discussions, two in-class examinations during the semester, a 30-minute quiz during week 14, and pop quizzes. Quizzes and exams will cover assigned readings, lectures, and films. There will be no final exam.

**Pop quizzes** will be given during the first 10 minutes of some class meetings. These quizzes cannot be made up and cannot be taken by those who arrive late to class. The lowest pop quiz score will be dropped.

**Grades** will be determined as follows:
- Pop quizzes = 20%
- In-class exam #1 (Oct. 8) = 25%
- In-class exam #2 (Nov 5) = 25%
- 30-minute quiz during week 14 (Dec. 8--or Dec. 10 if Dec. 8 is a snow day) = 15%
- Attendance and participation = 15%

**Pre-requisite:** Anthropology 101.

**Make-ups of the two in-class exams and 30-minute quiz will not be allowed except in emergencies (medical or death in the family).** If you miss an exam you must notify the instructor of the reason no more than 24 hours later, and provide documentation of the reason. (Be sure to notify the instructor by both voice mail and email.)

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

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend all classes. The only excused absences are for medical reasons, a death in the family, or a religious holiday. (See statement below about requirement for advance notification of a necessary absence due to a religious holiday.)

If you expect to miss one or two classes (for allowable reasons), please use the University absence reporting website [https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/](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: 30% of the total possible points for the attendance and participation portion of the grade will be deducted if three classes are missed; 75% will be deducted if four classes are missed; 100% if five classes are missed. Anyone who misses five or more class meetings (28% of the total number of 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. Repeated lateness will result in substantial point deductions from the attendance portion of your grade.

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. How well you practice these common courtesies will be reflected in the class attendance and participation portion of your grade. *(No recording devices may be used during class.)*

Communication: All 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: Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where she or he is officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. If the documentation supports a student’s request for reasonable accommodations, her campus’s disability services office will provide a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form.

Ethics/Academic Integrity: See the Rutgers academic integrity policy at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml. 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 information about how to identify and avoid academic dishonesty, see <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/resources-for-students/>.

Additional Course Resources:
--The World Top Incomes Database (Facundo Alvaredo, Tony Atkinson, Thomas Piketty, and Emmanuel Saez): http://topincomes.parisschoolofeconomics.eu

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SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Week 1/Sept. 1 & 3 The New Elite

and Shuster.

Film: *Born Rich* (excerpt)

Week 2/Sept. 10 **CULTURE AND THE GREAT WEALTH GAP**

[Note: Monday classes meet on Tuesday, Sept. 8]


Film: *Born Rich* (excerpt)

**Reference/optional:**

“Inequality and New York’s Subway. *The New Yorker*, April 16, 2013 (interactive infographic shows how median household income changes from station to station):


Week 3/ Sept. 15 & 17 **EXIT ZERO**

See also [http://www.exitzeroproject.org](http://www.exitzeroproject.org)

Film: *Exit Zero* (rough cut, excerpt)

Week 4/ Sept. 22 & 24 **THE GREAT RISK SHIFT**

--Jane Collins, 2012, “Theorizing Wisconsin’s 2011 Protests,” *American Ethnologist* 39(1):6-20. [To access Collins’ article, go to [http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/cms/findarticles](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 term for the journal *American Ethnologist* and then for the Collins article.]

Film: *Exit Zero* (rough cut, excerpt)
Week 5/Sept. 29 & Oct. 1 THE INSECURE AMERICAN


Film: Two American Families (Bill Moyers), if available, or Roger and Me (excerpts)

Week 6/ Oct. 6 & 8 SECRETS OF SUCCESS IN AMERICA…AND THE CONVERSATION WE AVOID


--Stephanie Greenwood, ed., 2007, 10 Excellent Reasons Not To Hate Taxes. New York and London: The New Press. 3 Excerpts: David Cay Johnston, “Introduction” (pp. 1-9); Matthew Gardner, “Progressive taxes are a good deal” (pp. 10-21); and Chuck Collins, “Taxes pay for economic opportunity” (pp. 85-96).

**EXAM #1, Thursday, Oct. 8

Week 7/ Oct. 13 & 15 ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE “MYSTIQUE” OF FINANCE

[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, Part 1

Week 8/Oct. 20 & 22  WALL STREET AND THE ECONOMY OF APPEARANCES


Film: Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room, Part 2

Week 9/Oct. 27 & 29  GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

--Short online videos explaining the crisis TBA.

Film: Inside Job

Optional/Supplemental Resources

Week 10/Nov. 3 & 5  THEORIZING CULTURE, ECONOMY, CRISIS


**EXAM #2, Thursday, Nov. 5**
Week 11/Nov. 10 & 12  THE WAL-MART DEBATE

--Wal-Mart Foundation
--Wal-Mart Watch
http://walmartwatch.com
http://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/sep/05/walmart-workers-strike-us-thursday
--Updates on Wal-Mart protests to be added.

Film: Wal*Mart: The High Cost of Low Price

Week 12/Nov. 17 & 19 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/14/opinion/why-i-am-leaving-goldman-sachs.html?pagewanted=all

Film: Wal*Mart: The High Cost of Low Price

Reference/optional

Week 13/Nov. 24 GENDER, CORPORATE DISCIPLINE, MOBBING


**THANKSGIVING break, Nov. 26 – 29**

Week 14/Dec. 1 & 3 HUMAN ECONOMY, MORAL ECONOMY?

“indexes and databases” and to Wiley Online Library; follow instructions from week 4.


Week 15/Dec. 8 & 10 **ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE**


**30-MINUTE QUIZ, TUESDAY, DEC. 8 (15% of total grade)**

[If December 8 is a snow day, the 30-minute quiz will be on Thursday, December 10]