Aims of the Course (aka Teaching and Learning Objectives)

This is one of the two ‘capstone’ courses for the Major in International Studies (the other being IS 450), and it is intended to bring together concepts and ideas from across the range of courses that may be taken up by those majoring in this field of study. It is based upon the view that close study of a small number of texts is a rewarding approach to learning. There is no generally accepted canon of ‘core texts’ in an interdisciplinary field such as International Studies, but all the texts selected for study in this course are widely reckoned to be of particular significance. Between them, they enable us to study a number of topics that are of great importance in International Studies: state formation and state failure; capitalism; development; liberalism and neoliberalism; class and politics; energy and geopolitics; nationalism, and ethnicity. Between them, too, they provide us with a broad overview of the sweep of modern history from the time of the formation of states in early modern western Europe, to the Cold War and the present era. And they enable us to study, as well, different approaches in the social sciences: rational choice; historical materialism and historical institutionalism; constructivism.

The Texts


This is a brilliant, very short book, tracing the story of state formation in early modern Europe through to that of state failures in the context of the Cold War. It presents, too, a way of thinking about development, rooted in a rational choice approach.

Harvey is one of the most widely cited scholars working today, and probably the most influential Marxist thinker. This book offers a Marxist perspective on recent trends in international development.


In this book Polanyi, a refugee from Nazism, first in Britain and then in the United States, reflects upon the rise of the market economy, and upon how the contradictions to which it gives rise explain the great world crisis of the middle of the twentieth century. The analysis is a source of many insights, and scholars such as David Harvey have found in them a way of understanding what has happened in politics and society over the last half-century, since the time that Polanyi wrote.


Paul Gilroy introduces this book – which addresses the question of whether it is possible to be ‘Black’ and ‘British’ (or American/Canadian) – by pointing out that ideas about nationality, ethnicity, race are distinctly modern. But in these post-modern times, he says, “Their power has, if anything, grown and their ubiquity as a means to make political sense of the world is currently unparalleled by the languages of class and socialism by which they once appeared to have been suppressed”. In the context of events such as those of Charlottesville in the summer of 2017, it is more than ever important to address questions about the politics of identity, and to examine what Gilroy describes as “the continuing lure of ethnic absolutisms”.

Alan Paton (1948) *Cry the Beloved Country* (many editions)

Described as “The greatest novel to emerge out of the tragedy of South Africa”, Alan Paton’s novel allows us to examine racial injustice in the context of colonialism.


‘Oil is a curse, it is often said, that condemns the countries producing it to an existence defined by war, corruption and enormous inequality. *Carbon Democracy* tells a more
complex story, arguing that no nation escapes the political consequences of our collective dependence on oil. It shapes the body politic both in regions such as the Middle East, which rely upon revenues from oil production, and in the places that have the greatest demand for energy ... In making the production of energy the central force shaping the democratic age, Carbon Democracy rethinks the history of energy, the politics of nature, the theory of democracy, and the place of the Middle East in our common world.’


This book explores another hugely important question: what is the social basis for revolt? Wood asks why, despite the very high costs of doing so, so many peasants in El Salvador supported opposition organizations. She shows, finally, that while material grievances, especially the unequal distribution of land, played a role in motivating rebellion, emotional and moral reasons were essential to the emergence and consolidation of insurgent collective action.

*Harlan County U. S. A* is a remarkable film made in the 1970s about a prolonged strike in the Kentucky coalfield. We will ‘read’ this film, too, as a ‘text’, alongside the books by Polanyi and Mitchell

**Lectures and Seminars**

The lectures in this course aim to provide historical and theoretical context for each of the texts in turn, and to draw out the concepts and ideas that they illuminate.

The seminars will be devoted to discussion of the texts.

**Writing and Assessment**

I will ask you to write a synopsis/essay on *Prosperity and Violence* [15%]; an extended essay on Harvey’s *Brief History* and *The Great Transformation* [25%]; a film review [5%]; an essay on *Black Atlantic* [20%]; a review of *Cry the Beloved Country* (15%); and an essay on either *Carbon Democracy* or *Insurgent Collective Action* [20%].
SCHEDULE

The following is a rough schedule for the course. I think courses should grow and change with discussion so I am not promising to stick rigidly to this programme except that the dates for submission of written work are set.

Week One: Tuesday September 5th:

Introductions, Introducing the Course, Introducing Robert Bates’ Prosperity and Violence: the Political Economy of Development

Week Two: Tuesday September 12th:

Further on Prosperity and Violence; Discussion of the Text

Week Three: Tuesday September 19th:

Lecture on David Harvey’s A Brief History of Neo-Liberalism; and Discussion

Friday September 22nd (5.00pm): Write a Synopsis of Prosperity and Violence? [1500 words]

Week Four: Tuesday September 26th:

Further discussion of A Brief History of Neo-Liberalism; and an Introduction to Polanyi’s Great Transformation

Week Five: Tuesday October 3rd:

Reading Polanyi’s The Great Transformation Part One (chapters 1 and 2) and Part 2.1 ‘The Satanic Mill’ (chapters 3-7)

Week Six: Tuesday October 10th:

Reading Polanyi Part 2.2 ‘Self-Protection of Society’
Week Seven: Tuesday October 17th:

Watch *Harlan County USA*

Friday October 20th (5.00pm): Submit essay. What does Polanyi mean by the double movement and how does he think it worked through the C19 and into the C20? How far is the idea relevant today? [2500-3000 words]

Monday October 23rd (5.00pm): Submit review of *Harlan County USA* [800 words]

Week 8: Tuesday October 24th:

Reading Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic*

Week 9: Tuesday October 31st:

Reading Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic*

Week 10: Tuesday November 7th:

Reading Alan Paton’s *Cry The Beloved Country*

Week 11: Tuesday November 14th:

Reading *Carbon Democracy*

Week 12: Tuesday November 21st:

Reading *Carbon Democracy*

Monday November 27th (5.00pm): Submit essay on Black Atlantic (title TBC): [2500-3000 words]
Week 13: Tuesday November 28th:

Reading Elizabeth Wood’s *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*

Monday December 4th (5.00pm): Submit review of *Cry The Beloved Country* [1500 words]

Wednesday December 13th (5.00pm): Submit essay on EITHER *Carbon Democracy* OR *Insurgent Collective Action* (title TBC) [2500-3000 words]

REMEMBER THAT SFU HAS STRICT RULES ABOUT PLAGIARISM. If you quote directly from a text you should indicate this by using quotation marks and by giving the date of the publication and the page number [as in, for example, (Gilroy 1993: 2)]. Then provide a full bibliography at the end of your essay/review [as in: Gilroy, P. (1993) *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press]