

COURSE REPORT FOR ANTH4610

Work, capital, and business

Work, capital and business is a new course for our new MA. It has been taught once. The course looks at the interstices between seemingly facile categories that are normatively separated but in fact overlap a great deal in an increasingly globalised world. In order to assess, in the spirit of the "Global political economy" stream, the makings of contemporary capitalism from an ethnographic point of view, the course focused on what ethnography reveals about work and capital. This has taken place with a focus on both privileged and marginalised subjects in the economy and unravelled with an attention to classic anthropological foci such as wealth, labour, kinship, reciprocity and gender.

- **Syllabus**

The reading list was comprised of 2-3 papers per week as well as a very short and easy to read contemporary public anthropology monograph (Riles, Annelise. 2018. *Financial citizenship: Experts, publics and the politics of central banking*. Cornell University Press [120 pages]). Students loved some of the readings (e.g. Gill, Shaxson, Willis, Argyrou) while found others slightly dense (Kasmir, Federici). The syllabus in terms of the per week readings was as follows:

1. A global economy: World changes in our predicament

Scheper-Hughes. 2000. The global traffic in human organs. *Current Anthropology*, 41(2): 191-224. [35 pages].

Nonini, Don. 2008. Is China becoming neoliberal? *Critique of Anthropology*, 28(2): 145-176. [32 pages].

Shaxson, Nicholas. 2015. "Welcome to nowhere: An introduction to offshore". In: *Treasure islands: Uncovering then damage of offshore banking and tax havens*. London: Bodley Head, pp. 11--34. [23 pages]

2. Working: Getting and keeping a job and a life

Willis, Paul. 2000 (1978). *Learning to labour: How working class kids get working class jobs*. Chapter 4: "Labour power, culture, class and institution", London: Routledge, pp. 89-117. [30 pages]

Gill, Tom. 2001. *Globalization and social change in contemporary Japan*. Chapter: "Yoseba and ninpudashi: Changing patterns of employment on the fringes of the Japanese economy", pp. 123-143. [21 pages]

Federici, Sylvia. 2014 (2004). (Excerpt from) The accumulation of labour and the degradation of women: Constructing "difference" in the "transition to capitalism". In: *Caliban and the witch: Women, the body and primitive accumulation*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia, pp. 82-132. [51 pages].

3. Work activities: Industry, services, time

Michael Burawoy. 1979. *Manufacturing consent: Changes in the labour process under monopoly capitalism*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 4 "Thirty years of making out", pp. 46-77. [31 pages]

Stein, Felix. 2018. "Selling speed - management consultants, acceleration and temporal angst". *PoLAR - The Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 40(1): 103-117. [16 pages]

Parry, Jonathan. 1999. "Lords of labour: Working and shirking in Bhilai". *Contributions to Indian sociology*. 33(1-2): 107-140. [24 pages].

4. Inequality: Class in and out of work

Lazar, Sian and Sanchez, Andrew. 2019. "Understanding labour politics in an age of precarity", *Dialectical Anthropology*, 43(1): 3-14. [13 pages]

Kasimir, Sharryn and Lesley Gill. 2018. "No Smooth Surfaces: The Anthropology of Unevenness and Combination", *Current Anthropology*, 59(4): 355-377 [23 pages].

Argyrou, Vassos. 1996. *Tradition and modernity in the Mediterranean*. Chapter 5: "Distinction and symbolic class struggle". Cambridge University Press, pp. 111-153. [42 pages]

5. Wealth: Accumulation, inheritance, accounting

Rakopoulos, Theodoros & Rio, Knut. 2018. "Introduction to an anthropology of wealth". *History and Anthropology* 29(3): 1-17. [18 pages].

Piketty, Thomas. 2014. "Response to HAU Book symposium on Piketty, Thomas, Capital in the 21st century". *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5(1): 517-527. [11 pages].

Shore, Cris and Wright, Susan. 2018. "How the Big Four got big: Audit culture and the metamorphosis of international accountancy firms". *Critique of Anthropology*, 38(3): 303-324. [24 pages]

6. The firm: The social life of companies

Yanagisako, Sylvia Junko. 2013. "Transnational Family Capitalism: Producing 'Made in Italy' in China." chapter in *Vital Relations: Modernity and the Persistent Life of Kinship*, edited by Susan McKinnon and Fenella Cannell. Santa Fe: SAR Press, pp. 63-84. [22 pages].

Brown, Hannah, Adam Reed and Thomas Yarrow, 2017. "Introduction: Towards an ethnography of meeting", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 23(1): 10-26. [17 pages]

Welker, Marina, Damani J. Partridge, and Rebecca Hardin. 2011. "Corporate Lives: New Perspectives on the Social Life of the Corporate Form", *Current Anthropology*, 52(3): S3-S16. [14 pages].

7. Corporations: Personhood, citizenship, expansion

Comaroff, John and Comaroff, Jean. 2014. "Ethnicity, Inc.: On the affective economy of belonging". Chapter in *Corporations and citizenship*, edited by Greg Urban, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. pp. 249-266. [17 pages]

Miyazaki, Hirokazu. 2014. "Saving TEPCO: Debt, credit, and the "End" of finance in post-Fukushima Japan". Chapter in: *Corporations and citizenship*, edited by Greg Urban, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press., pp. 127-142. [15 pages]

Foster, Robert, J. 2014. "Corporations as partners: 'Connected capitalism' and the Coca-Cola Company", *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 37(2): 246-258. [23 pages]

8. Elites: Ethnography among difficult tribes

Marcus, George. 1986. *Elites: ethnographic issues*. Chapter: "Elite communities and institutional orders". School for Advanced studies, pp. 41-57.

Salverda, Tijo & Abbink, Jon. 2013. *The Anthropology of Elites: Power, Culture, and the Complexities of Distinction*, chapter 1, "Introduction: An anthropological perspective on elite power and the cultural politics of elites", pp.1-29 [30 pages]

Glucksberg, Luna. 2018. "A gendered ethnography of elites: Women, inequality and social reproduction", *Focaal* 81: 16-28. [23 pages]

- **Teaching** (teaching methods, number of hours, spread across the semester, compulsory activities and assignments)

There were 10 weekly themes: The main themes explored throughout this course's 10 lectures were clear-cut, although as lecturer I showed the interplay between them, linking the issues in a coherent narrative. In that light, students were strongly encouraged to consider the course as a holistic approach to work, capital and business. The aim was to show the interrelatedness of the categories, to depict the word of business as pregnant with change and as a peopled domain, expressed through people's labour and everyday material concerns.

The number of hours were overall 21: 8 meetings of 3 hours each. We met for 8 continuous weeks on Mondays at noon till 3. Starting date was the 13th of January, while the last date was the 9th of March. One lecture was postponed from the 17th of February to the week after due to illness. No lecture was lost due to Corona or otherwise.

I recorded all lectures, with student consent. I uploaded the PowerPoint of the following lecture 3-4 days in advance of Mondays, plus uploaded the recorded lecture after.

- **Resources and infrastructure** (classrooms, audiovisual tools, library resources, etc.)

The lectures were in a small, intimate room in SV, every Monday at midday. A median of 8-10 students were present at all times while in some lectures we had maximum attendance.

I used PowerPoint peppered with other audiovisual tools, including small videos (no more than 3 mins) to illustrate points in the lecture. We used a compendium and online resources for the readings, as well as the Canvas of UiO that worked wonders for communication with extra material and information throughout the week. The weekly 300w assessment papers were submitted through Canvas, too.

- **Examination** (form of examination, form of evaluation)

There was one compulsory activity, that was also part of the assignment/assessment: namely, the students had to produce a minimum of six texts of circa 300 words each for the course, with a mind to provide a literature description for a chosen 6 thematic weeks (or for all of them, if they so desired, and most actually wrote 8 such small essays).

On top of this, of course, there was the yearly assessment via the online system of UiO, that comprised of a longer essay based on 3 assessment papers. The thematic points were revealed at the end of the semester and the students submitted this final examination as an

extension and development of the coursework during the semester. They generally enjoyed this means of assessment.

There have not been any papers rejected, neither have there been any appeals.

Feedback from students was mainly oral and there was general satisfaction. Students particularly noted how the two courses (taught by Keir and Theo) complement each other and indeed how they embolden their own MA projects.

- **Other points**

The course works satisfactorily and the information on learning outcome in the course description give a good description on what the students are expected to have learned after completing the exam. We should note, for future reference, that students get the absolute full picture from the first week on how the course is assessed – the 300w per week and the 1500w essay at the end. One suggestion for improvement, thus, would be that they are all briefed ahead of the beginning of the course that this is the way of assessment. While they all eventually enjoyed it and found it educational, some who joined later in the semester (3rd or 4th week) were slightly behind by way of digesting this new system of assessment. Finally, the optional monograph is deemed redundant: to my knowledge, no student has procured or read it.