

ANTH 2520/UGEC2990

Spring 2026

Globalization and Culture

Lecture: Tuesday 2:30-4:15, NAH 115

Teacher: Gordon Mathews, cmgordon@cuhk.edu.hk

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Tutorials: Tues 17:30, Wed. 11:30, TBA. These are flexible: we will arrange--

Introduction

Globalization has been economically transforming the world, as national borders become increasingly strained by the global flow of money and goods. But globalization also has a great impact on cultures across the globe, as products from Coca-Cola to iPhones to Facebook, and ideas from human rights to standards of beauty to ideologies of terrorism and viruses such as covid-19, intrude everywhere. This transforms the meanings of culture, as increasingly we no longer belong to a society based in a certain place, but to a global society, and a global "cultural supermarket." This course examines how globalization has been transforming the meanings of culture in today's world.

Course Objectives

The course objectives are to enable you to:

- 1) gain insight into the globalization of culture, a process taking place across the world today and shaping all of our lives;
- 2) obtain a broad understanding of different aspects of the globalization of culture, including those involving recent history, economics, consumption, immigration, terrorism, epidemics, nationalism, and cultural identity; and
- 3) comprehend both the costs and benefits of contemporary processes of globalization to individuals, societies, and the world.

In order to fully meet these objectives, you will need to attend all classes and do all class readings and watch all class videos. Grades will be based on the extent to which you can analytically utilize the readings, videos and lectures of the course in engaging in the questions posed by the course.

Course Requirements

- take-home midterm exam (7 pages long: 30% of grade), handed out Feb. 10, due March 10
- take-home final exam (11 pages long: 50% of grade), handed out March 31, due April 28
- class participation (20% of grade)

Course Materials

--There is one required text for the course: Manfred Steger, *Globalization, a Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, sixth edition, 2023). Newspaper and other articles, as well as all other readings, are available on Blackboard.

Plagiarism

Students are required by university policy to submit all papers to VeriGuide. Please check the website <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/> for information on how to submit papers through VeriGuide.

Zoom

This class is mixed-mode and there are a number of exchange students taking the class from overseas. However, if you are in Hong Kong, come to lectures in person.

<https://cuhk.zoom.us/j/95015035730?pwd=igfHdo7gBkfrYmxUhS0djSi1XsY66E.1>

Meeting ID: 950 1503 5730.

Passcode: 044131

Grade Descriptors

A Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes, through work that has creatively synthesized course materials and key ideas, to the extent that you show a depth of understanding as great as or greater than my own. Your arguments in your work are logical and cohesive, the discussion is well-organized, and the writing is clear. All relevant course materials have been fully utilized in your work, and additional material as well has been used from your own research.

A- Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes, through work has creatively synthesized course materials and key ideas. Your arguments in your work are logical and cohesive, the discussion is well-organized, and the writing is clear. All relevant course materials have been fully utilized in your work, and perhaps additional material as well from your own research.

B+ Substantial performance on all learning outcomes. Your arguments in your work are largely logical and cohesive, the discussion is generally well-organized, and the writing is clear. Most relevant course materials have been fully utilized in your work. There are areas for improvement with respect to building a cohesive argument, organizing the discussion, communicating clearly, and/or identifying relevant evidence and using all course materials, but by and large you have turned in good, solid work.

B Satisfactory performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall satisfactory performance. Your arguments in your work are somewhat logical and cohesive, the discussion is somewhat well-organized, and the writing is somewhat clear. Much relevant course materials have been fully utilized in your work. There are areas for improvement with respect to building a cohesive argument, organizing the discussion, communicating clearly, and/or identifying relevant evidence.

B- Adequate performance on all learning outcomes, OR satisfactory performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall largely adequate performance. Your arguments in your work are partially logical and cohesive, the discussion is partially organized, and the writing is somewhat clear. Some relevant course materials have been fully utilized in your work. There are areas for improvement with respect to building a cohesive argument, organizing the discussion, communicating clearly, and/or identifying relevant evidence.

C+ Adequate performance on the majority of learning outcomes. Your written work shows some effort, but course materials have not been sufficiently engaged. The argument and the writing is not clear, and/or there is less than full evidence for statements and claims made. There are areas for improvement with respect to building a cohesive argument, organizing the discussion, communicating clearly, and/or identifying relevant evidence.

C, C- Barely adequate performance on a number of learning outcomes. These grade will be awarded to students who have missed a large number of classes and have failed to use course materials in their written answers.

Jan. 6: Introduction

- Manfred Steger, "What is Globalization?" in *Globalization, a Very Short Introduction* 6th edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), p. 1-11
- "In Which I Try Valiantly to Cheer You Up" (*New York Times*, Dec. 27, 2025)
- "What Happens Next to Globalization?" (*Japan Times*, Sept. 11, 2025)
- "Why No One Can Visit North Sentinel Island – and Why You Shouldn't Try" (*Times of India*, April 6, 2025)

Jan. 13: Key Concepts for Understanding Globalization

- Robert H. Lavenda and Emily A. Schultz, "Globalization and the Culture of Capitalism," in *Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology* 5th edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013), p. 171-196
- Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy" (part), in Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo, eds. *The Anthropology of Globalization* 2d edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), p. 51-59
- Video: "Thomas Friedman's Three Eras of Globalization" (2008, 2:55)
- Video: "Globalization Theories | Society and Culture | MCAT | Khan Academy" 2014, 5:46)

Jan. 20: Globalization in History: Imperialism, Colonialism, Capitalism;

- Manfred Steger, "Globalization in History" in *Globalization, a Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 6th edition 2023), p. 12-33
- Richard H. Robbins, "The Era of the Global Trader, The Era of the Industrialist," in *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon: 2002), p. 69-92
- Video: "Imperialism: Crash Course World History #35" (2012, 13:46)

Jan. 27: The Globalization of the World Economy

- Manfred Steger, "The Economic and Technological Dimension of Globalization" in *Globalization, a Very Short Introduction*, p. 34-65
- Hamish McRae, "Technology Races Onward," in *The World in 2050: How to Think About the Future* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023), pp. 139-163

Feb. 3: "Low-End Globalization"/"Globalization From Below"

- Gordon Mathews and Carlos Alba Vega, "Introduction: What is Globalization From Below?" in G. Mathews, G. Ribeiro, and C. Vega, eds. *Globalization from Below" The World's Other Economy* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 1-15
- Gordon Mathews, "Low-end Globalization" (part), in *The World in Guangzhou: Africans and Other Foreigners in South China's Global Marketplace* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2017), p. 81-105

Feb. 10: Globalization, Consumption, and Ecology

- Amber Dance, "How Halloween Has Traveled the Globe" (*Sapiens*, Oct. 26, 2018)
- Manfred Steger, "The Ecological Dimension of Globalization" in *Globalization, a Very Short Introduction*, p. 95-110
- "What is Climate Change? A Really Simple Guide" (BBC, Nov. 2, 2022)
- Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "How Globalization Has Broken the Chain of Responsibility" (*Sapiens*, August 9, 2018).
- Video: "Consumption in a World of 32:1" (2012, 2:49)

(Take-home midterm exam handed out Feb. 10, due March 10)

Feb. 17: Chinese New Year Holiday

Feb. 24: Globalization, Media, and Cultural Values

- Manfred Steger, "The Cultural Dimension of Globalization," in *Globalization, a Very Short Introduction*, p. 83-94
- Yuval Noah Harari, "Equality: Those Who Own the Data Own the Future," in *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2018), pp, 73-81
- "In Search for the New Supermodel, Cultures Collide" (*International Herald Tribune*, April 23, 2003); "Global Internet Freedom Declines for 15th Consecutive Year" (*Tech Policy*, Nov. 14, 2025).

March 3: Reading Week: No Class

March 10: Globalization and Immigration

- Yuval Noah Harari, "Immigration: Some Cultures Might Be Better Than Others," in *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2018), pp, 140-157
- "How Trump Is Intensifying His Crackdown on Every Form of Immigration to the US," (*CNN*, 3 Dec. 2025).
- "Reports of Attacks on Women Heighten Tension Over Migrants" (*New York Times*, Jan. 5, 2016)
- Linda E. Sanchez, "Facing COVID-19 as an Undocumented Essential Worker," (*Sapiens*, 3 Dec. 2020)
- Tanja Ahlin, "Caring Across Distance—One Call at a Time" (*Sapiens* 4 June 2025)

March 17: Globalization and Tourism

- Arjun Guneratne and Kate Bjork, "'Village Walks: Tourism and Globalization among the Tharu of Nepal," in D. Spradley and D. McCurdy, eds., *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology* (Boston: Pearson, 2012), pp. 336-345
- Barbara Fraser, "The Perils and Privileges of an Amazonian Hallucinogen," (*Sapiens*, 3 Aug. 2017).
- "The Tourism Trap" (*Time*, July 26, 2018)
- "Bad Behavior, Overcrowded Streets: In Asia's Travel Hot Spots, Overtourism Is Creating European-Style Problems" (*CNN Travel*, 1 Nov. 2025)

March 24: Globalization, Terrorism, and Pandemic

- “Oslo Suspect Wrote of Fear of Islam and Plan for War” (*New York Times*, July 23, 2011)
- “How the Charlie Hebdo Attack Changed France” (*Al Jazeera*, Jan. 6, 2016)
- “How Covid Spread Fear of Globalisation and Threatens a New World Order” (*The Guardian*, Oct. 16, 2021).
- “Why China’s Handling of the Coronavirus Pandemic is at Best a Pyrrhic Victory” (*South China Morning Post*, Jan. 3, 2023)
- Video: “Can Terrorism Be Justified? (Part 1)” (2008, 4:38)
- Video: “Plague to Coronavirus: How Pandemics Have Transformed History” (2020: 11:00)

March 31: Globalization, Politics, and Nationalism

- Manfred Steger, “The Political Dimensions of Globalization,” in *Globalization, a Very Short Introduction*, p. 66-82
- Gordon Mathews, “The Hong Kong Protests in Anthropological Perspective: National Identity and What it Means.” (*Critique of Anthropology* 40(2), 2020: 264-26
- Video: “Is Nationalism Ever a Force for Good?” | Jared Diamond | Big Think (2019: 3:38)

I’ll hand out the take-home final exam March 31; it is due April 28

Easter Holiday: April 7

April 14: Cultural Identity in a Globalizing World

- Gordon Mathews, “On the Meanings of Culture,” in *Global Culture/Individual Identity: Searching for Home in the Cultural Supermarket* (London: Routledge: 2000), p. 1-23
- “In Changing South Korea, Who Counts as Korean?” (*New York Times*, 29 Nov. 2012);
- “The Fight over Christian Nationalism in a Small Tennessee Town” (BBC, 28 Dec. 2025).
- Video: “Ronald Reagan: Tribute to Patriotism” (2008, 6:39)
- Video: “George Carlin: Patriotism and National Pride” (2013, 9:47)

April 21 (Make-up class day): Assessing Globalization: Is It Helping Or Hurting the World?

- Manfred Steger, “Ideological Confrontations Over Globalization,” “Present and Future Trends,” in *Globalization, a Very Short Introduction*, p. 111-126, p. 127-136
- Discussion of take-home final