Soc3 Modern Societies II,  
Global Social Problems and Dynamics of Resistance

Course Organiser  Dr Monica Moreno Figueroa, mm2051@cam.ac.uk.

Lecturers in order of teaching:
Dr Jeff Miley: tjm52@cam.ac.uk
Dr Mónica Moreno Figueroa, mm2051@cam.ac.uk
Dr Ben Abrams, ba289@cam.ac.uk
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Supervisors:
Supervision will be organised centrally by Dr Moreno Figueroa in relation to student’s interests. See more details below.

Outline of the Paper

Aims and Objectives
• To introduce and explore a selection of global social problems and dynamics of resistance from a sociological perspective.
• To introduce the sociological notion and methodological tool of intersectionality, bringing gender, race and class to the fore, for the understanding of social problems and dynamics of resistance.
• 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, control and pluralism.

Structure of the paper

The paper starts with a one-hour Introduction (week 1), delivered by the course organiser, Dr Moreno Figueroa, and the Lecturers Dr Miley, Dr Abrams and Dr McPherson, and is then taught in 2-hour lecture blocks for a total 12 lectures (24 hours).

SOC3 has two parts with two modules each and with six lectures in each module, as follows:

Part 1. Global Social Problems

1. Global Social Problems (3 Lectures: Michaelmas weeks 2-4) Lecturer: Dr Jeff Miley.
a. Lecture 1: The Problem of Poverty and Inequality.
c. Lecture 3: The Problem of Natural Disasters and Environmental Catastrophes.

2. Body Projects around the globe (3 Lectures Michaelmas Weeks 5-7) Lecturer: Dr Monica Moreno Figueroa.
   a. Lecture 4: Bodies, Beauty Contests and National Projects.
   c. Lecture 6: Sex Tourism, Bodies and the Tensions of Development.

Part 2. Dynamics of Resistance to Social Problems

1. Social Movements and Protest in the Global Age (3 Lectures Lent, Weeks 1-3) Lecturer: Dr Ben Abrams.
   b. Lecture 8: The Making of Transnational Social Movements: Anti-Globalization Movements and Their Consequences ‘Anti-

2. Control and Resistance in Digital Societies (3 Lectures Lent, Weeks 4-6) Lecturer: Dr Ella McPherson.
   a. Lecture 10: Critical approaches to the information society.
   b. Lecture 11: Social media and social movements.
   c. Lecture 12: Representation and resistance: The problematics of big data and the politics of the selfie.

Mode of teaching
The course is taught by means of 12 two-hour lectures and 8 supervision sessions. Students should plan to have 6 substantive supervisions during Michaelmas and Lent terms, and then 2 revision supervisions in Easter term. 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. Students are not expected to cover all of the topics, but to make a balanced selection. In general, lecturers will give some supervisions on their course but also the teaching team has recruited a selected group of supervisors whose expertise matches the supervision topics.

Supervisions
Students should expect to receive 8 supervisions for this paper. Students should plan to have 6 substantive supervisions during Michaelmas and Lent terms, and then 2 revision supervisions in Easter term. Students will be expected to produce a minimum of 4 essays over the year instead of being required to write 6 essays. While still holding the stipulated 6 substantive supervisions plus the 2 revision sessions, 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. The 2
revision supervisors should be decided according to students interests and the outcome of the previous 6 substantive supervisions. The specific content of each of these 2 sessions should be decided in consultation with the supervisor.

Students will receive instructions about how to sign up for supervisions with the expectation to have this settled by the first week of term.

**Mode of assessment**
This paper will be examined by one 3-hr examination paper, divided into 2 sections. You will be required to answer 3 questions, including at least 1 from each section. Each section represents a part of the paper; each part has 2 modules and 3 lectures/topics in each.
Outline of Lectures

Part 1. Global Social Problems

Part 1, Module 1: Global Social Problems
Thomas Jeffrey Miley

Overview
This module will apply an intersectional approach to understand and analyse three major social problems that are global in scope: (1) poverty and inequality; (2) borders; and (3) natural disasters and environmental catastrophes. In the process, it will use the intersectional approach to each of these three major global social problems to illuminate debates about respective key contested concepts in contemporary social science. In this regard, the intersectional approach to the problem of poverty and inequality will be used to illuminate debates about the nature and dynamics of neoliberalism. Likewise, the problem of borders will be related to debates about the nature and dynamics of nationalism; and the problem of natural disasters and environmental catastrophes will be related to debates about the nature and dynamics of development.

Lecture 1: The Problem of Poverty and Inequality

Essential Readings:
David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism (Blackwell).

Additional Readings:
Christina Ewig, Second-Wave Neoliberalism: Gender, Race, and Health Sector Reform in Peru (Penn State, 2010).
Dorling, Danny. 2014. Inequality and the 1%. London, Verso.
Ong, Aihwa (2006), Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty.


**Sample supervision question:** Does neoliberalism cause poverty and inequality?

### Lecture 2: The Problem of Borders

**Essential Readings:**


**Additional Readings:**


**Sample supervision question:** Assess the appropriateness of the term “Global Apartheid” as a description of the contemporary world.
Lecture 3: The Problem of Natural Disasters and Environmental Catastrophes

Essential Readings:
Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva 1993, Ecofeminism, Fernwood Publications, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

Additional Readings:
Cardoso and Falleto, Dependency and Development in Latin America (1977).
Ferguson, James (2006), Global Shadows: Africa in the New World Order.
Henkel, Kristin. "Institutional Discrimination, Individual Racism, and Hurricane Katrina"
Kalpana Wilson, Race, Racism and Development
Kohli, Atul (2004), State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery.
Mamdani, Mahmood (1996), Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism.
Mbare, J.A. On the Post-Colony (University of California Press, 2001)
W. Easterly, The White Man’s Burden. Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good (Penguin Books, 2007).

Sample supervision question: How do the dynamics of dependent development cause and/or exacerbate the suffering associated with natural disasters and climate change?
Part 1, Module 2: Global Body Projects
Monica Moreno Figueroa

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. Gender, race, class and nation will be key concepts.

Lectures 4: Bodies, Beauty Contests and National Projects

Essential Readings:
King-O'Riain, R. C. (2008) 'Making the Perfect Queen: The Cultural Production of Identities in Beauty Pageants', Sociology Compass, 2 (1); 74-83.

Choose at least two of these:
Balogn, O. M. (2012) 'Cultural and Cosmopolitan: Idealized Femininity and Embodied Nationalism in Nigerian Beauty Pageants', Gender & Society, 26 (3); 357-381.

Additional Readings:


Sample supervision question: How are beauty contests “sites of contestation for conflicts over race, class and social power” (Ochoa 2014)? Situate your argument with examples that take into account ideas of nation.

Lecture 5: Beauty Work and Cosmetic Surgeries in Neoliberal Times

Essential Readings:


Choose at least two of the following:


**Additional Readings:**
Gimlin, D. (2010) 'Imagining the Other in Cosmetic Surgery', *Body & Society*, 16 (4); 57-76.

**Sample supervision question:** Resistance to and compliance with racialised beauty work co-exist. Discuss this tension in relation to intersectionality?

**Lecture 6: Sex Tourism, Bodies And The Tensions of Development**

**Essential Readings:**


Additional Readings:

Bishop, R. (2008) 'The Tele-Technics of Agency, the Net, the Urban and Sex Tourism', Social Identities, 14 (3); 349-361.


Williams, E. L. (2014) 'Sex Work and Exclusion in the Tourist Districts of Salvador, Brazil', Gender, Place & Culture, 21 (4); 453-470.

**Sample 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.
Part 2. Dynamics of Resistance to Social Problems

Part 2, Module 1. Social Movements And Protest In The Global Age
Ben Abrams

Overview
This module introduces students to the critical concepts and theories in the field social movements, assessing the wide-ranging debates over the causes and consequences of key social movements. We will consider the critical junctures at which movements have arisen, the dynamics of mobilization and organization, the degree to which they have attended to intersectionality, and how to evaluate the effects of social movements. We will then discuss how social movements have increasingly attempted to overcome the limitations of national organizing in the face of the growing transnationalization of capital and global financial crises, assessing the achievements and limitations of such movements.

Lecture 7: Social Movements: Theory and Intersectionality

Social Movement Theory

Essential Readings:

Additional Readings:

Intersectionality and Movements:

Essential Readings:

Additional Readings:
Sample supervision question: Why is an intersectional approach to social movements important?

Lecture 8: The Making of Transnational Social Movements: Anti-Globalization Movements and Their Consequences

Essential Readings:

Additional Readings:

Sample supervision question: What are the challenges facing transnational movements, particularly in an era of rising nationalism, and how can they be overcome?

Lecture 9: What Makes a Social Movement Effective?: The Case of Anti-Austerity Protests

Essential Readings:
Additional Readings:


**Sample supervision question:** What are the main strengths and weaknesses of contemporary anti-austerity protests and how do they affect their impact?
Part 2, Module 4: Control and Resistance in Digital Societies
Ella McPherson

Overview
This module examines how global social problems and related modes of resistance play out in digital societies. We underpin this examination by first taking a critical political economy approach to information and communication technologies, examining how ICTs are owned and controlled across the globe. 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, and accountability. 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

Essential Readings:


Additional Readings:


**Supervision question:** How can we critically understand the concept of the information society?

### Lecture 11: Social Media and Social Movements

**Essential Readings:**


**Additional readings:**


**Supervision question:** Do social media revolutions exist?

**Lecture 12: Representation and Resistance: The Problematics of Big Data and the Politics of the Selfie**

**Essential Readings:**


**Additional readings:**


**Supervision question:** *What is the relationship between representation and power in the digital age?*