Course Organiser
Dr Mónica Moreno Figueroa (mm2051@cam.ac.uk)

Lecturers in Order of Teaching
Dr Diana T. Kudaibergenova (dk406@cam.ac.uk)
Dr Mónica Moreno Figueroa (mm2051@cam.ac.uk)
Dr Matthew Sparkes (ms2268@cam.ac.uk)
Dr Matt Mahmoudi (mm2134@cam.ac.uk)

Supervisions Coordinator
Dr Rachell Sanchez Rivera (rs871@cam.ac.uk)

Aims and Objectives
- To introduce and explore a selection of global social problems and dynamics of resistance from a sociological perspective;
- To develop a critical understanding of key sociological concepts, approaches and analyses to social problems such as inequality, neoliberalism, development, nationalism, globalisation, social movements, protest, transnationalism, democracy, discourse, political economy, control and pluralism.
- To introduce the sociological notion and methodological tool of intersectionality – bringing gender, race and class to the fore – to understand social problems and dynamics of resistance in a critically imbricated way and not as one-dimensional struggles upheld by one-dimensional subjects (simply men, simply women, etc.)
- To think and raise questions about the current climate crisis across a range of social problems and dynamics of resistance.

Structure of the Paper
The paper starts with a one-hour Introduction (week 1), delivered by the course organiser and the lecturers. Following this, SOC3 has two sections. Each section has two modules, and each module consists of three two-hour lectures, for a total of 12 lectures over 24 hours as follows:

Section One:

1. Global Social Problems (Dr Diana T. Kudaibergenova)

   Lecture 1: State, Border, and Inequality
Lecture 2: Vaccine Nationalism
Lecture 3: Inequality, Protests and Social Movements

2. Global Body Projects (Dr Mónica Moreno Figueroa)

Lecture 4: Sex Tourism, and the Tensions of Development
Lecture 5: Bodies, Beauty Work and Cosmetic Surgeries in Neoliberal Times
Lecture 6: Inequalities and Fashion

Section Two

3. Global Debt Problems (Dr Matthew Sparkes)

Lecture 7: Financialised societies
Lecture 8: Personal indebtedness
Lecture 9: The ideology of debt and its affects

4. Control and Resistance in Digital Societies (Dr Ella McPherson)

Lecture 10: Critical Approaches to the Information Society
Lecture 11: Social Media and Social Movements
Lecture 12: Representation and Resistance: The Problematics of Big Data and the Politics of the Selfie

Supervisions

Supervision will be organised centrally by the Teaching Associate for Soc3, Dr Rachell Sanchez (rs871@cam.ac.uk), in relation to student’s interests.

The course is taught by means of 12 two-hour lectures and eight supervision sessions. Students should plan to have three substantive supervisions in Michaelmas and three in Lent, and then two revision supervisions in Easter term.

In Michaelmas and Lent, students should choose one of the two parts of that term’s module and have all three supervisions on the three topics of that part. As a result, they will cover two of the four parts over the year in their supervision. One of the revision supervisions should be on their Michaelmas topics, and the other should be on the Lent topics.

Lecturers will give some supervisions on their modules, but due to the size of the student cohort, cannot give all of them. The teaching team therefore also consists of a selected group of supervisors whose expertise matches the supervision topics. Students will have one supervisor per part (topics and revision supervision), so two supervisors for the duration of the paper. This supervisor allocation policy aims to balance supervisor expertise and consistency of supervision for students.

Students will be expected to produce a minimum of four essays over the six substantive supervisions, according to Department of Sociology policy. Students may write essays for the other two supervisions, but they also have the option to prepare for this supervision in other ways. Students taking the latter option should consult their supervisor in advance, who will assign an alternative preparation assignment, such as a short presentation, a case study or a book review.
In general, individual supervisors can decide to use some supervision sessions to read and discuss an article, ask students to present on a topic, or find other ways to address the topic in ways that are stimulating and provide a learning experience for students.

Lectures are central to this paper, and students are strongly advised to attend all of them. The reading lists below are meant to provide guidance for students and supervisors. In their supervision essays, students should answer the specified supervision question provided for each topic.

Students will receive instructions about how to sign up for supervisions at the start of the academic year, with the expectation to have this settled by the first week of Michaelmas.

**Mode of Assessment**

This paper will be examined by one three-hour examination paper, divided into two sections according to the two sections of the paper. You will be required to answer three questions, including at least one from each section.

**Timetable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Michaelmas</th>
<th>Lent</th>
<th>Easter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr M Moreno Figueroa and all lecturers</td>
<td>Dr Matthew Sparkes</td>
<td>All lecturers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Global Debt Problems</strong></td>
<td><strong>Revision Session</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed. 1pm, week 1 (13 Oct)</td>
<td>W. 4-6 pm, weeks 1-3, beginning 26 Jan</td>
<td>M. 2-3 pm, week 2 (9 May)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Diana T. Kudaibergenova</td>
<td>Dr Matthew Mahmoud</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global Social Problems</strong></td>
<td><strong>Control and Resistance in Digital Societies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. 4-6 pm, weeks 1-3, beginning 13 Oct</td>
<td>W. 4-6 pm, weeks 4-6, beginning 16 Feb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Mónica Moreno Figueroa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body Projects around the Globe</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed. 4-6 pm, weeks 4-6, beginning 3 Nov</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Online version of this paper for this academic year 2021-22**

This year all lectures of this paper will be online, according to the paper’s timetable, as follows:

1. Students will first meet for an hour with the paper organiser, Dr Monica Moreno Figueroa, to go over the paper’s organisation.
2. All lectures will include an approximately 50-60 min pre-recorded lecture that will be available ahead of time and that you can watch in the first hour of the timetabled slot.
3. The second hour of the lectures slot will be synchronous and interactive, that is, an online live session using the Zoom platform, which might include Q&A and other online activities. Students can write their questions in the chat, and the lecturers will answer them live.
SECTION ONE

Section One, Module One: Global Social Problems
Dr Diana T. Kudaibergenova

Overview
In this module we will focus on three major social problems and structures: 1) inequality, borders, citizenship and state; 2) COVID-19 pandemic and vaccine nationalism; 3) protests and social movements. In understanding these social problems, we will also focus on structures and realities that can both exacerbate them but also attempt to address them. We will critically evaluate the concepts of state, borders, citizenship (in Lecture 1), global health systems, colonial legacies, pandemic, and access to vaccines (in Lecture 2), and protests, collective identities, and social movements (in Lecture 3) to focus on intersectionality and complexities of inequality.

Lecture 1. State, Border, and Inequality

Essential Readings:

Additional Readings:
Supervision Questions:
- How important (or unimportant) is the state for eradication of inequality?
- Is borderless world possible?
- Is citizenship an ultimate form of exclusion?

Lecture 2. Vaccine Nationalism

Essential Readings:


Additional Readings


Supervision Questions

- In what ways is vaccine nationalism a continuation of coloniality?
- How do COVID-19 pandemic and vaccine nationalism change the concept of biopolitics?
- Critically discuss why COVAX is failing (or not) globally.

Lecture 3. Protests and Social Movements

Essential Readings


Additional Readings


**Supervision Questions**

- Why certain major social grievances do not lead to the formation of social movements?
- What type of issue or problem (if any) would a new global social movement born out of the COVID-19 pandemic be more likely to focus on? Justify your answer with empirical examples from current or past global events.
- Is it possible to evaluate the “successes” of social and protest movements? Why or why
Section One, Module Two: Global Body Projects
Monica Moreno Figueroa

Module Overview

This module interrogates the body as a site of production of inequalities. Through the critical exploration of instances of cosmetic surgery, beauty pageants and sex tourism, the module will consider the ways intersectionality, as a methodological strategy, can help us develop our sociological imagination. Inequality, embodiment, sexism, racism, class distinctions and nation building will be key concepts.

Section Two

Lecture 7: Sex Tourism and The Tensions of Development

Lecture overview

After an introduction to the module, we will discuss the dilemmas of sex tourism from a transnational perspective. We start by a historical analysis that allow us to consider how colonialism and the racist and sexist logics that developed thereafter have had major consequences to how bodies are understood and occupy space. We will look at the idea of ‘pornotropics’ to then explore, using examples of Latin America and the Caribbean, how the representations of the colonized have impacted the experience and practice of sex tourism. We then explore the political economy of the shifting distinction between sex and romance tourism. We will also experiment thinking together about the issue of the climate crisis and sex tourism, and more broadly about the issue of sustainability, travel and tourism and how these are gendered and racialised enquiries crossed by neoliberal logics of inequality.

Essential Readings


**Additional Readings**


Gregory S (2014) *The devil behind the mirror: Globalization and politics in the Dominican Republic*. Univ of California Press. (Chapters 4 and 5)


Supervision question

- According to Rivers Moore, sex tourism can be understood as a strategy for ‘getting ahead’. What are the contradictions and complexities that this argument pose? Discuss in relation to at least two other authors.

Lecture 8: Colorism, Beauty Work and Cosmetic Surgeries in Neoliberal Times

Lecture overview

In this lecture we explore the issue of colorism and cosmetic surgeries in relation to the concerns with issues of beauty and normality. We will reconsider the use of skin as a supposed biological marker that delineates difference along lines of race, class and gender. We will also explore the racialisation of the cosmetic procedures as well as the arguments for the decolonisation of beauty studies. We will link the concern for surveillance and control over our bodies as a logic of neoliberalism, the entrenchment of post-feminism alongside the urge for renewed forms of aesthetic work. Through this discussion we will seek to understand conceptions of skin that are framed by neoliberal discourse concerning self-help and self-responsibility. We will think through issues related to branding, racial and social passing, trauma and labour in order to understand how skin informs ways of seeing, and we will then consider how ways of seeing inform ways of being for people who are, because of their skin, marginalised and demonised by dominant groups.

Essential Readings


Additional Readings


**On Colorism**


Ahmed, S. (1999) ‘“She’ll Wake Up One of These Days and Find She’s Turned into a Nigger” Passing through Hybridity’ Theory, Culture & Society, 16(2); 87-106.


**On Cosmetic Surgery**


Cosmetic Surgery', Gender & Society, 27 (6); 913-934.

Supervision question

- Resistance to and compliance with racialised beauty work co-exist. Discuss this tension in relation to intersectionality.

Lecture 9: Inequalities and Fashion

In this lecture we will explore how economic, environmental and social inequalities intersect with clothing and fashion. We will focus on everyday garments, the materiality of clothing, and forms of appropriation and exploitation.

Essential Readings:

Additional Readings:


Newspaper or magazine’s articles


Supervision question:

- To what extent do ordinary garments reproduce oppression? Discuss with reference to the production, consumption OR use of clothing.
This module introduces students to one of the most significant social, economic, and cultural developments of the neoliberal era: the unprecedented expansion of global finance and the associated rise in debt. We will explore the underlying dynamics behind these changes, as well as the far-reaching implications for social (in)equality, identity, politics, and the environment.

Although the module is focused on a sociologically informed critical analysis of debt, we will remain attuned to entangled questions regarding marketisation, power, status, inequality, and struggle. We will look at the duality between individualising compliance to the debt logic and collectivising resistance to its seemingly unstoppable rise and how this is increasingly intertwined with social and environmental justice.

**Lecture 7: Financialised societies**

**Lecture Overview**

The first session begins by exploring how sociological approaches address financialisation, before examining the history and political significance of household debt in Anglo-America, and how this compares with other countries throughout the world. In the process we will cover core factors driving the expansion of credit markets and examine how financialisation has shaped the prevalence of meritocratic discourses underpinning public understandings of social inequality.

**Essential readings**


**Additional Readings**


Supervision Question

- What is financialisation and how is it related to neoliberalism?
- To what extent does “debt” challenge the notion we live in a meritocracy?

Lecture 8: Personal indebtedness

Lecture Overview

The second session moves on to look at the underlying social causes of rising indebtedness in Anglo-America, Latin America and Europe, and how this interacts with questions of class, culture, race, and gender. In particular, we focus on the way credit is used to both delineate and resist boundaries in cultural taste and lifestyle, before exploring the consequence of such practices on understandings of social inequality.
Essential Reading


Additional Reading

Europe


Latin America


United Kingdom and United States


Supervision Questions

- In what way does “debt” pervade mainstream analyses of social inequalities?
- In what way do social inequalities shape credit use and personal indebtedness? Discuss with reference to at least two world regions.

Lecture 9: The ideology of debt and its affects

Lecture Overview

The final session moves on to examine the ideology of debt and how it intertwines with discourses linking public and private debt. We will look specifically at how recent sociological approaches examining stigma as a classificatory form of neoliberal power allow us to examine the role of politicians, the media, creditors, and credit reference agencies in propagating a discourse of moral obligation regarding debt repayment at both a national and individual level. In doing so we will chart a course through the Global Financial Crisis to the Covid-19 Pandemic, focusing on how neoliberalism is sustained in times of crisis.

Essential Reading


**Additional Reading**


Graeber, David (2011), ‘Are We Slaves to Debt?’, *PBS Interview*.


Supervision Questions

- Resistance to and compliance with debt co-exist. Critically discuss.
- How useful is the concept of stigma as a classificatory form of power for understanding the ideology of debt?

Section Two, Module Two: Control and Resistance in Digital Societies
Dr Matt Mahmoudi

Module Overview

This module examines how global social problems and related modes of resistance play out in, or are increasingly born out of, digital societies. We underpin this examination by first looking at talk about technology, namely how technologies are often discursively equated with progress, and how and why these discourses travel and have impact across the globe. In particular, we will draw on critical race and digital studies (CRDS) to look beneath these discourses, to the dynamics of coloniality and inequality reproduced and augmented by technology production, use, and disposal. This will help us develop three lenses to combine and aid us in our analysis: an intersectional, critical political economy lens, and decolonial.

Next, we look at the role of social media in recent social movements, thinking in particular about the power and counter-power of networks and in networks. Finally, we will examine resistance through representation, focusing on the contested practice of taking selfies and on the problematics that big data poses for representation. Throughout, we will be attuned to continuity versus change in digital societies, as well as implications for equality, pluralism, accountability and the environment. We will also keep a critical eye on the methods used to research phenomena in digital societies, and specifically the relationship between these methods and the claims made.

Lecture 10: Critical Approaches to the Information Society

Lecture Overview

This lecture introduces students to the discourse of the information society, in which technology is understood as driving progress. We will critically assess this claim, using examples like the mining of
minerals for mobile phones, the content moderation of social media posts, the gender imbalance on Wikipedia and the disposal of e-waste. We will investigate three approaches for studying technology critically: the political economy approach, the intersectional approach, and the decolonial approach.

Essential Readings


Additional Readings


**Supervision Question**

- *How can we critically understand the concept of the information society?*

**Thinking and Talking Question**

- *What is the connection between information society discourses and world’s rising levels of e-waste?*

**Lecture 11: Social Media and Social Movements**

**Lecture Overview**

This lecture both builds on the previous lecture’s concept of discourse and introduces the metaphor of the network to interrogate the use of social media by social movements. We will first examine how this relatively recent adoption of social media follows a long tradition of social movements’ use of media for symbolic counter-power, including the anti-globalisation Zapatista movement, a very early adopter of online mobilization tactics. We will go on to look at several more contemporary examples, including the ‘Twitter Revolution’ in Iran, the #BlackLivesMatter movement in the United States, #YaMeCansé in Mexico, and Extinction Rebellion in the UK. In each case, we will focus on how technology intersects with the power relations within and around these movements, including those related to race, gender and sexuality as well as to corporate and state power.

**Essential Readings**


**Additional Readings**


Supervision Question:

- Do social media revolutions exist?

Thinking and Talking Question

- What are the tensions arising from environmental and/or racial justice movements’ uses of social media?
Lecture 12: Representation and Resistance: The Problematics of Big Data and the Politics of the Selfie

Lecture Overview

This lecture will introduce the concept of representation and examine how the power relations around representation have (or have not) changed in the digital age. We will use the examples of selfies and of big data as case studies, examining the differences in the claims to representation made by these types of information, as well as in the ways these types of information are represented. In particular, we’ll also consider the implications of platform and infrastructure power, especially when these govern the main channels through which social movements engage in resistance – how is state and corporate power entangled or challenged through e.g. community standards, content moderation, and censorship? Or through enabling tools of policing and surveillance, e.g. predictive policing and facial recognition? We will then circle back to the political economy approach to reflect on the environmental consequences of the ‘cloud,’ in which such digital representations tend to be stored, before returning to the decolonial approach and considering the emancipatory potential and challenges of ‘refusal’.

Essential Readings


Additional Readings

Amnesty International (2020), 'We Sense Trouble: Automated Discrimination and Mass Surveillance in Predictive Policing in the Netherlands'


**Supervision Questions**

- How is representation mediated, weaponised and/or reclaimed in an age of surveillance giants, AI, and Big Data?

**Thinking and Talking Question**

- What shapes the representation of the climate crisis in the digital age?