**Course Description:**

This course serves as an introduction to the core principles, theories, and histories of economics, with specific attention to the issues that shape the spatial contours of the global economy. We will work to develop a basic understanding of contemporary public debates about economic policy and explore the relationships between spaces, labor, and markets. By the end of the semester, we will have engaged with concepts like globalization, austerity, and neoliberalism and studied the often-conflicting roles of economic actors like states, producers, and consumers.

- We will use the first half of the semester to develop a basic understanding of the central concepts of the discipline of economics, and to situate these ideas within various iterations of economic discourse.
- Through a diverse set of readings and in class discussions, after the midterm we will work to connect the historical development of capitalism to ongoing shifts in the spatial organization of production and consumption.
- By framing economics not only through the abstract models of conventional economics, but also through an interrogation of economic activity in diverse spaces (like the Global South), together we will critically analyze globalization and investigate the causes and patterns of spatial economic inequality.
- Develop a classroom culture that encourages you to critically analyze the connections between your daily practices and the uneven economic, political, and environmental issues that underpin them.
Readings:

There is no “textbook” to purchase for this class. However, I would like you to purchase one inexpensive (currently under $15 new; under $8 used; under $10 as an ebook) book that will serve to ground our reading and discussion during the first part of the semester.


All other readings are located on our class Blackboard site or available for download from the FDU library/e-brary. Readings will be drawn from a range of sources: academic articles and book excerpts, newspapers and magazine reportage, and fiction. Some of the readings are quite dense, and will require careful reading and reflection. If you put in the effort, the reward for close reading extends far beyond the walls of our classroom.

BRING THE READINGS TO CLASS. We will be referring to the articles in our lectures and class discussions, so having the readings with you will enable you to follow along, take notes, and make meaningful contributions to class discussions. You should complete the assigned readings before each class and to use these readings to frame questions for discussion each week.

**TEN DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

You are responsible for ten (10) short, thoughtful discussion questions. These are to be handed in as you come into the classroom. Questions submitted after I begin lecture will not receive credit. This question should address a concern, criticism, or challenge provoked by the readings done for that day’s class. I will use these questions to help guide us in our preliminary conversations. Remember that a good discussion question is not a yes or no question, but one that asks why, how, when, etc.

**Midterm and Final Exam:**

There are two exams for this class. Both will be open-notebook, and draw from readings, lectures, and discussions and focusing on broad course themes and major vocabulary.

**Attendance and Participation:**

Attendance and active participation are compulsory in this class. You are required to arrive on time, contribute to our discussions and in-class projects, and stay for the duration of the class. You are allowed two unexcused absences in the course (an excused absence is a documented medical or family emergency as determined by the Dean of Students Office). Each additional unexcused absence will result in the loss of 3 points from your attendance and participation grade (there are a total of 15). Late arrivals and early departures will count as 1/2 an absence. Six unexcused absences will result in the
automatic failure of the course. You are responsible for finding out what you missed while absent and getting the notes from a classmate. There are no make-up quizzes in this class.

Writing Assignments:

I am a firm believer that writing is one of the keys to engaged, nuanced, critical thinking. To that end, in the class our writing assignments have an emphasis on process as well as product. What this means is that each assignment you write will be iterative in some way, requiring that you review and revise your initial submission. In evaluating your projects, your drafts and edits are viewed as being as important as the final product.

There are two writing projects this semester:

A. WEEKLY JOURNAL:

Each Friday, we will devote about 15 minutes at the end of class to a brief in-class writing assignment. The goal of these interventions is threefold. 1) to assure that you can demonstrate a basic comprehension of the terms and issues we discussed that week, 2) to encourage you to weave our class discussions together with the readings from the week, and 3) to encourage you to develop critical thinking skills and sound argumentation. These projects will often ask you to look at the week’s readings to draw out your analysis, so this makes it even more important for you to bring the readings to class. Taken together, these entries add up to 15% of your final grade.

B. COMMODITY CHAIN RESEARCH PAPER AND MAP:

This semester we will also work on writing one research essay and building an associated interactive web map. For this paper, you will choose a specific product/commodity and put together an in-depth research paper that describes and analyzes its global commodity chain. First, you will map out the history of the product’s market, major sources (and locations) of competition, whether it has been taxed, how and why it has been traded, etc., with a focus on the language and terminology of the economics discipline. Next, you will trace it as it travels and transforms from its site of extraction to the point of consumption (and beyond in the form of waste?), including attention to processing and manufacturing techniques, distribution and transportation routes, and scales of use. With my help, we will build a map of this chain.

You will present your findings (and map) to the class during the last week of class, and the final draft of the paper is due in class on April 28. Because research and writing are processes that take time, this single paper will take shape over the course of the entire
semester, by way of a number of short assignments and in-class peer review sessions. The final essay will be approximately 1,800-2,000 words long.

Your essay must have an original title, be stapled, typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, with standard margins and a works cited list. I grade for analysis and content as well as style and grammar, and will provide you with a simple grading matrix to help you along. To that end, you are encouraged to visit me during office hours and/or use the tutors at the Academic Support Center. Late papers will only be accepted for one week after due date with 20% reduction in the grade. After that, you will not receive points for the paper. This paper is the most significant assignment in the class, and accounts for 35% of your final grade in the course.

**Class protocols:**

The following protocols hold, without exception, for all students in this class:

1. Collegiality and common sense require that you turn off your cell phone in the classroom. If your cell phone rings in class, I will ask you to leave, and you will earn ½ absence for the day.
2. Unless otherwise stated, please do not bring laptops into class. I love digital and networked technology almost as much as you do, and use it in nearly all facets of my life. However, in my recent experience in the classroom, I’ve noticed that laptops primarily distract their users and those around them. Beyond the growing evidence suggesting that students who listen and take notes by hand actually learn more than those who use computers, I think that any classroom discussion would no doubt benefit from students looking at each other and not the back of a digital device. If you require the use of a laptop in class, please provide a note from the university.
3. Respect is paramount. We will be discussing and debating issues in this class that have no clear or inevitable ‘answers’ yet still generate impassioned and/or emotional responses. Please be mindful of others as we work to develop an open-yet-critical classroom culture.
4. Visit me during office hours. I am more than happy to review material and answer questions. If you cannot make posted hours, we can try to arrange an alternative appointment time.

**Grading criteria:**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance, Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Questions</td>
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<td>Weekly Journal</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commodity Chain Paper &amp; Map</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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**Grade determination:**

There is no extra credit given in this course.
The numeric grades correspond to the following letter grades:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95 – 99%</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 – 79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 94%</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>73 – 76%</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60 – 69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 82%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Less than 60%</td>
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**Academic Integrity:**

Cheating, plagiarism, or other violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated. To that end, if you haven't already done so, please become familiar with FDU's Academic Integrity Policy. Any and all students in violation of this policy will be subject to automatic failure of the course for a first offense, and will be suspended from the university for a second offense. The inability to prove authorship when questioned about your work’s authenticity could be grounds for the charge of plagiarism. It is entirely your responsibility to read the FDU Academic Integrity Policy carefully and abide by it.

**Disability Disclosure:**

Fairleigh Dickinson University – College at Florham, in accord with the policies underlying Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), works to ensure that reasonable accommodations are implemented for enrolled students with documented disabilities to function in the academic environment. Any student with documented disabilities, who feels he/she may need academic accommodations while taking this course, should first contact the office of Disability Support Services at 973-443-8079 to discuss his/her specific needs. Once the disability is verified, pick-up your letters from the office of Disability Support Services, then make an appointment to see the professor.

Course Schedule:

WEEK 1: FOUNDATIONS

Jan. 24: Intro


Jan. 27: What (and where) is economics? What is at stake in a class like this?


WEEK 2: YOU ARE HERE

Jan. 31: History of Capitalism


Feb. 3: History of Capitalism part II


Commodity Chain Papers: Consumption Diary and Commodity Selection Due!!

WEEK 3: EXCHANGE PLACE

Feb. 7: Markets


Feb 10: Commodities


**WEEK 4: WORKING and EQUILIBRIA**

Feb. 14: *Supply and demand*


Feb 17: *Wage, labor, and class*


**WEEK 5: SPECIALIZATIONS, SPATIALIZATIONS, and MONEY**

Feb. 21: *Comparative Advantage and Trade*


Feb. 24: *Money and Finance*


**Commodity Chain Papers: Annotated Bibliography Due!**

**WEEK 6: MACROECONOMICS**

Feb. 28: *Aggregation, fiscal policy, monetary policy*


Mar. 3: *Unemployment, Inflation, and Macroeconomic Problems*


WEEK 7: CAPITALISM and EMPIRE

Mar. 7: Uneven Development


Mar. 10: Midterm

SPRING BREAK: No Class March 14 or 17

WEEK 8: MY OWN PRIVATE…WATERWORLD?

Mar. 21: Property and the State


Mar. 24: Taxation, Government Intervention


WEEK 9: INDUSTRIALIZATION

Mar. 28: Production, Consumption, and Fordism


Mar. 31: Industrial Revolutions


Commodity Chain Papers: Rough Draft Due!
WEEK 10: UNEVEN CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT

Apr. 4:  *The Welfare State, Bretton Woods, and the Emergence of International Financial Agencies*


Apr. 7:  **NO CLASS: I WILL BE AT A CONFERENCE**

WEEK 11: THE NEOLIBERAL TURN

Apr. 11:  *Fordism’s limits*


Apr. 14:  *Flexible Accumulation*


*Commodity Chain Papers: Excel Spreadsheet for map Due!*

WEEK 12: COMMODITY CHAINS and the LOGISTICAL SOCIETY

Apr. 18:  *Containerization, Movement, and Speed*


Apr 21:  *Precision, Bodies, and Distribution*


WEEK 13: TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY TECHNO LIBERTARIANISM

Apr. 25: The Corporation and the Rise of Silicon Valley


Apr. 28: Silicon Urbanism

Silicon Valley and the effects on urban life:

http://www.lrb.co.uk/v35/n03/rebecca-solnit/diary

Commodity Chain Final Papers Due!!

WEEK 14: AUSTERITY (and PRESENTATIONS)

May 2: Austerity, Crisis, Occupy


Presentations

May 5: Final Review

Presentations

FINAL EXAM: FRIDAY, MAY 12 @ 10:00 am