

Interdisciplinary Honors Seminar, Fall 2016

01:090:293:01 (Index #13336, 3 credits)

T 1:10-4:10 p.m., Honors College, Rm E128

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RETHINKING THE GLOBAL WEALTH DIVIDE

Global wealth inequality today attracts ever more attention from media, world leaders, and scholars. The rhetorical visibility of inequality has been enhanced by expressions of concern from Pope Francis, IMF managing director Christine Lagarde, President Barack Obama, Nobel-Prize-winning economists, and even hosts of the annual World Economic Forum at Davos, who termed inequality one of our most pressing “global risks.”

In 2015, the wealth of the 62 richest people in the world equaled that of the entire poorest half of the world’s population. The top one percent own more wealth than the other 99 percent of the world’s people combined. More than one billion people live on less than \$1.25 per day.

If those statistics startle us, they also provoke debate about inequality’s causes and morality, and they inspire dreams of a global moral community and redemptive humanitarianism. Why do some consider rising wealth inequality to be an inevitable or evolutionary process, while others vigorously contest this notion? What causes wealth inequality? Is inequality harmful for all? How have popular discourses as well as scholarly thinking about wealth inequality changed in recent years? How may rising inequality threaten a parallel trend—namely the decline between the early 1980s and the early 2000s in the number and percentage of the world’s people living in absolute poverty? Why do nearly three-quarter’s of the world’s people live in countries where the gap between rich and poor is greater now than it was three decades ago? How are wealth inequalities connected to long-standing differences rooted in gender, race, ethnicity, and other identities?

These questions and more are the focus of the interdisciplinary honors seminar “Rethinking the Global Wealth Divide.” Readings and lectures incorporate geographically diverse examples and are drawn from anthropology, history, political science, philosophy, psychology, economics, geography, sociology, literary and cultural commentary, and news media. The class format will include lectures, group discussion, films, and brief oral presentations by students (such as commentaries on assigned readings or on supplemental material the student has researched). There will be in-class writing assignments and quizzes, as well as a 10-page paper (2,500 words) on a topic selected by the student in consultation with the professor, or on a topic selected from a list provided by the professor. The professor will provide students feedback on paper drafts so that they can build their research and writing skills. The course will fulfill certification requirements as part of the SAS Core Curriculum for the goal “Writing and Communication” (WCd).

Course Objectives:

- Help students develop critical analytical skills for interpreting today’s global wealth divide 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 introduce students to key concepts, theories, and debates in the study of wealth differences.

- Examine how people in diverse geographic settings cope with both wealth and economic precarity.
- Explore how ideas about wealth and the purpose of the economy shape perceptions of self, family, society, nation, and citizenship.
- Enhance students' capacities to communicate scholarly ideas clearly in oral and written forms.

This course fulfills the following Core learning goal of the School of Arts and Sciences, Cognitive Skills and Processes: goal t [WCd] ~Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry.

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 you are prepared to discuss them in class the week they are assigned), short oral presentations, three in-class quizzes, and a short paper (10 pages/2,500 words) that will be due on Monday, December 19. Paper drafts are due in class on December 13. Quizzes will cover assigned readings, lectures, and films. There will be no final exam.

Grades will be determined as follows:

Quiz #1 (Oct. 4) = 15%

Quiz #2 (Nov. 8) = 15%

Quiz #3 (Dec. 6) = 15%

10-page/2,500-word paper (due Monday, Dec. 19) = 30%

[Note: Paper drafts due in class Dec. 13.]

Attendance, participation, in-class reading responses, and presentations = 25%

Make-ups of the three in-class quizzes will *not* be allowed except in cases of serious illness.

If you miss a 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.

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: 25% 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>.

SAS Honors Program Integrity Guidelines and Pledge

<http://www.sashonors.rutgers.edu/academics/integrity-pledge>

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.

Additional Course Resources (Optional):

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

Schedule of Topics and Readings

[Note: The outline below does not include guest speakers and films. Information about these will be provided during the semester.]

Week 1/Sept. 6 ~ Introduction to the Seminar

--(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>

--"The World's Billionaires." 2016. Browse <http://www.forbes.com/billionaires/>

Week 2/Sept. 13 ~ Wealth Across Time and Space: How much inequality in the Roman Empire, 19-century England, 19th and 20th-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.

--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

--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/>

Week 3/ Sept. 20 ~ Whose Side Are We On? + The Hierarchy of Credibility

--Howard S. Becker. 2014 [1966]. "Whose Side Are We On?" In *Moral Anthropology: A Critical Reader*, edited by Didier Fassin, pp. 305-312. London and New York: Routledge.

--Emma Seery and Ana Caistro Arendar. 2014. "What can be done to end extreme inequality?" pp. 68-104 in *Even It Up: Time to End Extreme Inequality*. Oxford: Oxfam. Available at: https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/cr-even-it-up-extreme-inequality-291014-en.pdf

--Nick Galasso. 2014. "Why Did Oxfam Target the Billionaires at Davos?" Oxfam blog. <http://www.oxfam.ca/blogs/pay-taxes-stop-using-wealth-to-influence-politics>

Short in-class writing exercise on the hierarchy of credibility

"Advice on Writing From *The Atlantic's* Ta-Nehisi Coates." Video (3 minutes, 51 seconds). September 27, 2013:
<http://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/280025/advice-on-writing-from-i-the-atlantic-i-s-ta-nehisi-coates/>

Week 4/Sept. 27 ~ Unsettling the Compassion Consensus

--Paul Farmer, 2002, "On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below," pp. 29-50, and "Afterword," pp. 247-256, in *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

--Didier Fassin. 2014. "The Immunity of Humanitarianism." In *Moral Anthropology: A Critical Reader*, edited by Didier Fassin, 328-337. London and New York: Routledge.

--Friedrich Nietzsche, 2014[1994 transl.] "On the genealogy of morality." In *Moral Anthropology: A Critical Reader*, edited by Didier Fassin, 29-32. London and New York: Routledge.

Week 5/Oct. 4 ~ Quiz # 1

+ 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*, pp. 1-25 and 273-281. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Week 6/Oct. 11 ~ The Great Risk Shift

+ The False-Equivalence Struggles

---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.

--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 7/Oct. 18 ~ 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 8/Oct. 25 Demystifying Wall Street and Global Finance

--Karen Ho. 2015 [2012]. "Finance." In *A Companion to Moral Anthropology*, edited by Didier Fassin, pp. 411-431. Oxford, UK and Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.

--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.]

Week 9/Nov. 1 ~ 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.

-Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, 2001, "The Case for Participation as Tyranny," pp. 1-15, in *Participation: The New Tyranny?* Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, eds. New York and London: Zed Books.

Week 10/Nov. 8 ~ Quiz #2 + Success Narratives

--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.

Week 11/Nov. 15 ~ Rethinking Global Poverty

--James Ferguson. 2015. *Give a Man a Fish*, pp. xi-xiii and 1-2, 35-46. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

--Akhil Gupta. 2010. "The Construction of the Global Poor: An Anthropological Critique." In *World Social Science Report: Knowledge Divides*, International Social Science Council, pp. 13-16. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

http://unescore-clic.org/system/files/upload/wssr_13-16.pdf

Extra Credit:

--Sohini Kar. 2013. "Recovering Debts: Microfinance Loan Officers and the Work of 'Proxy-Creditors' in India." *American Ethnologist* 40(3):480-493. [To access this article, follow the procedure described above for Powell's article.]

Week 12/Nov. 22 ~ *NO CLASS* [Note: Thursday classes meet on Tuesday this week, due to Thanksgiving holiday, Nov. 24-27]

Week 13/Nov. 29 ~ Friendship Across the Global Wealth Divide

--James H. Smith and Ngeti Mwandime. 2014. *Email from Ngeti: An Ethnography of Sorcery, Redemption, and Friendship in Global Africa*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press. [excerpts]

Week 14/Dec. 6 ~ Quiz #3 + Workshop on Paper Writing

--Howard S. Becker. 2007. "Editing By Ear," pp. 68-89 in *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*, Second Edition. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Week 15/Dec. 13 ~ Seminar Wrap-Up: Student Presentations and Discussion

--Drafts of final papers due in class.

****Final versions of papers due in instructor's office mailbox (Department of Anthropology, 3rd floor, Ruth Adams Bldg., Douglass Campus) on Monday, December 19 (no exceptions).****

[Papers should be 10 pages/2,500 words (double-spaced, one-inch margins, font size 11 or 12, footnotes, references). Students may find it helpful to consult the *Chicago Manual of Style*: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>.]