

Exploring the Global Political Economy through Film

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Virtual Sessions Live meetings with obligatory participation via Big Blue Button, accessible under "Meetings" in our Stud.IP course, on the following three dates (in red below)
Monday, 19 October 2020, 18-20h (c.t.)
Monday, 02 November 2020, 18-20h (c.t.)
Monday, 01 February 2021, 18-20h (c.t.)

Office Hours Wednesday, 9–11h (virtual format, please register beforehand on Stud.IP, link to virtual meeting room: [REDACTED])

Description

What are the defining features of the world economy? Which issues help us reflect on structure and agency in the political constitution of global capitalism? How are ordinary people enmeshed in it? How can we make sense of existing challenges to the dominant modes of production, exchange, and consumption, and which alternatives do exist? This seminar aims at exploring these questions through the use of documentaries as entry points to scientific debates about the global political economy. To this end, we will make ourselves familiar with some key tenets of the discipline before watching and discussing selected documentaries. These will touch upon issues such as unequal exchange and inequality in the global economy, as exemplified by coffee trade; the role of finance in contemporary societies, as discussed in the context of the 2007-2008 financial crisis and the politicization of tax havens; or the depletion of natural resources and ecosystems as in the case of plastic use/recycling and sand mining.

In a virtual format, participants will take on the task to provide short (pre-recorded) scientific introductions to the films, reflect on the research literature and scholarly debates relevant to the films' motives, and structure the subsequent discussion. Here one should note that documentaries are not scientific inquiries, even though they usually are the result of intensive and meaningful research. They employ visual representations of the global economy that may resonate with us not only as researchers, but as human beings and political subjects. Thus, this course may raise more questions than it will provide answers.

Proof of performance (4/6 ECTS Points) and general remarks

- (1) This course will predominantly employ a broadly asynchronous format, relying heavily on pre-recorded material, the documentaries, and written interaction in the “Forum” of our Stud.IP course. It will involve only three virtual sessions via BBB: the first two sessions in order to lay the administrative and substantial foundations of our seminar, and the very last session in order to reflect and conclude jointly on the issues raised. This set-up requires a regular commitment to participate in written exchange throughout the course via the “Forum” and neglect to do so may result in not receiving credit points.
- (2) The general format for each week is that participants start by watching the brief scientific introduction by their fellow students’ expert group (see below) before then streaming the documentary. I strongly recommend to do so during the regular class date on Mondays, 18-20h, in order to retain a structure for the virtual learning environment. Please make notes during the film on potential linkages to the scientific presentation, on scenes that leave an impression or on questions that arise. Notes are important inputs for the forum discussions, which will be moderated by the expert group. Each film will have its own forum thread and will be active until the respective Friday. When you engage in the forum, please do so respectfully and with reference to other posts. In other words, make this a worthwhile conversation that enables learning from each other.
- (3) Receiving 4 ECTS points requires, first, the submission of a very small task (“Aufgabe”) for session 2 by **November 2nd** (see below), which involves formulating questions in preparation of our virtual session. Second, it requires participation in the joint production of a scientific introduction to the documentary and in moderating the respective online discussion. This is based on the idea that each documentary needs a placement in research debates, delivered by a pre-recorded student presentation. You will be able to register for one theme/film after our class on November 2nd and form an expert group of 3-4 people. Each session below includes a couple of selected publications and research keywords that point to issues relevant to the film’s motives. The group will watch the film in advance, do research, read the literature and discuss insights and questions with me during office hours, before producing a 15 to 20 minutes-long video presentation due on the morning of class. This can be a typical voice-over slide presentation or an alternative format of content presentation that conveys the scholarly debate. Moderating the subsequent forum discussion mainly entails giving impulses or connecting different contributions.

- (4) 6 ECTS points will be granted to those who submit a written elaboration ("Referatsausarbeitung") of their presentation topic of no more than 3,000 words by **March 31st 2021** (to be uploaded as a pdf file on Stud.IP). This elaboration should summarize the scientific literature used for the presentation and discuss it in relation to a) the documentary and b) the larger context of the course/the relevancy to our understanding of the global political economy. Please give special attention to a clear structure and concise writing. Language of the submission has to be English.
- (5) Finally, Covid-19 may spread further during the term and thereby impact teaching and learning conditions. The course is broadly set up to be fit for lockdown, but also allows for in-presence collaborative learning among the expert groups. While this is in principle encouraged, I want everyone to be considerate and respectful of personal circumstances of group members. Most importantly, should Covid-19 affect your ability to study and obtain a proof of performance, please contact me in due course so that we can arrange alternatives. At the same time, deadline extensions on short notice (in particular for 6 ECTS) will only be granted with a doctor's attestation.

Course Plan

19 October 2020

Virtual Session - Introduction

Use the 'Meetings' tab in our Stud.IP course and connect, if possible, with mic and webcam.

02 November 2020

Virtual Session - Setting the Scene: What is (the) Global Political Economy?

Use the 'Meetings' tab in our Stud.IP course and connect, if possible, with mic and webcam.

Context

This session is to make everyone familiar with a basic sets of approaches, issues and questions that characterize Global Political Economy as an academic discipline and as an object of scientific inquiry. It is supposed to give you a first understanding of the themes that this course addresses and supports you in making a choice for selecting a topic/film for your own presentation. To this end, please read the literature below and address the task given (see tab "Aufgabe") in our stud.ip course. The deadline for submitting your task is the morning of this very session: 02 November, 9:00 am.

Literature

Broome, André (2014): *Issues and Actors in the Global Political Economy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1-15.

Phillips, Nicola (2017): Power and Inequality in the Global Political Economy. *International Affairs* 93 (2), 429-444.

Note that literature marked with an asterisk (*) is a shorter piece recommended for general preparation.

16 November 2020	Colonialism, Capitalism and Power in the Global Economy
Context	The unequal structure of the global economy has its roots in centuries of imperial domination and 'conquest'. Today's existing tensions that are present, for instance, in North-South relations or racial and gendered divisions of labor, are often traced to the histories of colonialism and their continuities. This film builds on one of the key works in this regard, Frantz Fanon's <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i> , to explore the relations between (post-)colonialism, capitalism and power. <i>Please note that the film uses explicit imagery.</i>
Film	<u>"Concerning Violence. Nine Scenes from the Anti-Imperialistic Self-Defense"</u> (2014), by Göran Olsson.
Literature	Bhambra, Gurminder K. (2020). Colonial Global Economy: Towards a Theoretical Re-orientation of Political Economy. <i>Review of International Political Economy</i> , online first. Hoogvelt, Ankie (2001): <i>Globalization and the Postcolonial World. The New Political Economy of Development</i> . 2 nd edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 163-196. Kvangraven, Ingrid H. (2020): Beyond the Stereotype: Restating the Relevance of the Dependency Research Programme. <i>Development and Change</i> , online first. *Vives, Luna & Mohabir, Nalini (2020): Postcolonialism. In: Kobayashi, Audrey (ed.): <i>International Encyclopedia of Human Geography</i> , 2 nd edition, Volume 11, 289-295.
Research Keywords	(post-)colonialism, dependency theory, hierarchies in the world economy

23 November 2020	Commodity Trade and North-South Relations
Context	One of the ways in which coloniality continues to play a role in the global political economy is through trade relations, trade governance and what is called 'unequal exchange'. This film does not only trace the connectedness of coffee farmers in Ethiopia via its farmers' cooperative and multinational corporations with consumers in Europe and the U.S.; it also highlights the linkages between agricultural trade, development and inequality.
Film	<u>"Black Gold"</u> (2006), by Nick and Marc Francis
Literature	Clapp, Jennifer (2020): Food. 3 rd Edition. Cambridge: Polity, 1-28. Hoekman, Bernard M. & Kostecki, Michel M. (2010): <i>The Political Economy of the World Trading System. The WTO and Beyond</i> . 3 rd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 532-581. *Pflaeger-Young, Zoe (n.d.): Coffee. Online resource at <i>International Political Economy of Everyday Life</i> , http://i-peel.org/homepage/coffee-3/ , last accessed on 14 September 2020. Talbot, John M. (2002): Tropical commodity chains, forward integration strategies and international inequality: coffee, cocoa and tea. <i>Review of International Political Economy</i> 9 (4), 701-734.
Research Keywords	trade relations, global food systems, supply/value chains, fair trade

30 November 2020	The Political Economy of Privatization
Context	Privatization has been one of the key policies associated with neoliberalism, representing a common trend in many economies around the world. While as a strategy to balance public budgets it provides the limited means of one-off revenues, it significantly affects state-society relations – often detrimental to those depending on publically-provided services. This week's film, <i>Der große Ausverkauf</i> in German original, traces the everyday politics of privatization in energy, transport, health and water sectors in South Africa, Britain, Philippines, and Bolivia.
Film	<u>"The Big Sellout"</u> (2006) by Florian Opitz
Literature	<p>Clifton, Judith, Comín, Francisco & Díaz Fuentes, Daniel (2006): Privatizing public enterprises in the European Union 1960–2002: ideological, pragmatic, inevitable? <i>Journal of European Public Policy</i> 13 (5), 736-756.</p> <p>Hamm, Patrick, King, Lawrence, P. & Stuckler, David (2012): Mass Privatization, State Capacity, and Economic Growth in Post-Communist Countries. <i>American Sociological Review</i> 77 (2), 295-324.</p> <p>*O'Neill, Phillip M. (2020): Privatization. In: Kobayashi, Audrey (ed.): <i>International Encyclopedia of Human Geography</i>, 2nd edition, Volume 11, 19-24.</p> <p>Strange, Susan (1996): <i>The Retreat of the State. The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3-15, 44-65.</p>
Research Keywords	privatization, retreat of the state, corporate power, International Monetary Fund

7 December 2020	The Great/Global Financial Crisis (GFC)
Context	Researching the origins and consequences of the financial crisis that arose from the bust of the US housing market in 2007/2008 has become a defining feature of political-economy scholarship of many trades over the past decade. It has drawn attention (once more) to the interconnectedness and fragility of the global financial system, and the role of finance in contemporary politics and society. "Boom, Bust, Boom", presented by the late Monty Python member Terry Jones, is a humorous and curious examination of some of the crisis' aspects.
Film	<u>"Boom, Bust, Boom"</u> (2016), by Terry Jones
Literature	<p>Aliber, Robert Z. & Kindleberger, Charles P. (2015): <i>Manias, Panics, and Crashes. A History of Financial Crises</i>. 7th edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 5-37.</p> <p>*Helleiner, Eric (2011): Understanding the 2007–2008 Global Financial Crisis: Lessons for Scholars of International Political Economy. <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i> 14, 67-87.</p> <p>Seabrooke, Leonard (2010): What Do I Get? The Everyday Politics of Expectations and the Subprime Crisis. <i>New Political Economy</i> 15 (1), 51-70.</p> <p>Van der Zwan, Natascha (2014): Making Sense of Financialization. <i>Socio-Economic Review</i> 12, 99-129.</p>
Research Keywords	financial crisis, bubbles, financialization, capital flows

14 December 2020	Tax Havens and Global Governance
Context	In line with the critical salience of financial issues following the GFC, aggravated by fast-burning fiscal crises also in the core of the global economy, and reinforced through leak scandals <i>LuxLeaks</i> , <i>Panama Papers</i> or <i>Paradise Papers</i> , international tax cooperation and conflict has intensified and moved to the fore of political debate. “The Spider’s Web”, co-produced by the Tax Justice Network, inquires the issue through a focus on offshore finance and the role the City of London/British Empire has played in the current set-up of the global economy.
Film	<u>“The Spider’s Web”</u> (2017), by Michael Oswald
Literature	<p>Christensen, Rasmus C. & Hearson, Martin (2019): The New Politics of Global Tax Governance: Taking Stock a Decade after the Financial Crisis. <i>Review of International Political Economy</i> 26 (5), 1068-1088.</p> <p>Harrington, Brooke (2017): <i>How the Rich Stay Rich</i>. Interview by Doug Henwood. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/11/paradise-papers-wealth-managers-brooke-harrington-interview</p> <p>Ogle, Vanessa (2020), ‘Funk Money’: The End of Empires, The Expansion of Tax Havens, and Decolonization as an Economic and Financial Event. <i>Past & Present</i>, online first.</p> <p>*Zucman, Gabriel (2015): <i>The Hidden Wealth of Nations: The Scourge of Tax Havens</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1-55.</p>
Research Keywords	tax havens, tax avoidance, international tax governance, state finances

*** winter break ***

04 January 2021	Inequality Within Countries
Context	Besides the inequalities that make up the structure of the global political economy, rising inequality within many developed countries has made income and wealth distribution an issue of greater contention in national and international politics. Scholarly works on inequality such as Thomas Piketty’s <i>Capital in the 21st Century</i> have drawn attention beyond academic circles. The film for this session, originally <i>Ungleichland</i> in German, follows the theme through accompanying a wealthy individual and puts it into perspective in democratic capitalism.
Film	<u>“Inequality – How Wealth Becomes Power”</u> (2018), by Julia Friedrichs, Fabienne Hurst, Andreas Spinrath & Michael Schmitt
Literature	<p>Atkinson, Anthony B. (2015): <i>Inequality. What Can Be Done?</i> Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 9-44.</p> <p>*Elsässer, Lea, Hense, Svenja & Schäfer, Armin (2020): Not Just Money: Unequal Responsiveness in Egalitarian Democracies. <i>Journal of European Public Policy</i> (online first).</p> <p>Gilens, Martin (2015): Descriptive Representation, Money, and Political Inequality in the United States. <i>Swiss Political Science Review</i> 21 (2), 222-228.</p>
Research Keywords	income and wealth inequality, unequal representation, money and power

11 January 2021	The Political Economy of Waste and Environmental Governance
Context	Beyond the challenges woven into the structure and recent political constitution of the global economy, those concerning climate change and the depletion of natural resources are most severe. This and next week's films provide insights into the devastations produced by the dominant forms of contemporary cross-border economic activity and draw attention to the intersections of global environmental and economic governance. "The Story of Plastic", as the first of the two films, shows how plastic is at the heart of such intersections, tracing its fossil origins to its disposal in earth's oceans, opening ways to rethink the political economy of waste.
Film	<u>"The Story of Plastic"</u> (2019), by Deia Schlosberg
Literature	<p>*Clapp, Jennifer & Helleiner, Eric (2012): International Political Economy and the Environment: Back to the Basics? <i>International Affairs</i> 88 (3), 485-501.</p> <p>Dauvergne, Peter (2018): Why is the Global Governance of Plastic Failing the Oceans? <i>Global Environmental Change</i> 51, S. 22–31.</p> <p>Hook, Leslie & Reed, John (2018): Why the World's Recycling System Stopped Working. <i>Financial Times</i>, 25 October 2018.</p> <p>O'Neill, Kate (2018): The New Global Political Economy of Waste. In: Dauvergne, Peter & Alger, Justin (eds.): <i>A Research Agenda for Global Environmental Politics</i>. Edward Elgar, 87-100.</p>
Research Keywords	environmental politics, recycling flows, waste, global governance

18 January 2021	Natural Resources and the IPE of Built Environment
Context	While plastic is an obvious element of everyday production and consumption, the massive demand for sand for the built environment is a less-known fact about the global economy. "Sand Wars" points to the planetary limits of continuous economic expansion as well as to the social conflicts and governance issues that are arising from the practices of sand mining around the globe.
Film	<u>"Sand Wars"</u> (2013), by Denis Delestrac
Literature	<p>Lamb, Vanessa, Marschke, Melissa & Rigg, Jonathan (2019): Trading Sand, Undermining Lives: Omitted Livelihoods in the Global Trade in Sand. <i>Annals of the American Association of Geographers</i>, online first.</p> <p>Rogers, Dallas & Koh, Sin Yee (2017): The Globalisation of Real Estate: The Politics and Practice of Foreign Real Estate Investment. <i>International Journal of Housing Policy</i> 17 (1), 1-14.</p> <p>Torres, Aurora, Brandt, Jodi, Lear, Kristen, Liu, Jianguo (2017): A Looming Tragedy of the Sand Commons. <i>Science</i> 357 (6355), 970-971.</p> <p>*United Nations Environment Programme (2014): <i>Sand, Rarer Than One Thinks</i>. UNEP Global Environmental Alert Service, March 2014.</p>
Research Keywords	commodity trade, natural resources, real estate, sustainability

25 January 2021	Alternatives
Context	Debates about and scholarly inquiry into alternatives to the status quo of any (global) political economy have always existed and include struggles as diverse as a 'Green New Deal', a New International Economic Order (NIEO) or the utopian scenarios emerging in early capitalist societies. Those continue to thrive in the face of the issues of this seminar. One set of debates revolves around a new organization of production, including workplace democracy and collective ownership. "The Take" is one voice in this debate.
Film	<u>"The Take"</u> (2004), by Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein
Literature	<p>Anghie, Anthony (2019): Inequality, Human Rights, and the New International Economic Order. <i>Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development</i> 10 (3), 429-442.</p> <p>Aronoff, Kate, Battistoni, Alyssa, Cohen, Daniel Adana & Riofrancos, Thea (2019): <i>A Planet to Win. Why We Need a Green New Deal</i>. London/New York: Verso, 1-34.</p> <p>Webb, Tom & Cheney, George (2014): Worker-owned-and-governed Co-operatives and the Wider Co-operative Movement. Challenges and Opportunities Within and Beyond the Global Economic Crisis. In: Parker, Martin, Cheney, George, Fournier, Valérie & Land, Chris (eds.): <i>The Routledge Companion to Alternative Organization</i>. Abingdon: Routledge, 64-88.</p> <p>*Wright, Erik Olin (2012): Transforming Capitalism through Real Utopias. <i>American Sociological Review</i> 78 (1), 1-25.</p>
Research Keywords	alternative economic organization, co-operatives, commons, Green New Deal, NIEO

01 February 2021	Virtual Session - Concluding Discussion / Feedback Rounds
	Use the 'Meetings' tab in our Stud.IP course and connect, if possible, with mic and webcam.