

Anthropology 303  
Fall 2013  
T, Th, 2:15-3:35

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## **WEALTH AND CULTURE** **A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Challenges Course**

In 2013, there were more than 1,400 billionaires in the world. 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? 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 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, and work groups. Readings are drawn from anthropology as well as other disciplines.

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### **Core Curriculum Goals**

Group I: 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

### **Course Objectives**

- 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.
- Help students develop critical analytical skills for interpreting today's global economic crisis as it is portrayed in both mass media and scholarship.
- 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. 3) = 25%

In-class exam #2 (Nov 7) = 25%

30-minute quiz during week 14 (Dec. 5, or Dec. 10 if Dec. 5 is 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/> 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. (No recording devices may be used during class.) \*How well you practice these common courtesies will be reflected in the class attendance and participation portion of your grade.\*

**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** requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html>.

**Ethics/Academic Integrity:** Be careful to **avoid plagiarism and cheating**. 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 tips about how to consult sources without plagiarizing—how to take notes so that you don't plagiarize by accident, see

<[http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib\\_instruct/instruct\\_document.shtml](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib_instruct/instruct_document.shtml)>

*Students should take a 20-minute interactive tutorial on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:*  
<http://sccweb.scc-net.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/Intro.html>

#### **Additional Course Resources:**

--Current and historical data on income inequality in the United States, by economists Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez: <http://elsa.berkeley.edu/~saez/> or <http://elsa.berkeley.edu/~saez/saez-UStopincomes-2011.pdf>

--Glossaries of terms relevant to the financial crisis (on Sakai site)

## **References/Optional: *What Is Culture?***

--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," pp. 137-162. In *Recapturing Anthropology*, Richard G. Fox, ed. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research.

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## **SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS**

### **Week 1/Sept. 3 & 5 RICHISTAN AND EXIT ZERO**

--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.

--Christine J. Walley, 2013, *Exit Zero: Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago*. University of Chicago Press, pp. ix-x, 1-18, 57-88 (Preface, Introduction, Chapter 2).

--Paul Fussell, 1983, *Class: A Guide Through the American Status System*, pp. 15-23. New York: Simon and Shuster.

Film: *Born Rich* (excerpt)

### **Week 2/Sept. 10 & 12 THE GREAT WEALTH GAP**

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

<http://www.newyorker.com/sandbox/business/subway.html>

--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.

--Timothy Noah, 2012, *The Great Divergence: America's Growing Inequality Crisis and What We Can Do About It*, pp. 1-27 and 144-163. New York and London: Bloomsbury Press.

--Joseph E. Stiglitz, 2012, "Preface," pp. ix-xxvi and "America's 1 Percent Problem," pp. 1-27, in *The Price of Inequality*. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company.

Film: *Exit Zero* (rough cut)

### **Reference/Optional:**

--David Cay Johnston, 2005, "Richest Are Leaving Even the Rich Far Behind," pp. 182-189, in *Class Matters: Correspondents of The New York Times*. New York: Times Books.

--Janny Scott and David Leonhardt, 2005, "Shadowy Lines That Still Divide," pp. 1-26, in *Class Matters: Correspondents of The New York Times*. New York: Times Books.

### **Week 3/ Sept. 17 & 20 THE GREAT RISK SHIFT**

--Milton Friedman, 2002[1962], *Capitalism and Freedom*, pp. vii-21. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

---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> 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 Collins article.]

--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.

--Robert B. Reich, 2007, *Supercapitalism: The Transformation of Business, Democracy, and Everyday Life*, pp. 3-14 and 209-226. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

--Paul Krugman, 2010, "Now That's Rich." *New York Times*, August 23, p. A23.

Film: *Two American Families* (Bill Moyers), if available, or *Capitalism: A Love Story* (excerpts)

#### Week 4/Sept. 24 & 26 **THE INSECURE AMERICAN**

--Christine J. Walley, 2010, "Deindustrializing Chicago: A Daughter's Story," pp. 113-139, in *The Insecure American*, Hugh Gusterson and Catherine Besteman, eds. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

--Barbara Ehrenreich, 2010, "Foreword," pp. ix-xi, in *The Insecure American*, Catherine Besteman and Hugh Gusterson, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press.

--Catherine Besteman and Hugh Gusterson, 2010, "Introduction," pp. 1-23, in *The Insecure American*, Hugh Gusterson and Catherine Besteman, eds. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press

--Micaela di Leonardo, 2008, "Introduction: New Global and American Landscapes of Inequality," pp. 3-20, in *New Landscapes of Inequality: Neoliberalism and the Erosion of American Democracy*, Jane L. Collins, Micaela di Leonardo, and Brett Williams, eds. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press.

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

#### Week 5/Oct. 1 & 3 **SECRETS OF SUCCESS IN AMERICA...AND THE CONVERSATION WE AVOID**

--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.

--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.

--"Born on Third Base: What the Forbes 400 Really Says About Economic Inequality and Opportunity in America" pp. 1-20. Boston: United for a Fair Economy, 2012.

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

--Warren Buffett, 2011. "Stop Coddling the Super-Rich." *New York Times*, August 15, A20.

--Paul Krugman, 2010, "America Goes Dark." *New York Times*, August 8.  
--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. 3**

Week 6/ Oct. 8 & 10 **ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE "MYSTIQUE" OF FINANCE**

--Laura Barton's interview with anthropologist and *Financial Times* columnist Gillian Tett: "On the Money," *The Guardian*, October 31, 2008 (4 pages)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2008/oct/31/creditrunch-gillian-tett-financial-times>

--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.]

--Gillian Tett, 2009, "Preface," pp. ix-x and "The Derivatives Dream," pp. 3-22, in *Fool's Gold*. New York and London: Free Press.

--Caitlin Zaloom, 2005, "The Discipline of Speculators," pp. 253-269, in *Global Assemblages*, Aihwa Ong and Stephen J. Collier, eds. Oxford: Blackwell.

--Karen Ho, 2009, "Disciplining Investment Bankers, Disciplining the Economy: Wall Street's Institutional Culture of Crisis and the Downsizing of 'Corporate America'." *American Anthropologist* 111(2):177-189.

Film: *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, Part 1

Week 7/Oct. 15 & 17 **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.

--Steve Fraser, 2008, *Wall Street: America's Dream Palace*, pp. 1-10 and 175-180. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

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

Week 8/Oct. 22 & 24 **GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS**

--Joseph Stiglitz, 2008, "Reversal of Fortune," *Vanity Fair*, November 2008, pp. 134-138.

--Joseph Stiglitz, 2009, "Capitalist Fools," *Vanity Fair*, January, pp. 48-51.

--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.

--Short online videos explaining the crisis TBA.

Film: *Inside Job*

## Optional/Supplemental Resources

--Financial crisis for beginners: <http://baselinescenario.com/financial-crisis-for-beginners/>

### Week 9/Oct. 29 & 31 **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, I**

--Dinah Rajak, 2011, *In Good Company: An Anatomy of Corporate Social Responsibility*. Stanford University Press (Introduction, Chapter 1, Conclusion, pp. 1-63 & 231-240).

---Greg Smith, 2012, "Why I Am Leaving Goldman Sachs." *New York Times*, March 14, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/14/opinion/why-i-am-leaving-goldman-sachs.html?pagewanted=all>

--Anne Salmon, 2010, "Corporate Social Responsibility," pp. 166-174, in *The Human Economy*, Keith Hart, Jean-Louis Laville and Antonio David Cattani, eds. Cambridge (UK) and Malden, MA: Polity.

#### **Reference**

--Peter Benson and Stuart Kirsch, 2010, "Capitalism and the Politics of Resignation." *Current Anthropology* 51(4):459-486.

### Week 10/Nov. 5 & 7 **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, II: Oil, Gas, and Corporate Social Technologies in Russia**

--Douglas Rogers, 2012, "The materiality of the corporation: Oil, gas, and corporate social technologies in the remaking of a Russian region." *American Ethnologist* 39(2):284-296. [Access online through Rutgers Libraries, databases, Wiley Online Library.

#### **\*\*EXAM #2, Thursday, Nov. 7**

### Week 11/Nov. 12 & 14 **THE WAL-MART DEBATE**

--Jane Collins, 2010, "The Age of Wal-Mart," pp. 97-112, in *The Insecure American*, Catherine Besteman and Hugh Gusterson, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press.

--Barbara Ehrenreich, 2001, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*, pp. 121-221. New York: Henry Holt/Metropolitan Books.

--Wal-Mart Foundation

<http://walmartstores.com/CommunityGiving/203.aspx>

--Wal-Mart Watch

<http://walmartwatch.com>

-- "Walmart workers protest over minimum wage in 15 U.S. cities," *The Guardian*, September 5, 2013. <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. 19 & 21 **GENDER, CORPORATE DISCIPLINE, MOBBING**

--Noelle Mole, 2010, "Precarious Subjects: Anticipating Neoliberalism in Northern Italy's Workplace." *American Anthropologist* 112(1): 38-53.

--Carla Freeman, 2002, "Designing Women: Corporate Discipline and Barbados's Off-shore Pink-collar Sector." In *The Anthropology of Globalization: A Reader*, Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo, eds., pp. 83-99. Oxford: Blackwell.

--John Urry, 2010, "Mobility," pp. 325-335, in *The Human Economy*, Keith Hart, Jean-Louis Laville and Antonio David Cattani, eds. Cambridge (UK) and Malden, MA: Polity.

Week 13/Nov. 26 **HUMAN ECONOMY, MORAL ECONOMY?**

--Sohini Kar, 2013, "Recovering debts: Microfinance loan officers and the work of 'proxy-creditors' in India." *American Ethnologist* 40(3):480-493. [[Access article online through Rutgers Libraries](#), then to "indexes and databases" and to Wiley Online Library.]

--Robert H. Frank, 1999, "Money Well Spent?," pp. 1-13, in *Luxury Fever: Money and Happiness in an Era of Excess*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

--Peter Singer, 2006, "What Should a Billionaire Give – and What Should You?" *New York Times Magazine*, pp. 58-63, 80, 83, 87.

--William Greider, 2005, "Building a Moral Economy," pp. 247-257, in *Inequality Matters*, James Lardner and David A. Smith, eds. New York: New Press.

--Michael Cooper, 2010, "Governments Go to Extremes as the Downturn Wears On." *New York Times*, August 6.

--Chris Hann, 2010, "Moral Economy," pp. 187-198, in *The Human Economy*, Keith Hart, Jean-Louis Laville and Antonio David Cattani, eds. Cambridge (UK) and Malden, MA: Polity.

**THANKSGIVING break, Nov. 28 – Dec. 1**

Week 14/Dec. 3 & 5 **ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE**

--Joseph E. Stiglitz, 2012, "The Way Forward: Another World Is Possible," pp. 287-290, in *The Price of Inequality*. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company.

--Karl Polanyi, 1944, *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon Press, excerpts.

--Keith Hart, Jean-Louis Laville and Antonio Cattani, 2010, "Building the Human Economy Together," pp. 1-17, in *The Human Economy*, Keith Hart, Jean-Louis Laville and Antonio David Cattani, eds. Cambridge (UK) and Malden, MA: Polity.

--Geoffrey Pleyers, 2010, "Alter-Globalization," pp. 63-74, in *The Human Economy*, Keith Hart, Jean-Louis Laville and Antonio David Cattani, eds. Cambridge (UK) and Malden, MA: Polity.

**30-MINUTE QUIZ, THURSDAY, DEC. 5**

Week 15/Dec. 10 **COURSE WRAP-UP**

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