

Anthropology 303  
Fall 2015  
T, Th, 3:35 – 5:15 p.m.

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## **WEALTH AND CULTURE** **A 21st Century Challenges Course**

In 2015, there are more than 1,800 billionaires in the world. They possess an aggregate net worth of \$7.05 trillion. 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? Why do some anthropologists find the notion of crisis itself to be problematic? What do economic experts say about the crisis and why do some normalize it? 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 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: 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.

### **Anthropology Department Learning Goals Met by this Course**

1. Students gain knowledge that will allow them to identify, explain, and historically contextualize the primary objectives, fundamental concepts, modes of analysis, and central questions in their major field and demonstrate proficiency in their use of this knowledge.
2. Students are able to demonstrate proficiency in the use of critical thinking skills.

### **Course Objectives**

- Help students develop critical analytical skills for interpreting today's global economic crisis as it is portrayed in both mass media and scholarship.
- 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.
- 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. 8) = 25%

In-class exam #2 (Nov 5) = 25%

30-minute quiz during week 14 (Dec. 8--or Dec. 10 if Dec. 8 is a 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. How well you practice these common courtesies will be reflected in the class attendance and participation portion of your grade.

\*(No recording devices may be used during class.)

**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:** Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where she or he is officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports a student's request for reasonable accommodations, her campus's disability services office will provide a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

**Ethics/Academic Integrity:** 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 information about how to identify and avoid academic dishonesty, see <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/resources-for-students/>

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

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

--The World Top Incomes Database (Facundo Alvaredo, Tony Atkinson, Thomas Piketty, and Emmanuel Saez): <http://topincomes.parisschoolofeconomics.eu>

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## **SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS**

### **Week 1/Sept. 1 & 3 *The New Elite***

--Shamus Rahman Khan, 2011, *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*, pp. 1-40. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

--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 **CULTURE AND THE GREAT WEALTH GAP**

**[Note: Monday classes meet on Tuesday, Sept. 8]**

--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.

--Elizabeth Vann, 2013, "Culture," pp. 30-48, in *The Handbook of Sociocultural Anthropology*, edited by James G. Carrier and Deborah B. Gewertz. London and New York: Bloomsbury.

--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.

Film: *Born Rich* (excerpt)

**Reference/optional:**

"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>

--Kenneth J. Guest, 2014, "Culture," pp. 33-72, in *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age*. New York: W.W. Norton. [on reserve at Douglass Library]

Week 3/ Sept. 15 & 17 **EXIT ZERO**

--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).

See also <http://www.exitzeroproject.org>

--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: *Exit Zero* (rough cut, excerpt)

Week 4/ Sept. 22 & 24 **THE GREAT RISK SHIFT**

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

--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.

--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 term for the journal *American Ethnologist* and then for the Collins article.]

--Joseph E. Stiglitz, 2012, "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, excerpt)

Week 5/Sept. 29 & Oct. 1 **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 6/ Oct. 6 & 8 **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. 8**

Week 7/ Oct. 13 & 15 **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/creditchurn-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 8/Oct. 20 & 22 **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 9/Oct. 27 & 29 **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 10/Nov. 3 & 5 **THEORIZING CULTURE, ECONOMY, CRISIS**

--Michael Blim, 2012, "Culture and Economy," pp. 344-360, in *The Handbook of Sociocultural Anthropology*, edited by James G. Carrier and Deborah B. Gewertz. London and New York: Bloomsbury.

--Michael Blim, 2012, "Economic crisis, 2008: what happened, what could be learned about how and why, what could happen next," pp. 597-611, in *The Handbook of Sociocultural Anthropology*, edited by James G. Carrier and Deborah B. Gewertz. London and New York: Bloomsbury.

--[Re-read] Elizabeth Vann, 2013, "Culture," pp. 30-48, in *The Handbook of Sociocultural Anthropology*, edited by James G. Carrier and Deborah B. Gewertz. London and New York: Bloomsbury.

--Joseph E. Stiglitz, 2014, "The Great Divide: Inequality Is Not Inevitable." *New York Times*, June 27. <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/category/the-great-divide/>

--Jochen Bittner, 2015, "Europe's Civil War of Words." *New York Times*, August 21, p. A27; online version, August 18: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/19/opinion/jochen-bittner-europes-civil-war-of-words.html>

**\*\*EXAM #2, Thursday, Nov. 5**

Week 11/Nov. 10 & 12 **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. 17 & 19 **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

--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.

--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; see instructions for week 4.]

Film: *Wal\*Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*

**Reference/optional**

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

Week 13/Nov. 24 **GENDER, CORPORATE DISCIPLINE, MOBING**

--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.

**\*\*THANKSGIVING break, Nov. 26 – 29\*\***

Week 14/Dec. 1 & 3 **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; follow instructions from week 4.]

--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.

#### Week 15/Dec. 8 & 10 **ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE**

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

--J.K. Gibson-Graham, Jenny Cameron, and Stephen Healy, 2013, *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming our Communities*, excerpts. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

--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, TUESDAY, DEC. 8 (15% of total grade)**

**[If December 8 is a snow day, the 30-minute quiz will be on Thursday, December 10]**