

Fall 2012
WEALTH AND CULTURE 070:303
Instructor: Professor Angelique Haugerud
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Pre-requisite: Anthropology 101

Description: 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? Looking beyond media headlines, how do 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 scholars explain today's global economic crisis? 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, work groups, and innovative dramatizations of economic inequality and contradictory cultural assumptions about wealth. 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.

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 proficiency 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 knowledgably and proficiently in writing and speaking about central issues in this area of scholarly inquiry.

This interdisciplinary course will help students to develop critical analytical skills for interpreting today's global economic crisis as it is portrayed in both scholarship and mass media. It 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.

Evaluation of Learning Goals

Student comprehension and progress will be assessed through pre- and post-testing.

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 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 explore how ideas about wealth and the purpose of the economy shape perceptions of self, family, society, nation, and citizenship.
- To help students develop critical analytical skills for interpreting today's global economic crisis as it is portrayed in both mass media and scholarship.

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 the last week of class, 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 = 25%
- In-class exam #2 = 25%
- 30-minute quiz during week 14 = 15%
- Attendance and participation = 15%