COURSE DESCRIPTION

Globalization has become a much-debated and deeply controversial topic. In this class, we will focus on the ways that labor has been represented and understood, especially in relationship to the development of capitalism in its global form. We will explore how the movement of capital, commodities, and workers across the globe and with seeming indifference to national borders shapes the idea of work and those who perform it. Of equal importance in our study will be the way that work transforms the structure of the global economy. Some primary questions we will explore are: How has the demand for labor required migration and imposed geographical dislocations? How does labor create value within these new locations? How do some gain control of the work of others? How do workers organize themselves and develop community in new locations? How does this relationship of power change over time? In order to engage with these questions, we will read and view a wide range of works. We will begin by reading two texts from the seventeenth century when systems of global capitalist production were being invented. We will then use writings by Karl Marx to explore how capitalist institutions of labor and production became central to the modern world. Wrangling with the ways that movements of laborers have been represented in fiction, we will read a Haitian novel about a sugar cane worker who migrates to the Dominican Republic and a postcolonial play created and performed by workers from Kenya. We will place these works of fiction in conversation with documentary films (about sugar production, global finance, transgender migrant workers in Israel, and migrant workers on Long Island), visual representations by Diego Rivera, works by historians on global corporations and utopian economies, by anthropologists and filmmakers on sex tourism in "paradisal" locations that seem to exist outside of the everyday world and on the labor of domestic workers right here in New York.

COURSE AIMS: As you will see from the above description and the schedule below, this course is designed to present students with a diverse range of materials that engage with forms of global labor, and to help students develop a more nuanced understanding of the ways labor has been represented, shaped, and understood over time. The course has two primary aims. Many theorists of labor have demonstrated how capitalism and especially global capitalism (with its movement of laborers and production of commodities in far away places) have discounted the value of labor and made it invisible. Our first goal then is to examine the various strategies used in these diverse works to make labor literally more visible. The first half of the course--Depicting Labor--is particularly focused on
exploring the various techniques of representation used by writers and artists to show us labor, to bring the value of labor to light, and to provide an alternative story about labor's contributions to our world. To accomplish this aim, we will have to become careful readers and viewers ourselves, attentive to the forms, strategies, and content of these works. Not leaving this approach behind us, in the second part of the course we will be wrestling to understand the relationship between these representations and the actual historical processes through which the global market shapes laborers and those who benefit from that labor, as well as the very idea of work itself. Though the course is divided into two sections, students are encouraged to consider their overlap. Putting texts from one section into dialogue with those of another will help us to understand how work itself is a contested term and practice, defined and redefined over time with a range of implications.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class Attendance and Participation:
This is a seminar that will develop through class discussion--a form of collaborative labor. Thus, regular attendance (including arriving to class on time) and thoughtful engagement with the course materials are crucial to its success. Be generous with your ideas and questions, and show up with texts in your hand and ready to think in new ways. Careful preparation is a key component of participation. Complete all readings, viewings, and assignments before you come to class in order to be ready to participate in that day's discussion. Come to class with questions you have about the material and/or with specific issues or passages from works you would like to discuss. Be ready to contribute meaningfully to our discussions.

If you are absent, I will assume you have a good reason. You do not need to tell me why. (The exception is if something very out of the ordinary happens that requires you to miss more than two classes in a row.) The course, however, moves quickly and the material is challenging, and those that miss seminar will likely find it difficult to keep up. Whenever you miss class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed from one of your classmates and for keeping up with the assignments.

My preference is that you bring hard copies of all reading materials to class. You will be permitted to use laptops in class to read course materials (if you have a very strong preference to do so) and to take notes, but not for any other purpose. All other electronic devices should be off--not ringing or vibrating in class and not visible to you or others.

Written Work: A variety of forms of written work will be required for the class. I detail them below. All written work will share in the project of moving toward accomplishing the stated goals of the course, of making connections among the different works and discussions of them, and, of course, making new discoveries about why studying this material matters to us. Because this course is rapidly paced, it is particularly vital that work arrives on time and in good form.
Reading Responses: In order to help you prepare to participate in discussion and to give you the practice of writing on a regular basis about course materials, you will also be asked to complete a response paper roughly every other week. This paper is a two-page critical response to the materials assigned since the previous response paper was due. These are typed, thoughtful engagements that address a specific issue, question, or section of a work that you would like to explore. They may also engage with issues raised in class discussion. For some classes, I will assign a specific topic or approach. For others the choice will be yours. Due dates by which the responses must be turned in are listed on the syllabus. Response papers are due on the day that the work you are writing about will be discussed. In most cases, you can choose the work and thus the day during the (usually) two-week period when you will be writing. Response papers are due at the beginning of the class period. Please number and date your response papers.

Discussion questions: In addition to the response papers you will also be asked to bring a thoughtful discussion question to class at least twice during the semester. Each class period two students will present their questions based on the assigned works for that day. This assignment will help us to bring your questions and concerns to the center of class. You are expected to bring your questions and concerns to every class, but these questions should be particularly designed to stimulate discussion about the issues in which you are interested. I will post your assigned days before the second week of class begins. Please make sure to bring your question to class in writing and to email it to me by the end of the day. I will keep a running list of questions on blackboard for all of us to refer back to as the semester progresses.

Papers:
In addition to the above, you will be writing two analytical papers for the class. The first paper will be five to six pages and the last will be a research paper of eight to ten pages. Topics for your papers will develop from issues we have discussed in class. The research paper is designed to give you the opportunity to delve more deeply into a topic we have studied that is of great interest to you and inspires you. I encourage you to develop research topics that allow you to connect what we have been studying to your concentration or major if it will be productive for you to do so. You might choose a topic by thinking about how the ideas we’ve studied in this course add a new dimension to, or way of thinking about, issues that are central to your concentration—or vice-versa. A prospectus for this paper will be due early in April, and we will have individual conferences to discuss your topics and ways to research them. There are many ways to conduct research for this paper. These might include: reading additional novels or plays, viewing other films, reading works by historians, anthropologists, labor organizers, literary critics, etc. Many of you will find that a combination of the above will be most useful.

Grades are based on the quality of all written work (response papers and papers) as well as class participation (which includes your discussion questions). The following is a rough breakdown of how much each category is worth. If your work gets stronger as the course progresses, I will weigh your later work more heavily. (Attendance and Participation: 30%; Response Papers: 25%; Papers: 45%).
Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon.

Plagiarism: As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

Do not plagiarize. If you take an idea or more than two or three words directly from any source (including the Internet), you must cite the source in a footnote. If you are not sure if you are plagiarizing, please ask me. Similarly, if you are unsure how to complete an assignment, come talk to me.

Required Texts:
All texts should be available at the NYU bookstore. In addition to the texts listed below, I will be distributing additional materials. Films will be on reserve at the Avery Fisher Center at Bobst Library.

Shakespeare, *The Tempest*  
Jacques Stephen Alexis, *General Sun, My Brother*  
Desmond Rochfort, *Mexican Muralists*  
Greg Grandin, *Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City*
Course Schedule: (Schedule May Be Subject to Changes)

**WEEK 1: Introduction and Foundations**

January 24:
--Syllabus and Introductions

January 26:
--Defining/Pondering Key Terms. What is labor? What is a market? What defines a global market? Why is it important to study the way labor is represented? Why study labor in relationship to the global market?
--Turn in sheet on your interests in relation to the course.

**SECTION 1: DEPICTING LABOR: Weeks 2-7**

**WEEK 2: Unfree Labor in the Early Modern Period: Ethnography to Tragicomic Romance**

January 31:
--Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (excerpts on African slaves, Christian indentured servants, and natives.) (This will be posted on blackboard.) Some questions to think about: What kinds of observations about the systems of labor and those who perform labor does Ligon make? What seems to be the focus of his attention in his description of each of the categories of laborers he describes? What about these laborers does he make more visible? What does he seem to conceal? What do you think he is trying to communicate to his audience when he shifts his attention away from labor itself? Do these possible digressions inform or alter the explicit discussions of labor he presents?

February 2:
--Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Acts 1-3. Some questions to think about: What kinds of labor are represented, imagined, or disavowed? What categories of laborers are represented and how are they valued differently from each other? What kinds of relationships are imagined to exist between labor and power and between labor and the body? In what ways is labor a site of contestation among the characters?

**Response Paper One Due:** Compare Ligon's representation to that of the opening acts of the *Tempest*. Some possible approaches/questions to reflect on: What aspects of labor does each text make visible? What aspects of labor seem to be contested? Does Ligon's "distanced" perspective produce an account of labor that is different from that of the play's dramatic representations and tensions? If so, why? This is a short assignment, so I recommend that you focus on one aspect of labor that interests you in these texts.
WEEK 3: Unfree Labor and "Free" Labor
February 7:
--Finish *The Tempest*
Some questions to think about: What aspects of the play's representations of labor and power are resolved or left unresolved by the play's ending? How does the play avoid the tragic ending threatened throughout? How does that avoidance transform how the play's labors and laborers are understood or valued?

February 9:

WEEK 4: Alienated Labor, Productivity, and Class Conflict/ Marxist Fictions of Labor
February 14

February 16
--*General Sun, My Brother*: Prologue and Part 1 (through page 116)

**Second Response Paper Due**

WEEK 5: Marxist Fictions of Labor
February 21
--*General Sun, My Brother*: Part 2 (through page 211)
Select a passage to discuss in class that addresses Hilarion’s education and/or his uncertainty about the relevance of Communism to the plight of workers.

February 23:
-- Finish *General Sun, My Brother*

WEEK 6: Sugar and Slavery in the 21st Century/ Marxist Postcolonial Drama
February 28:
--Haney, *The Price of Sugar* (film available at Avery Fisher Center)
March 1:
-- Ngugi wa Thiong’o & Ngugi wa Mirii, *I Will Marry When I Want*

**Third Response Paper Due**

WEEK 7: Visual Representations of Labor
March 6:
--Siqueiros, *Social, Political, and Aesthetic Declaration from the Union of Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors*
--Rivera, from *Mexican Muralists* (selections)

**March 7: First Paper Due by Noon**
March 8-9:
--Visit to MOMA exhibit of *Diego Rivera Murals for the Museum of Modern Art*
We will meet at the Museum at 3:45 PM and stay until it closes at 5:30. For those of you who have an evening class at 5 on Thursday we will schedule a visit on Friday, probably
around noon. Please do all you can to make yourself available for one day or the other. Note that Spring Break does not start on the 9th but on the following Monday.

PART TWO: TRANSFORMING AND TRANSPORTING LABOR (Weeks 8-14)

WEEK 8: Globalization and its Implications/ Intimate Labor: Part 1: Sex Tourism
March 20:
  --Stephanie, Black, Life and Debt (Documentary On Reserve at Avery Fisher Center)
March 22:
  -- Steven Gregory, "Sex Tourism and the Political Economy of Masculinity," from The Devil Behind the Mirror: Globalization and Politics in the Dominican Republic

Fourth Response Paper Due

March 28:
  --Laurent Cantet, Heading South (Vers Le Sud) (Film On Reserve at Avery Fisher Center)
March 30:
  --Heymann, Paper Dolls (Film Available at Avery Fisher Center)

WEEK 10: Intimate Labor Part 2: Working in the Home
April 3:
  --Shelee Colen, “’Like a Mother to Them’: Stratified Reproduction and West Indian Childcare Workers and Employers in New York.”

Fifth Response Paper Due
April 5: Research Day

WEEK 11: Threatening Home?/ Global Movements of Corporations: Reality
April 10:
  --Sandoval and Tambini, Farmingville (Film On Reserve at Avery Fischer Center)
April 12:
  --Jefferson Cowies, Capital Moves, Selections

WEEK 12: Moving Industry and Transforming Geography: Stranger than Fiction
April 17:
  --Grandin, Fordlandia
April 19:
  --Grandin, Fordlandia
Epigraph (Final )Response Paper Due
WEEK 13: Stranger than Fiction/Outsourcing
April 24:
   --Grandin, *Fordlandia*
April 26:
   --Nadeem, *Dead Ringers* (selections)

*April 27th Final Research Paper Due by Noon*

WEEK 14: Conclusions and Connections
May 1:
   --Chaplin, *Modern Times* (short scenes to be viewed in class)
   --Epigraph Day 1
May 3:
   --Epigraph Day 2