

Anthropology 362

Anthropological Perspectives on Global Issues

Spring 2007

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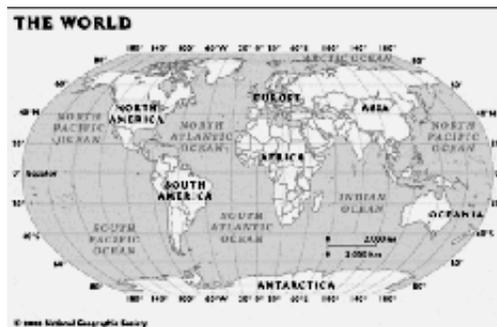
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Introduction: Aims

Each day we confront on television, radio, newspapers, and news magazines stories about global problems: population growth, poverty and hunger, environmental degradation, disease, ethnic and religious strife, war, and crime. A premise of the course is that we are not getting the whole story from these sources. This does not necessarily mean that there is a conspiracy to keep us from the truth, but only that our perspectives on global problems are biased by the cultural framework through which the news is reported.

There are a couple of consequences of the cultural bias in our knowledge of world events. First, they seem far more removed from our lives than they really are. While we may agree that it is a tragedy that people are starving in Brazil or massacred in East Timor, it seems to have little to do with us. More importantly, it seems that there is little we can do about these problems other than contribute to one charity or another or support government aid programs that are supposed to help alleviate these problems. Second, because the media is largely ahistorical, it rarely seriously examines the historical roots of the problems it reports on. Consequently, the problems seem rooted in contemporary dynamics only. Third, because the media tends to view problems as isolated, and not as issues rooted in a global system or network, we fail to appreciate the degree to which these problems affect and are affected by all of us.

Global Perspectives will examine how world events are rooted in a specific global culture and cannot be fully understood in isolation from this culture's economic, political, social, and historic contexts.

Readings, Resources and Responsibilities

Information and resources for the class will come from the following sources:

- Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism (3rd edition) by Richard H. Robbins (Allyn & Bacon Publishers) Available in the bookstore or ordered on the Web
- The Online Global Problems Reader, edited by Richard H. Robbins and Gloria Bobbie Available on the Internet at <http://www.plattsburgh.edu/legacy/gpr.htm>
- Electronic Mail and the Internet. I expect to be forwarding to you readings via email during the semester, so you will need to check your "mailbox" daily. You will also be responsible for accessing information through the World Wide Web. We will have a special class on using email and the Web, and special help will be available, if needed.
- **Each participant will be responsible for collecting information on a specific country related to the course issues. The nature of the information will be discussed in class.**
- **Each participant will be given a specific "corporate investment," and will obtain information on the social, economic, environmental, etc. impact of that corporation (see below)**

Assessment

Assessment (grades) will be determined by:

- Daily Quizzes: we will have a short, relatively easy, one or two-question weekly quiz. It will be based on that week's reading assignment. The quizzes will account for 1/3 of the grade. The other 2/3s will be based on....
- A report on the social, economic, environmental, etc. impact of the corporation that you have chosen to invest in (see below).
- Reports on specific features (see below)of the country that you are assigned.
- Your contributions to class discussions.

Country Reports

You will be responsible for preparing five reports on your country (due dates are noted in the Course Outline and Assignments. **DO NOT E-MAIL PAPERS**). One paper will be the brief history mentioned above, another on the history and nature of social protest (# 8 below), and three selected from topics 2 through 7 below. To find out your assigned country go to

http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robbins/legacy/global_course.htm

Guidelines for the papers can be found on pages 6-9 of this syllabus and at our website at:

http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robbins/legacy/guidelines_for_essays.htm

The guidelines contain specific questions for each paper: **Use these questions as subheadings in your paper. If you cannot find the information to answer the question, state that information is unavailable.**

1. An economic history of your country (5-7 pages--Required)

Choose 3 from numbers 2 through 7

2. The history and impact of population growth (3-5 pages)

3. The distribution of wealth and the extent of poverty and hunger (3-5 pages)

4. The state of the environment and sources of environmental degradation (3-5 pages)

6. The state of health and medical care (3-5 pages)

7. The relations between the nation state and minority and ethnic populations (3-5 pages)

8. The history and nature of social protest (5-7 pages--Required)

Corporate Report (3-5 pages)

If you were an investor (capitalist) you'd expect your investments to yield a profit. If you buy stocks or mutual funds or dabble in commodities, you expect to your money to "reproduce." However the process through which money "grows" is often hidden, or conveniently overlooked. Your task in this report is to examine the social, political, or economic costs of the reproduction of money. First, you need to follow your investment to see whether or not your money "reproduced." But more importantly, you need to research how your corporation went about reproducing your money. In what sort of conditions did workers labor? What were the environmental costs of producing whatever it was your corporation produced? What sort of political power does your corporation assert? What are the economic or social costs of production? Then examine the political actions of your corporation. For example, did they make political contributions to political parties or candidates, and, if so, to whom? Are they members of any political action committee? Can you find anything on legislation passed that, in one way or another, favored your corporation or the industry of which it is a part?

Extensive information on corporations can be found on our website at:

http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robbins/legacy/corporate_resources.htm

You may find that your corporation is very responsible; but you have to also remember that the sort of information that you want is not something that corporations (or the state or the media, for that matter) wants you to know. Consequently you need to do some real detective work. Our

website (http://www.plattsburgh.edu/legacy/corporate_resources.htm) provides some excellent resources for you to start with; just go to internet resources, then to corporations (or the capitalist) to begin. Multinational Monitor and Corporate Watch are both good places to start; you may also want to go to the site on "Researching Corporations," and you may want to see if your corporation is on the list of top 100 corporate criminals (see <http://www.corporatecrimereporter.com/index.html>) or how much the CEO of your corporation earns (see <http://www.aflcio.org/corporatewatch/paywatch/>). But don't neglect library resources, newspapers (e.g. the NY Times index), or other searchable databases.

To find out your assigned corporation go to

http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robbins/legacy/global_course.htm

COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Dates	Topics	Assignments and Due Dates
Weeks 1-2	Money and the Creation of the Consumer	Text: Introduction Part 1, Chapter 1; Online Reader: Consumer Readings 1, 3, 8; Exercise 1
Week 3	The Creation of the Laborer	Text: Chapter 2; Online Reader, Labor Readings 4, 9, 10; Exercise 1, 2; Begin and continue to collect information on your country.
Week 4	The Creation of the Capitalist	Text: Chapter 3; Online Reader, Capitalist Readings 3, 11, 13, (Readings 9 and 12 are optional:9 provides a defense of "free trade" and 12 explains the collapse of Asian economies in 1997)
Week 5	The Creation of the Nation-State	Text: Chapter 4: Online Reader, Nation-State Readings 4, 7, 8, 10
Week 6	Population Growth	Text: Introduction Part 2; Chapter 5; Online Reader, Population Readings 1, 6, 7, Exercise 2. Country history paper is due.
Week 7	Poverty, Hunger, and Economic Development	Text, Chapter 6; Online Reader, Poverty Readings 6, 8, 12, Exercise 1, 4 (Check for your country); Population paper is due.
Week 8	The Environment	Text: Chapter 7; Online Reader, Environment Readings 3, 7, 8, Exercises 2-3; Poverty and development paper is due.
Week 9	Health and Disease	Text: Chapter 8; Online Reader, Health Readings 1 a&b, 4, 6, 8; Exercise 1 (Check your country). Environment Paper Due
Week 10	Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Conflict	Text: Chapter 9; Online Reader, Indigenous Readings 2, 9; Health and Disease paper is due.
Week 11	Peasant Resistance and Revolt	Text: Introduction Part 3; Chapter 10; Online Reader, Peasant Readings 3, 4, 5, and 8. Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Conflict paper due.
Week 12	Anti-systemic Protest	Text: Chapter 11; Online Reader, Anti-Systemic Readings 5, 11, 12 Exercise 1; Corporate paper due

Week 13 Religious Protest

Text: Chapter 12; Online Reader, [Religious](#)

[Readings](#) 1, 3, 9, 10; Exercise 1

Week 14 The Citizen-Activist

Text: Chapter 13; Online Reader, [Citizen-Activist](#)

[Readings](#) 3, 4, 11 and 13; Social protest paper due

GUIDELINES FOR ESSAYS

The following are some general guidelines for each of the country papers due for the course. Most of the information should be available on the Internet, but don't neglect library resources (URLs of resource sites accompany each paper description) **Above all your papers should reflect your reading of the text and assigned readings (particularly if your country is discussed)** Don't be reluctant to quote from the text or the readings. **All your sources must be cited, and, if you are not aware of them, acquaint yourselves with the college's plagiarism policy.** If you do use direct quotations from sources, note them as such and cite the author and source.

You will find some overlap between topics (e.g. economic conditions and poverty and hunger) and that information that you use in one paper will be applicable to others. That's fine. Remember, use the questions noted below for each paper as **subheadings in your paper**. If you can't find information on that question, simply note that information was not available.

Required paper: History and Capital Development (5 to 7 pages)

Web resources:

http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robins/legacy/capitalist_resources.htm

http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robins/legacy/nation_state_resources.htm

http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robins/legacy/country_resources.htm

The key in this paper is to focus on your country's position in the global economy and how it got that way. **I suggest that you work from the present backwards; that may help focus your paper on the events and agents that contributed to the present state of your country. Be sure to begin your paper with your brief summary of the issues raised in appropriate chapters of the text. And include a map of your country** (see http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robins/legacy/map_file.htm)

Some of the questions to address in this paper include:

1. What are some of the issues and topics discussed in your readings or class that relate to the economic history of your country?
2. How and when did your country emerge as a nation-state? How were its borders created and defined?
3. Which of the core powers most influenced your country? What was the relationship between them (e.g. colonizer to colonized, etc.)? Which core country is most influential today in the affairs of your country?
4. What is the present state of the economy (e.g. GNP, per capita income, rate of economic growth, etc.)? How much debt does your country have? How does the economy (particularly the economic growth rate) today compare to 20 or thirty years ago? Try to find out what sort of economic programs have been imposed on your country by the IMF.

5. What are the dominant industries and or corporations, and who controls them?
6. How would you characterize the present government of your country (democratic, authoritarian, etc.)?

You will find a lot of the information that you need for this paper at the CIA country site, the World Bank site, and the IMF site.

Population (3-5 pages)

Web resources:

http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robbins/legacy/population_resources.htm

This paper should focus on the population history of your country. Your paper should then address the following questions:

1. What are some of the issues discussed in your readings or in class that relate to understanding the population dynamics of your country?
2. What are the demographics of your country (e.g. total population, age and gender distribution, rate of population growth, urban vs. rural population, etc.)?
3. How many people are there per square mile? For comparison, New Jersey (the highest in the U.S.) has 1,042.2 persons per square mile, the Northeastern U.S., 313.1, and the U.S. as a whole 70.3 persons per square mile. You can check out the density of other states at <http://www.demographia.com/db-landstatepopdens.htm>. Which state does your country most closely resemble? Is your country overpopulated?
4. What was the population 20 years ago? 40 years ago?
5. What is the role of women in your country in deciding reproductive strategies?

Poverty and Hunger (3-5 pages)

Web Resources:

http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robbins/legacy/hunger_resources.htm

Address the following questions:

1. What are some of the issues discussed in your readings or class discussions that relate to poverty and hunger in your country?
2. What is the per capita income in your country? How unevenly is income distributed (e.g. what percentage of the population earns less than \$1.00 a day? Less than \$2.00 a day)? What is the Gini coefficient? (see www.nationmaster.com); What might you conclude is the degree of endemic hunger?
3. What are the major agricultural crops produced (e.g. land devoted to different crops)? Which are food crops? What percentage of the food crops produced are exported?
4. Have there been major famines in your country?
5. How much foreign aid does your country receive? From where do they receive it?
6. What sort of programs does your country have to alleviate hunger and/or poverty? Are there international efforts?

The Environment (3-5 pages)

Web resources:

http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robbins/legacy/environment_resources.htm

Address the following questions:

1. What are some of the issues discussed in readings and class discussions that relate to environmental conditions in your country?
2. What is the environmental status of your country's a) forests, b) water, c) air quality? How much and what kind of energy (e.g. coal, hydroelectric, nuclear, etc.) does your country use and what is its rate of carbon emission (you can get that information at <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/iea/contents.html>)?
3. What is the greatest source of environmental pollution in your country? What sort of environmental laws does your country have? Is it relatively easy to get information on the sources of pollution? How does that compare to the U.S.?
4. Does your country import toxic waste? To what extent are multinational corporations responsible for environmental pollution?
5. Check out your country's environmental sustainability index at <http://www.yale.edu/esi/>. How does it stand relative to other countries?

Health and Disease (3-5 pages)

Web resources:

http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robbins/legacy/health_resources.htm

Address yourself to the following questions:

1. What are some of the issues discussed in readings and class discussions that relate to health conditions in your country?
2. How would you characterize the basic state of health in your country (e.g. infant and child mortality rates, life expectancy, etc.)? What are the greatest threats to health? How many doctors or health care workers (e.g. nurses) are there per 1000 persons?
3. What are the infection rates for such things as malaria, tuberculosis, and AIDS?
4. What are some of the cultural factors that might predispose people in your country to specific diseases? How is the rate of disease and access to health care influenced by class and/or gender?

Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Conflict (3-5 pages)

Web resources:

http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robbins/legacy/indigenous_peoples.htm

Address yourself to the following questions:

1. What are some of the issues discussed in readings and class discussions that relate to the position of indigenous peoples in your country?
2. Who are the indigenous groups or religious or ethnic minorities within your country? Approximately what is their percentage within the general population? (you can get some of that information at <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>.)
3. Historically, how have indigenous groups or ethnic and/or religious minorities been treated by the majority or dominant population? Are there present or past conflicts between them? Have these conflicts been violent?
4. What is the present economic and social condition of indigenous and/or ethnic or religious minorities relative to the rest of the population? Does your country have any market-dominant minorities?

Required Paper: Social Protest (5-7 pages)

Web Resources

http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robbins/legacy/peasant_protest.htm

http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robbins/legacy/antisystemic_protest.htm

http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robbins/legacy/religious_protest.htm

There are various forms of protest to the expansion of capitalism that we will examine in class including peasant, labor, feminist, minority, environmental, indigenous, and religious protest, among others. Your paper should begin with a brief summary from the text and readings of the major issues involved in social and/or antisystemic protest. Address at least some of the following questions in your paper:

1. How have small-scale farmers (peasants) fared in agricultural development? What is the history of peasant protest? To what extent were these and other forms of protest linked to the expansion of the capitalist world system?
2. What were the motivations or reasons given by members of antisystemic movements for their protest? Could they be linked to economic conditions?
3. Are there present-day movements that involve attempts of people or groups (labor groups, women's groups, environmental groups) to gain relief from what they view as oppression?
4. What role have religious groups played in addressing the social and economic problems of your country? Have religious groups been involved in any way in violent protest in your country?
5. What has been the reaction of your nation-state to the protests? Were these reactions violent?