

COMM 620
Fall 2013
Thursday 9:30-12:20
ASC 228
Professor Sarah Banet-Weiser
Professor Manuel Castells

RESEARCH SEMINAR ON ECONOMIC CULTURES

Course Description:

This is a research seminar that aims to explore and analyze the interaction between culture and economy by observing different types of economic practices. The purpose of the seminar will be the generation of new knowledge in this field. Students will be expected to develop research and original thinking and to produce a research paper of publishable quality. Students are welcome to use the seminar as a testing ground in theory and methodology for work related to their theses and dissertations.

The seminar will be organized around three elements:

- 1) A series of joint presentations by the instructors on specific topics followed by an open discussion with the participants in the seminar.
- 2) Supporting reading for every topic treated in the seminar, and specifically recommended readings for students engaged in a given research project.
- 3) Empirical studies conducted by each one of the students, leading to a research paper at the end of the semester. Research topics will be selected in agreement with the instructor, within the thematic area of the seminar. Students must present their work in progress in one session of the seminar during the semester, to receive comments and suggestions from the whole class. Active participation by all students in each session is required.

The seminar will meet once a week, in a three hour session. Presentations by the instructors will take part in the first half of the semester, so that research work by the students can proceed in the meantime.

Grading will be based on active participation in the discussion in the seminar, as well as in the effort invested in the research project, regardless of the final results of the research.

Pre-requisites:

Graduate standing, no exceptions. Social science background is necessary.

Annenberg students have priority but the seminar is open to students from other departments. Enrolment is limited to 15 students.

Required Books/Readings:

1. Viviana Zelizer, *Economic Lives: How Culture Shapes the Economy* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2013)
2. Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002)
3. Sarah Banet-Weiser, *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2012)
4. Joseph Stiglitz, *Freefall: America, Free Markets and the Sinking of the World Economy*, New York: WW Norton, 2010
5. Manuel Castells et al (eds), *Aftermath. The Cultures of the Economic Crisis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012
6. Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope. Social Movements in the Internet Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press
7. Bill Maurer, "Payment. Forms and Functions of Value Transfer in Contemporary Society," *Cambridge Anthropology* 30 (2) Autumn 2012: 15-35
8. Manuel Castells and Sviatlana Hlebiak "Alternative Economic Practices in a Time of Crisis", *International Sociology*, forthcoming

Required viewing: **Aftermath. The cultures of the economic crisis**, directed by Bregtje Van der Haak, set of 4 videos, Amsterdam: VPRO (Dutch Public Television) (available online)

Themes of Presentations by the Instructors (presenting jointly in each session)

Week One:

August 26: **Economy is Culture: The Theoretical Debate.**

Reading: Viviana Zelizer, *Economic Lives: How Culture Shapes the Economy*

Week Two:

September 5: **Consumerism, History, and the Media**

Reading: Selections from Gary Cross, *The All-Consuming Century*; Selections from Nestor Garcia Canclini, *Consumer Citizens*

Week Three:

September 12: **The Culture of Branding**

Reading: Sarah Banet-Weiser, *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*

Week Four:

September 19: **The Cultural Foundations of Global Financial Capitalism: From the Culture of Risk to the Practice of Greed**

Reading: Joseph Stiglitz, *Freefall: America, Free Markets and the Sinking of the World Economy* (New York: WW Norton, 2010)

Week Five:

September 26: **Metamorphosis of a Crisis: The Crash of 2008 and its Aftermath**

Reading: Manuel Castells et al (eds), *Aftermath: The Cultures of the Economic Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

Week Six:

October 3: **Contesting the Values of Financial Capitalism: Networked Social Movements Against the Management of the Crisis**

Reading: Manuel Castells: *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012)

Week Seven:

October 10: **Alternative Financial Practices**

Reading: Bill Maurer, "Payment. Forms and Functions of Value Transfer in Contemporary Society," *Cambridge Anthropology* 30 (2) Autumn 2012: 15-35

Guest Lecture: Lana Schwartz

Week Eight:

October 17: **Alternative Economic Cultures in a Time of Crisis: Towards a New Paradigm?**

Reading: Manuel Castells and Sviatlana Hlebig, "Alternative Economic Practices in a Time of Crisis" International Sociology, forthcoming

Week Nine:

October 24: **Required Viewing:** Aftermath: The cultures of the economic crisis, directed by Bregtje Van der Haak, (4 videos), Amsterdam VPRO (Dutch Public Television), available online.

Week 10:

October 31: Student Presentations (3 per session)

Week 11:

November 7: Student Presentations

Week 12:

November 14: Student Presentations

Week 13:

November 21: Student Presentations

Week 14:

No Class, Thanksgiving

Week 15:

December 5: Student Presentations

RECOMMENDED READING

Ulrich Beck, *German Europe*, Cambridge: Polity, 2013

Mark Blythe, *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013

Edward Engelen et al., *After the Great Complacency: Financial Crisis and the Politics of Reform*, Oxford, Oxford University Press

Anthony Giddens and Will Hutton (eds), *On the Edge. Living in Global Capitalism*, New York: Free Press, 2000

Matthew Hilton, *Prosperity for All: Consumer Activism in an Era of Globalization*, New York: Cornell University Press, 2009

Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land*, New York: Penguin, 2011

Jo Littler, *Radical Consumption: Shopping for Change in Contemporary Culture*, London: Open University Press, 2008

David Marsh, *The Euro: The Battle for the New Global Currency*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011, new edition

Paul Mason, *Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere: The New Global Revolutions*, London: Verso, 2012

L.S. McDonald, and P. Robinson, *Colossal Failure of Common Sense: The Incredible Story of the Collapse of Lehman Brothers*, New York: Crown Business, 2009

Liz Moor, *The Rise of Brands*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007

Peter Nolan, *Crossroads: The End of Wild Capitalism and the Future of Humanity*, London: Marshall Cavendish, 2009

Michael Princen, et al, *Confronting Consumption*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002

Juliet Schorr, *Plenitude*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Robert Shiller, *The Subprime Solution: How Today's Global Financial Crisis Happened and What to do About it*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008

Wolfgang Streeck and Armin Schafer (eds.), *Politics in the Age of Austerity*, Cambridge: Polity, 2012

Gillian Tett, *Fool's Gold*, London: Little, Brown, 2009

Martin Wolf, *Fixing Global Finance*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008