SOC 562

Nature and Technology from Transnational Perspectives

Instructor: Zsuzsa Gille

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Class: Thursday 03:00PM - 06:20PM
G48 Foreign Languages Building

Office hours: Thursdays 1-3pm or by appointment

Course topic:
In the last twenty years various disciplines (geography, sociology, history, and anthropology) have started contemplating what it would mean for our understanding of social problems and economic-political transformations if we attended to the formative role nonhuman entities play in constituting our social world. This endeavor by now has culminated not only in a formidable scholarship that deserves a regular place in a well-rounded sociological curriculum, but has also readjusted the theoretical terrains on which we understand globalization, transnational social relations and democracy. After an introduction to basic sociological theories of globalization, materiality and practice, we will classify the ways in which human-nonhuman relations stretch not only across national boundaries but also scales and evaluate the differences among such novel concepts as global assemblages, material civilization, transnational material flows, neoliberal governmentality, technological zones, or biopolitics. Students will use these theories and empirical models to formulate their own research projects, which efforts and experiments will serve as the basis of their final papers for this course.

Keywords:
Technology, nature, science, body, biopolitics, globalization, materiality, spatiality, democracy, colonialism, development, globalization, risk

This class fulfills course requirements for the transnational sociology area of concentration.

Prereq’s: none, but prior exposure to social theory is highly recommended.

Readings: articles on Compass and the following list of books, which are on reserve at the library:


Students’ responsibilities:

1. Reading all assigned texts
2. Weekly commentary on readings that reflects one’s familiarity with the assigned readings (one page-300 words max) to be submitted before class—by 9pm every Wednesday—to the course’s webpage. (You may miss one week, no questions asked).
3. Completing in-class writing assignments and occasional smaller projects
4. Thoughtful, focused, and respectful contributions to discussion in class
5. A cumulative final exam (essay of 20 pages)
6. Approaching instructor with questions before problems accumulate
7. Visiting instructor at least once during office hours

Instructor will:
- provide context-setting short lectures
- devise learning tools
- ensure a non-intimidating and democratic environment for discussion
- regularly check on students’ understanding of the material
- refer students to auxiliary material if needed
- notify students about emerging problems in time to rectify them before grades are assigned

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

August 27

Introduction. No reading.

September 3

Globalization


September 10

**Theoretical introduction #1**


September 17

**Theoretical introduction #2**


September 24

**Colonialism #1**


October 1

**Colonialism #2**


October 8

**The Economy**


October 15

**Natural resources and the environment**


October 22

Race and Migration


October 29

Gender


November 5

State and Power as Assemblage


November 12

Food


November 19

Ethics, Morality and the Sociology of Standards

December 3

Epistemology, Methods, Research Design

Hilary Kahn (Ed.) *Framing the Global*. Indiana University Press. Chs. TBA.

December 10 (Reading Day: Participation is optional or we may reschedule this class.)

Summary and Discussion of Projects

Final paper due December 14th midnight on Compass.