



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

COMMUNITY CLASSROOM

Consequences of Capitalism

Spring 2021

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-10:45 a.m.

January 14-March 4, 2021

Online

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS SYLLABUS IS NOT FINAL AND STILL SUBJECT TO CHANGE!

Professors: Noam Chomsky & Marv Waterstone

Contact Information

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Course Description

This course is intended to take up a series of contemporary issues with an eye to placing these matters in appropriate contexts so that their origins, current status and interconnections become understandable, and hopefully, approachable.

Beginning with an overview of the formal and informal mechanisms that shape our views of the world, the course will examine how industrial state capitalism has come to dominate our thinking as the only way to organize the political economy to satisfy human needs and wants. In fact, at the present juncture, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism. In the subsequent weeks we will examine some of the most important consequences of organizing society along these lines. Finally, the course will take up questions of response and resistance to

these phenomena. Here we intend to assess the achievements and difficulties involved as social movements agitate for change, as well as the role of critical pedagogy in attaining desirable social change.

The course **lectures** will be **pre-recorded** and **made available each Monday** for class participants to view at their convenience. Each week, the lecture by Professor Waterstone will provide the necessary historical, theoretical, conceptual and substantive context for that week's topic. The lecture by Professor Chomsky will focus on concrete historical and contemporary examples to draw out and illustrate the phenomena discussed in the lecture by Professor Waterstone.

Additionally, **each Tuesday from 9:30-10:45 am** (Mountain Standard Time, **MST**), there will be a live online presentation by an **outside scholar/activist/practitioner** working in the area of that week's topics. Finally, **each Thursday from 9:30-10:30 am** (MST) there will be a **live online Q & A session with Professors Chomsky and Waterstone**.

Required Texts and Suggested Films

Basic background material will be covered in the new book by Chomsky and Waterstone, *Consequences of Capitalism: Manufacturing Discontent and Resistance* (noted as **C of C** in the schedule below), available through multiple outlets in both traditional and e-book formats. For ordering information go to:

<https://www.haymarketbooks.org/books/1619-consequences-of-capitalism>

All other readings are delineated between "Required" and "Supplementary" on this syllabus and on the SBS Community Classroom Forum website. These will be made available in electronic form through the SBS Community Classroom Forum website.

Relevant films and movies will be recommended as appropriate.

Subject to Change Statement

Information contained in the course syllabus may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructors.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1—Introduction and Overview

Thursday, January 14: Our first class meeting will provide a general introduction to the course and cover course organization and logistics. This session will be held live online from **9:30-10:45 am (MST)**.

Week 2—Common Sense, the Taken-for-Granted and Power

Tuesday, January 19: We will take up an overview of the formal and informal mechanisms that shape our views of the world (what we take as common sense). This will include, among others, the role of families and peers, the mass media, the education system, religion, and the culture industries. The week will conclude with an examination of the role of critical pedagogy in producing a viewpoint that is always healthily skeptical of the taken-for-granted, pervasive common senses that prevail in societies at particular times and places.

Required Readings:

C of C: Preface and Chapter 1, Waterstone lecture

Supplementary Readings:

TBA

Film Viewing:

Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media. Dir. Mark Achbar & Peter Wintonick. 1992.

Live online visitors (9:30-10:45 am, MST): Jeff Cohen, Founder, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, Co-founder, Roots Action Network; Janine Jackson, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, Host Counterspin Radio

Thursday, January 21: We will concentrate on concrete examples about the role of the mass media, the PR industry, the educational system, and religion. We are particularly interested this year in examining the ongoing assaults on evidence and facts, and the demonization of journalism and journalists.

Required Reading:

C of C: Chapter 1, Chomsky lecture

Noam Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy.* London and New York: Verso, 1991. Chapter 12. (pdf)

Supplemental Readings:

TBA

Live online Q & A with Chomsky and Waterstone (**9:30-10:45 am, MST**)

Week 3— The Current Common Sense: Capitalist Realism

Tuesday, January 26: We will take up the ways in which the current, prevailing common sense represents a “capitalist realism:” a worldview that posits that there is no realistic alternative to industrial state capitalism. Here we examine how this orientation has come to dominate our thinking regarding how we organize the political economy to satisfy human needs and wants. Are there alternatives? How are these characterized, trivialized, and criticized? How dominant is the capitalist worldview in reality? Given a choice, might many people opt for other ways to organize society?

Required Readings:

C of C: Chapter 2, Waterstone lecture

Robin Hahnel, “Why the Market Subverts Democracy” *American Behavioral Scientist* 52 (7): 1006-1022, 2009.

Film Viewing:

The Corporation, 2003, directed by Mark Achbar, Jennifer Abbot

Supplemental Readings:

TBA

Live online visitors (**9:30-10:45 am, MST**): Robin Hahnel, Professor Emeritus, American University; Abby Maxman, President and CEO, Oxfam America

Thursday, January 28: We will discuss “really existing capitalism,” and compare it with the mythical capitalism that is a core part of contemporary ideology. Again, using concrete examples we will examine economic history (and its differing characteristics in various parts of the world over time), the creation of the so-called “Third World,” current forms of neoliberal capitalism, and the role of markets and “free” trade.

Required Readings:

C of C: Chapter 2, Chomsky lecture

Gar Alperovitz, “Principles of a Pluralist Economy: Introduction.” May 15, 2017. The Next System Project. <https://thenextsystem.org/principles-introduction>

Supplemental Readings:

TBA

Live online Q & A with Chomsky and Waterstone (**9:30-10:45 am, MST**)

Week 4— Capitalism and Militarism

Tuesday, February 2: We will begin to make the connections between the essential features of this form of late stage capitalism and its most pressing effects. These requirements of capitalism include, most critically, organizing the globe geopolitically to facilitate the spread of this form of political economy. At different historical moments this set of activities (which almost always has had as its objectives the securing of advantageous access to resources, markets, labor, and/or other favorable conditions of production or sale of commodities) has been termed colonialism, imperialism, and/or neo-imperialism. In all of these forms, however, the quest for geopolitical dominance has posed grave dangers for those populations in the way of such expansion. At the present moment, these dangers are manifested as such existential threats to the human species as potential nuclear war and nuclear terrorism, the spread of nuclear weapons, and constant and expanding militarism and warfare. In this week, we will examine the various forms these threats have taken at different moments and in different regional contexts, as well as the rationales that have been used to justify such troubling developments.

Required Readings:

C of C: Chapter 3, Waterstone lecture

Excerpts from NSC 68, A Report to the National Security Council, 1950.

http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/10-1.pdf

Film Viewings:

President Dwight D. Eisenhower's farewell address and warning about the military industrial complex, January 17, 1961.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyBNmecVtdU>

Supplemental Readings:

TBA

Live online visitors (**9:30-10:45 am, MST**): Vijay Prashad, Executive Director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research and Chief Editor of LeftWord Books; Phyllis Bennis, Director of the New Internationalism Project at the Institute for Policy Studies

Thursday, February 4: Concrete illustrations of the foregoing points. One focus would be on the threat of imminent destruction throughout the nuclear age, and the shocking record of near terminal disaster in part from accident and in part from highly adventurist choices of political leaders, including some that are very well documented but very poorly understood, like JFK's decisions at the peak of the missile crisis. And on the escalating dangers today, particularly at the Russian

border, largely a result of NATO expansion since 1991, where we will focus on what is now known from recent archival scholarship. In particular we pay attention to recent developments concerning the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) and New Start Treaties. We will also highlight the ways in which such militarism produces important local impacts and connections.

Required Readings:

C of C: Chapter 3, Chomsky lecture

Materials from the William J. Perry Project

<http://www.wjperryproject.org/about-the-project/>

Supplemental Readings:

TBA

Live online Q & A with Chomsky and Waterstone (**9:30-10:45 am, MST**)

Week 5— Capitalism vs. the Environment

Tuesday, February 9: Here we examine a second essential feature of industrial state capitalism: the quest for ever expanding profits. A critical implication of this need is the contradiction between the quest for infinite growth and the material reality of a finite planet. While long problematic in more localized settings, the scale of the capitalist system now poses such existential threats as climate change, massive environmental degradation, and irretrievable resource depletion. Again, we will make clear the linkages between essential elements of this stage of capitalist development, its environmental impacts, and the reasons that, and ways in which, recognizing such connections are downplayed and obscured.

Required Readings:

C of C: Chapter 4, Waterstone lecture

John Bellamy Foster, *Ecology Against Capitalism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002. Preface and Chapter 2.

Marv Waterstone, “Adrift on a Sea of Platitudes: Why We Will Not Solve the Greenhouse Issue.” *Environmental Management* 17 (2): 141-152, 1993.

Supplemental Readings:

TBA

Live online visitor (**9:30-10:45 am, MST**): Kieran Suckling, Executive Director, Center for Biological Diversity

Thursday, February 11: The principal focus here will be on the second major threat to survival: global warming and climate change more generally. The discussion will review the basic facts and bring out one of the most astonishing features of modern history: the extraordinary marginalization of the most crucial question that has arisen in human history and even worse, the fact that a major political organization in the most powerful state in history not only denies the facts but is urging that we race to the precipice – and that all of this passes virtually without comment; hardly a word in the recent presidential campaign or coverage, even on the left. We will also extend Tuesday’s discussion, through concrete cases, of the incompatibility of unregulated capitalism with survival—given its demand for unsustainable growth and ignoring of externalities—along with its incompatibility with democracy.

Required Readings:

C of C: Chapter 4, Chomsky lecture

Can Humanity Avert a Climate Change Catastrophe? A Joint Interview With Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin by C.J. Polychroniou (pdf)

R. Pierrehumbert, “There is no Plan B for Dealing with the Climate Crisis.” Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, August 30, 2019. Available at: <https://thebulletin.org/2019/08/there-is-no-plan-b-for-dealing-with-the-climate-crisis/>

Supplemental Readings:

TBA

Live online Q & A with Chomsky and Waterstone (**9:30-10:45 am, MST**)

Week 6— Neoliberalism, Globalization and Financialization

Tuesday, February 16: Here we take up questions of the more mundane and pervasive, but nevertheless devastating, effects of the current globalized and neoliberal forms of late stage capitalism. We will explore the roots and impact of the neoliberal globalized stage of state capitalism, with the tendencies towards plutocracy, monopolization and secular stagnation, as well as the shifting nature national power (vis a vis the power of global capital) in the contemporary period. Again, we will demonstrate the anticipated connections between these phenomena and the current stage of capitalist formation.

Required Readings:

C of C: Chapter 5, Waterstone lecture

Lewis F. Powell, Jr. “The Powell Memorandum/Manifesto” Aug 23, 1971.
http://reclaimdemocracy.org/powell_memo_lewis/

Pete Dolack, "Never Let a Crisis Go To Waste: The Pandemic Brings More Inequality." December 25, 2020. Available at: <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/56090.htm>

Supplemental Readings:

TBA

Live online visitors (**9:30-10:45 am, MST**): Yanis Varoufakis, Founder MeRA25 Political Party, Member of Greek Parliament and former Greek Finance Minister; Lisa Graves, Senior Fellow, Center for Media and Democracy, Founder and President, True North Research, former Deputy Assistant Attorney General in US Department of Justice

Thursday, February 18: We will review a number of specific examples of these effects, which include increasing wealth and income inequality, reductions of state support for citizens (often under the harsh requirements of imposed austerity programs), privatization and enclosure of commons resources and services, the increasing production of surplus/disposable people (which includes a portion of the massive, current refugee and immigrant streams, as well as enormous and growing prison populations), and the policing and surveillance of domestic populations.

Required Readings:

C of C: Chapter 5, Chomsky lecture

Supplemental Readings:

TBA

Live online Q & A with Chomsky and Waterstone (**9:30-10:45 am, MST**)

Week 7—Resistance and Response

Tuesday, February 23: The phenomena we have been discussing thus far in the course do not take place without impact and consequences. In this week, we take up questions of the multi-faceted ways that those affected by the machinations of late stage, neoliberal, globalized capitalism respond. Each of the sets of impacts that we have examined have given rise to social movements of many kinds, from peace and environmental activism, to calls for social, political, cultural, and economic justice. In this week, we will examine the ways in which these diverse movements might find common ground, and thus political alliance and solidarity.

Required Readings:

C of C: Chapter 6, Waterstone lecture

Ian G. R. Shaw and Marv Waterstone, *Wageless Life: A Manifesto for a Future Beyond Capitalism*. 2019. University of Minnesota Press. Chapters 1, 11 & 12.

Tim Snyder, The American Abyss, *NYT Magazine*, January 9, 2021 (pdf)

Supplemental Readings:

TBA

Live online visitor (**9:30-10:45 am, MST**): Angela Davis, Professor Emerita, University of California, Santa Cruz

Thursday, February 25: We will begin with an examination of historical predecessors to today's social movements that include anti-slavery and anti-colonial resistances, early contests over industrialization and waged labor, and the civil rights and feminist movements. With this background, we then intend to assess the achievements and difficulties involved a variety of contemporary social movements agitating for social change.

Required Readings:

C of C: Chapter 6, Chomsky lecture

Supplementary Readings:

TBA

Live online Q & A with Chomsky and Waterstone (**9:30-10:45 am, MST**)

Week 8—Social Change

Tuesday, March 2: Given all of the foregoing, we return to the basic premise of the course in order to examine the most current events on the political stage. Because we are preparing this course outline several months before these final two sessions, we cannot say for certain what these issues will be, but they are likely to include more continuities than abrupt changes. We will make use of these examinations in order to provoke contemplation on what would constitute progressive change, and how such change might be brought about. In approaching these matters we also return to the potential contribution of critical pedagogy and the role of informed and activist scholars and citizens.

Required Readings:

C of C: Chapter 7, Waterstone lecture

C of C: Capitalism and Covid-19: A Concluding Coda

Marv Waterstone, "Smoke and Mirrors: Inverting the Discourse on Tobacco." *Antipode* 42(4): 875-896, 2010. (pdf)

Henry Giroux, "Cultural Studies, Public Pedagogy and the Responsibility of Intellectuals." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 1 (1): 59-79, 2004.
<http://www.public.iastate.edu/~drrussel/www548/giroux-respofintells.pdf>

Supplemental Readings:

TBA

Live online visitors (**9:30-10:45 am, MST**): Eduardo Moreira, Brazilian Landless Workers Movement; Erin Araujo, Mexican Zapatista Collectives, Generator, Department of Decolonial Economics, El Combalache

Thursday, March 4: We will tie together themes already discussed, and explore conceptions of the common good from the Enlightenment to the present. In terms of the educational system, we will contrast the traditional concept of education as a vessel into which one pours water with the Humboldtian view of education as laying out a string along which the student pursues his/her own course, with the goal of encouraging innate curiosity and the desire to inquire and create, to challenge and to discover. We will connect these concepts to the current state of education, bringing in the current imposition of business models particularly in reaction to the liberating and democratizing tendencies of the 1960s.

Required Readings:

C of C: Chapter 7, Chomsky lecture

Noam Chomsky, *What Kind of Creatures Are We?* New York: Columbia University Press, 2015. Chapter 3. (pdf)

Supplemental Readings:

TBA

Live online Q & A with Chomsky and Waterstone (**9:30-10:45 am, MST**)