

Globalization

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- (Some of the approach here is inspired by Richard Robbins, *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism*)
- **Globalization**: the increasing interconnectedness of people, places, and activities around the globe
 - the global distribution of information by radio, television, and internet
 - the global distribution of consumer goods
 - the global network of production, shipping, sales, banking, etc. to produce, deliver, and pay for those goods
 - increasing contact and interaction between people of different cultures due to air travel, telephones, internet, foreign wars, etc.
 - some people define globalization as the homogenization of culture that supposedly results from this
 - but others (including me) feel it is better to use the term globalization for only the interconnectedness,
 - and not to include in the term an assumption about what the results of the interconnectedness may be
 - in fact, some of the consequences of increasing global connectedness are actually *increased* differences between people
 - as groups come into competition for limited resources, they often place more emphasis on **boundary maintenance**
 - more clearly marking the differences between themselves and the others through clothing, language, speech patterns, etc.
 - increasing interaction with others often leads to more **othering**
 - as we saw in an earlier class, creating group solidarity and individual identity by defining one's own group by contrast with another
 - example: globalization leads to greater migration of workers towards places with better employment options
 - this often results in othering, stereotyping, and conflict
 - the native population emphasizing their difference from the immigrants
 - and the immigrants emphasizing their distinct ethnicity as way of maintaining dignity, solidarity, and defending themselves
 - example: places that want to attract tourism emphasize their distinct local culture
 - while globalization is usually seen as a late 20th-century and 21st century process, in fact it has been building up for a long time
 - arguably from the first Mesopotamian empire of Sargon of Akkad, around 2250 BC
 - or the empire of Alexander the Great (336-323 BC)
 - or the Roman empire (44 BC – 476 AD)
 - example of “globalization” in Roman times: the trade in sheer silk dresses from China, popular among rich women of Rome

- traded overland on the Silk Route to the Levant, then by ship in the Mediterranean to Rome
- this was effectively global trade, as early as the time of Christ
- The Roman senate tried to ban these dresses in 50 AD because the senators considered them immoral
 - both because they were too risqué and revealing
 - and also because they were shocked by the obscenely high cost of these unnecessary luxuries, and the supposed mistreatment of the poor, underpaid women who made them in China:
- Pliny the Elder, The Natural History VI, 20:
 - “to the females... they give the twofold task of unraveling [the silk cocoons’ fibers], and of weaving the threads afresh. So manifold is the labor, and so distant are the regions which are thus ransacked to supply a dress through which our ladies may in public display their charms.”
- Seneca the Younger c. 3 BCE–65 CE, Declamations Vol. I:
 - “Wretched flocks of maids labor so that the adulteress may be visible through her thin dress.”
 - Don’t these objections sound like people today discussing the treatment of women who make outrageously expensive athletic shoes in Asian sweatshops?
- or the Dutch and British East India companies (1600 to 1858)
 - which divided up big portions of the world into areas of government/private military control
 - forcing colonized people in India and Southeast Asia to mine minerals, grow spices, cotton, opium, etc.
 - which were traded around most of the world
 - for the profit of European investors
- Why focus on globalization, and its colonial and imperialist history, in an anthropology class?
 - Globalization is the context for all societies and cultures today
 - culture is integrated and a system
 - anthropologists argue for a holistic view of society, seeing culture as an interconnected system
 - so to understand any culture today (and many in the past), we have to consider its global context
 - to include all of the holistic pattern
 - example: the production, exchange, and consumption of sushi, in your reading by Bestor
 - the lives of fishermen in Maine are affected by the water temperatures off Spain; the success of a restaurant in New York is affected by the bidding for fish in Tokyo...
 - we cannot understand any of this without a global perspective
 - example: Ju/’hoansi in Botswana and Namibia, 1980s-2001 (Lee chapter 12)
 - Lee details big impacts on the Ju/’hoansi from outside forces
 - both negative and positive
 - notice that Lee emphasizes how the Ju/’hoansi responded and dealt with the changing circumstances

- both in general and as individuals
- they are not passive victims, but players in a complex, global system
- even if they are at a disadvantage in some ways
- The **Modern World System**
 - World system, or **world systems theory**: a model of how modern world economic and political relations developed and operates, proposed by Immanuel Wallerstein
 - Includes the entire world known at the time
 - now the globe, but formerly Europe, its colonies, and the surrounding societies
 - A powerful **core** society exploits a dominated **periphery** of other societies
 - The periphery provides raw resources, cheap labor, and often consumers to buy the goods
 - The core
 - extracts these resources, converts them to finished goods, and sells them back to the periphery
 - uses political/economic methods (taxes, import duties, licensed monopolies, etc.) to ensure that it benefits
 - uses military force to keep its political/economic position
 - but does this classic model correctly portray the modern globalized world?
 - it fit reasonably well with the 19th century British Empire
 - or US economic imperialism in the 20th century
 - but does it still?
 - in the sushi article, where is the core, and where is the periphery?
 - if the suchi article suggests that the world system core is in Tokyo, where would you place the core after reading an article about computers, or financial markets, or manufacturing...?
 - there really is no longer one core and one periphery
 - but instead many places that function as a core in one industry or context, and periphery in others
 - an ever more complex network of interactions
 - with power, wealth, production, and consumption no longer all clumped together in a single core
 - but distributed at many different nodes of the network
 - no one core monopolizes the power to act
 - probably never really did
 - the periphery has probably always pushed back and influenced the core, too
 - What causes globalization?
 - “The society of perpetual growth”
 - capitalism requires constant economic growth
 - or it collapses
 - you constantly hear in the news about measures of economic growth, and you know that economists worry if it gets down to just a few percent per year
 - **capital** is wealth that is used to create more wealth: interest on investments
 - if capital is successfully producing ever more wealth, then the total economic system must be growing

- virtually all economists agree with this
 - details are complex, not fully understood
 - related to the need in capitalism for loans and the payment of interest (the new wealth produced by capital)
 - there can be no “steady state”, no acceptable level where economic activity can stabilize
- so businesses constantly seek
 - more consumers
 - or to get the same consumers to buy more: advertising
 - when goods were produced on a small scale, often by kin, they were made in direct response to demand
 - but under capitalism, an investor predicts what demand may be, builds a factory, produces a huge amount of a product, and then has to sell it all or he loses money
 - so capitalists have to ensure or create demand that often was not there before
 - by bringing the goods to new people (new markets)
 - or by influencing the wants of the same people
 - by creating new or better products
 - or by convincing them to buy more of the existing ones
 - or both
 - more and cheaper material inputs (mining, logging, drilling, etc.)
 - more and cheaper labor
 - a business can increase profit by producing and selling more, but also by cutting costs, especially by paying laborers less
 - so they will move production to wherever labor is cheapest
 - and will try to pay as little as possible for as much work as possible
- governments support this economic growth
 - with trade agreements, military intervention, etc.
 - because economic growth is good for citizens
 - it keeps people working and provides lots of goods
 - and because it is good for business owners and investors
 - who influence government to ensure that they continue to profit
- Result: globalization
 - ever more people drawn into the capitalist system
 - as consumers and as laborers, to a lesser extent as capitalists (investors)
 - ever greater connections, flows of wealth, people, goods between different places and cultures around the globe
- obviously, all capitalist societies are not identical
 - but they all share certain features that make them capitalist
 - like any culture, capitalist cultures are comprised of
 - roles (categories of people)
 - and rules (for how members of a category behave)
 - specifically, capitalist cultures involve
 - the role of “consumer”
 - who buys and accumulates goods in order to attain happiness

- the role of “capitalist”
 - who invests wealth in any way that makes a profit
- the role of “laborer”
 - who work as much and as hard as possible for an employer
 - in exchange for as much payment as they can get
 - not as part of their social identity and obligations to kin...
 - but in a commercial workplace with little or no social relationship between the laborer and the employer
- these are arbitrary cultural constructs
 - not necessary features of human society, even though they almost seem so to us
 - none of these roles exist among foragers, or among many pre-capitalist farmers
 - think of the different ways that exchange and consumption are constructed by
 - Trobriand Islanders engaging in *kula* exchange – they are not acting as consumers or capitalists
 - New Guineans practicing *moka* or Northwest Coast Native Americans practicing potlatch
- these roles and rules of behavior had to...
 - develop over time (historically)
 - be taught to people as part of the process of **enculturation**, or learning and adopting a culture
- there has been a lot of study of the historical development of capitalism and the three main social roles in capitalism, which we can't cover here
 - the development of the role of consumer involved
 - advertising, how retail stores operate, government policies, changes in childrearing practices, changes in religious theology, and much more
 - the development of the role of the laborer involved
 - converting much of the world's populace from largely self-supporting farmers to a landless workforce of wage laborers
 - through
 - explicit government policies like “enclosure” in England
 - the effect of partible inheritance as population grows,
 - the effect of credit in which small farmers cannot survive a run of bad years and have to sell their land to large commercial farmers in order to pay back their loans
 - competition in which small self-supporting farmers cannot produce cheaply enough to compete with large, commercial farmers... and so on
- the development of the role of the capitalist involved
 - a shift from making wealth by ownership of farmland
 - to **mercantilism**: using wealth to finance import of materials and export of manufactured products
 - supported by **imperialism**: using government-backed force to control natural resources, labor, etc. in foreign places
 - and to maintain monopolies that guarantee enough consumers
 - to capitalism: using wealth to create more efficient means of production such as factories

- employing and often exploiting laborers
 - to industrial capitalism: using wealth to mechanize factories to produce even more
 - making so many goods at such a high initial investment cost that capitalists must find ways to motivate people to buy them
- So there has been a historical process of the development of capitalism
 - which was a cultural process in the sense of constructing the roles and rules of consumers, laborers, and capitalists
 - it was also a cultural process in which ever more people incorporated these constructs into their own cultures and begin living by them
- and this growth of capitalism,
 - which is driven to endlessly expand its production and consumption in order to pay interest on loans
 - eventually expands to a point that we call globalization
- once the whole globe is completely involved, can capitalism continue to grow?
 - can we keep producing and consuming more and more forever without any new resources to use or new consumers to sell to?
 - or are there limits at some point...?