

Subject overview

A techno-optimist version holds that the decline of 20th century ideologies and the rise of an integrated economy has created a “global village.” A pessimist version -- which has adherents on the Left and the Right -- worries about homogenization (or McDonaldization, Westernization, etc.) of social and cultural forms. This subject critically examines -- and challenges -- both of these interpretations of globalization. Drawing on ethnography, anthropological theory, history and other disciplines, we look at various kinds of cultural change and flows in the global economy, with a focus on consumption and media.

Learning Outcomes

After completion of this subject, students will be able to articulate arguments to the following questions:

- Do all societies follow the same path of economic development?
- What role do mass media play in producing cultural and national differences in a global economy?
- How do commodities like sugar or bananas link consumers and producers in “periphery” and “core” nations?
- How are images of the exotic or the suffering body commodified in the media?

Assessment overview

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| • Essay | 40% of total assessment |
| • Class Participation and Oral Presentation | 15% of total assessment |
| • Reading Response Papers | 20% of total assessment |
| • Final Exam | 25% of total assessment |

Subject modules

- All That Is Solid Melts in the Air: Modernity and/vs Globalization
- Sugar and Bananas: Consumption, Culture, and Commodities
- McWorld: Brands as Culture in Late Capitalism
- Consuming Beauty and Fashion in the Global Cultural Economy
- From Print Capitalism to Videology: Mass Media in Modernity
- The Noble Savage in the Global Eco-Village: Representations of the exotic and the primitive in modernity
- Global Food Politics: Food, Identity and Social Change
- The Black Atlantic: Syncretism, Creolization, Diaspora
- Working in the Global Economy
- The City and Modernity
- Compassion Fatigue and Cosmopolitanism in Global Media

Required readings

- Ehrenreich, B. (2001). *Nickel and dimed: On (not) getting by in America*. New York City: Henry Holt.
- Students will also read a variety of journal articles assigned by Academic Teaching Staff.

Questions?

If you have questions about any of the subject summaries, please contact us.