

Wealth and Culture (Fall 2019)

Department of Anthropology
01:070:303

**Fulfills Core Curriculum Goal, Group 1: a,d
A 21st Century Challenges Course**

(No Prerequisite)

Tuesday, 2:15-5:15, Rm. 209A, Ruth Adams Bldg., Douglass Campus



Today there are more than 2,000 billionaires in the world, while a billion people live on less than \$1.25 per day. The billionaires' vacation spots, private jets, mansions, cars, yachts, and attire are objects of desire and sometimes envy. Although images that fuel fantasies of luxurious consumption are everywhere, the possibilities of living out the dream of consumption are still minimal or nonexistent for many of the world's people. Why has the gap between rich and poor widened to historically unprecedented levels? How has the nature of wealth changed historically? How do people cope with increasing economic precariousness, debt, and gig economies?

This course explores how scholarly thinking, as well as popular discourses, about wealth and income inequality have changed in recent decades. Is inequality harmful for all? How do cultural understandings of wealth differ across countries and world regions? How are wealth and income inequalities connected to long-standing differences rooted in gender, race, ethnicity, and other identities? What moral and social obligations do people believe the possession of wealth entails? How does Wall Street affect wealth inequality?

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, and films.



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