



**GVPT409G-19 Seminar in International Relations and World Politics:
Corporations in the Global Political Economy
Syllabus v1.0**

Fall 2019

LeFrak 1171

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The expansion in size, number and influence of multinational corporations (MNCs) is one of the main forces driving the process of globalization in the modern era. Business is at the center of many political issues, not just economic ones, as they bargain for advantage with governments in both industrialized and developing countries. Increasingly they also negotiate with international organizations and transnational activist groups over issues of policy, values and norms. One of the central questions in international political economy today is how to regulate or govern global corporations across national legal and cultural boundaries.

This course introduces the corporation, and asks: do corporations have too much power in the global system? We explore this through both scholarship and popular debates over the nature of capitalism today, and the impact of corporate interests and norms in specific issue areas. We will focus particular attention on the relative balance of power between governments, corporations, and civil society groups in transnational regulation and global governance. The readings include different perspectives, and present ideas, approaches, and empirical evidence. The course is primarily qualitative in approach, starting with historical developments and

different debates about corporate power and accountability. The aim is to help you develop a sophisticated understanding that goes beyond bumper stickers maligning corporations or celebrating unfettered capitalism.

Please let me know within the first two weeks of the course if you have any religious or other accommodations that we need to discuss, so that I can help you succeed in this class. If you miss a class on a day when we have an exam or an assignment due, you will need to document the reason in order to be excused. University policies are collected together here:

<http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>

Late Policy: All assignments should be submitted on time as listed on the ELMS Assignment—but you have a 24 hours grace period before I start deducting points. Assignments are designed both to help you learn and to assess whether you have learned. If you don't attend class you won't do well on the assignments; if you don't do well on the assignments, you probably aren't learning. If you cheat on assignments you are most definitely not learning anything. All students should be familiar with University policies on academic integrity—cheating will not be tolerated. The rules state that "Any member of the University community who has witnessed an apparent act of academic dishonesty, or has information that reasonably leads to the conclusion that such an act has occurred or has been attempted, has the responsibility to inform the Office of Judicial Programs promptly."

Basic Needs: Let me know if you face any challenges in accessing sufficient food or safe and stable housing which may affect how you perform in this course. Please visit go.umd.edu/basic-needs for resources the campus offers you. Let me know how I can help!

Readings:

Required books:

John Mikler, *The Political Power of Global Corporations*

John Gerard Ruggie, *Just Business: Multinational Corporations and Human Rights*

The readings are available via ELMS Course Reserves

Requirements:

1. Communication skills

- In-class participation (150 points): attendance, contribution to discussion, respectful debate
- Lead class discussion (50): identify key questions, concepts, ideas and information for one class session, and lead the discussion that day
- Presentation (75): Present your research paper to the class

2. Knowledge and Analysis:

- Reflection/ Analysis Essay (100): Synthesize material from two or more class sessions, comparing and contrasting perspectives and examples, and evaluating them
- Final Exam (250): Comprehensive essay exam

3. Critical Analysis

- Research paper topic (50): 1-2 pages describing a research question you plan to explore
- Research paper literature review and outline (100): Research question, discussion of different approaches to answering that question/ review of the relevant literature, and preliminary outline of the final paper Note: at this point you are committed to this topic and cannot change
- Research paper (225): In-depth research on a compelling question regarding the politics of global corporations

DATE	TOPIC/ READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
PART I	PERSPECTIVES AND HISTORY	
August 26 Introduction	Osnos, "The Investor Seth Klarman, in a Rare Interview, Offers a Warning. Davos Should Listen" <i>The New Yorker</i> January 22, 2019 ELMS> Course Reserves or Files	Assign discussion leadership and essays
August 28 What is the "corporation"?	Micklethwaite and Wooldridge, Introduction and Chapter 8, <i>The Company: A Short History of a Revolutionary Idea</i> ELMS> Course Reserves	
Sept 2	LABOR DAY—NO CLASS	
Sept 4 History from a critical perspective	Suwandi and Foster, "Multinational Corporations and the Globalization of Monopoly Capital" <i>Monthly Review</i> July 2016	
Sept 9 International political economy and MNCs	Mikler, Ch. 1 Introduction and Ch. 2 Theorizing, <i>The Political Power of Global Corporations</i>	
Part II	THE PURPOSE AND POWER OF CORPORATIONS	
Sept 11 Is profit the only purpose?	Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits" <i>The New York Times Magazine</i> September 17, 1970 Scherer and Palazzo, "Globalization and Corporate Social Responsibility," in <i>Oxford Handbook of Corporate Social Responsibility</i> eds. Crane, et al 2008 MacLellan, "Nearly 200 CEOs Just Agreed..." <i>Quartz at Work</i> August 19, 2019	
Sept 16 The dimensions of corporate power	Fuchs, "The Commanding Heights? The Strength and Fragility of Business Power in Global Politics," <i>Millennium</i> 33,3 2005: 771-801 Babic, et al, "Who is More Powerful—States or Corporations?" <i>The Conversation</i> July 10, 2018	
Sept 18	Mikler, Ch. 3 Geographical Concentration <i>The Political Power of Global Corporations</i>	

Sept 23 Outgrowing control?	Lind, "Vitali, et al "The Network of Global Corporate Control" <i>PLOS One</i> 2011 Khanna, "The World's Megacompanies..." <i>Quartz</i> April 28, 2017 https://qz.com/954838/global-companies-local-rules/ Knight, "The Spectacular Power of Big Lens," <i>The Guardian</i> May 10, 2018	
Sept 25 Global managerial capitalism	Lind, "The New Class War" <i>American Affairs</i> Summer 2017	Paper Topics—prepare to share in class
Sept 30 What is the structural power of mobile capital?	Mosley and Uno, "Racing to the Bottom or Climbing to the Top?" <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> August 2007	
Oct 2 What is the relationship between global supply chains and state power?	Farrell and Newman, "Weaponized Interdependence," <i>International Security</i> Summer 2019 Mikler, Ch.4 Institutional Embeddedness <i>The Political Power of Global Corporations</i>	
Part III	HOLDING CORPORATIONS ACCOUNTABLE	
Oct 7 What is the position of corporations in international law?	Wouters and Chané, "Multinational Corporations in International Law" Working Paper No. 129 December 2013 KU Leuven	
Oct 9 Using ideas	Prakash and Sell, "Using Ideas Strategically: The Contest between Business and NGO Networks in Intellectual Property Rights," <i>International Studies Quarterly</i> 48,1 2004: 143-75	
Oct 14 Discursive power of NGOs	Bartley and Child, "Shaming the Corporation: The Social Production of Targets and the Anti-Sweatshop Movement," <i>American Sociological Review</i> 2014	
Oct 16 Transnational activism	McAteer and Pulver, "The Corporate Boomerang: Shareholder Transnational Advocacy Networks Targeting Oil Companies in the Ecuadorian Amazon," <i>Global Environmental Politics</i> 2009 9,1: 1-32	

Oct 21 Can MNCs rule themselves?	Mikler, Ch. 5 Private Authority and the Potential for Private Governance, <i>The Political Power of Global Corporations</i>	
Oct 23 Is there a role for corporations in conflict prevention?	Haufler, "Governing Conflict through Transnational Corporations: The Case of Conflict Minerals," in <i>Transnational Actors in War and Peace</i> , eds. Malet and Anderson	Outline + Literature Review
Oct 28 What role for corporations in human rights?	Ruggie, Ch. 1 "The Challenge" and Ch.2 "No Silver Bullet" in <i>Just Business</i> Goñi, "Argentina: Two Ex-Ford Executives Convicted in Torture Case" <i>The Guardian</i> December 11, 2018	
Oct 30 What new forms of accountability?	Ruggie, Ch. 3 "Protect, Respect, and Remedy" and Ch. 5 "Next Steps" <i>Just Business</i>	
Nov 4 Capital and labor in the global economy	Maike J. Drebes "Impediments to the implementation of voluntary codes of conduct in production factories of the Global South: so much to do, so little done," <i>Third World Quarterly</i> , 35:7, 1256-1272 Stoller, "Bigger Corporations are Making you Poorer" <i>Vice</i> April 5, 2015 https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/gve7v4/bigger-corporations-are-making-you-poorer O'Keefe, "Inside Big Chocolate's Labor Problem" <i>Fortune</i> March 1, 2016 http://fortune.com/big-chocolate-child-labor/ (Links to an external site.)	
Nov 6 Environment	Dauvergne and Lister, "Big Brand Sustainability: Governance Prospects and Environmental Limits," <i>Global Environmental Change</i> 22,1 2012: 36-45 Beer, "Exclusive: Patagonia is in Business to Save our Home Planet" <i>Fast Company</i> December 13, 2018 Peters, "A Coalition of Giant Brands..." <i>Fast Company</i> January 26, 2019	
Nov 11 Climate	Bommier and Renouard, "Corporate Responsibility in the Climate Crisis" <i>Public Books</i> January 21, 2019	

	<p>https://www.publicbooks.org/corporate-responsibility-in-the-climate-crisis/</p> <p>Green, "Private Standards in the Climate Regime: The Greenhouse Gas Protocol" <i>Business and Politics</i> 12,3 2010: 1-37</p> <p>Hall, "Exxon Knew about Climate Change almost 40 Years Ago," <i>Scientific American</i> October 26, 2015</p>	
Nov 13 Corruption	<p>Hendrikse and Fernandez, "Offshore Finance" <i>TNI Longreads</i> 2019 http://longreads.tni.org/state-of-power-2019/offshore-finance/</p> <p>Harding, "What are the Panama Papers?" <i>The Guardian</i> April 2016 https://www.theguardian.com/news/2016/apr/03/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-panama-papers</p>	
Nov 18 Food	<p>Clapp, "Mega-Mergers on the Menu: Corporate Concentration and the Politics of Sustainability in the Global Food System," <i>Global Environmental Politics</i> 2018 18,2: 12-33</p> <p>Pfister, "Leaked: Coca-Cola's Worldwide Political Strategy to Kill Soda Taxes," <i>Medium</i> October 14, 2016 https://medium.com/cokeleak/leaked-coca-colas-worldwide-political-strategy-to-kill-soda-taxes-9717f361fb04 (Links to an external site.)</p> <p>Lambert, "Study: Coca-Cola Shaped China's Efforts to Fight Obesity," <i>NPR Goats and Soda</i> January 10, 2019</p>	Research Paper Due
Nov 20 Case Study: Cargill	<p>"Cargill Highlights Sustainability Progress Across Multiple Supply Chains" https://www.cargill.com/2019/cargill-highlights-sustainability-progress</p> <p>Shorthand, "Cargill: The Worst Company in the World" https://preview.shorthand.com/qfu6yKGKbYPR7Td1</p>	
Nov 25 Health	<p>McDaniel, Intinarelli and Malone, "Tobacco Industry Issues Management Organizations: Creating a Global</p>	

	Corporate Network to Undermine Public Health,” <i>Globalization and Health</i> 4,2: 1-18	
Nov 27	Thanksgiving—No Class	
Dec 2 The Platform Economy	Kenney and Zysman, “The Rise of the Platform Economy,” <i>Issues in Science and Technology</i> 32,3 2016 https://issues.org/the-rise-of-the-platform- economy/ (Links to an external site.) <i>The Economist</i> , “The World’s Most Valuable Resource is No Longer Oil, but Data” May 6, 2017 (optional) Land of the Giants podcast about Amazon https://www.vox.com/land-of-the-giants-podcast	
Dec 4	Presentations	Presentations Review Guide for Final Exam
Dec 9 State, society and corporate power and accountability	Mikler, Ch. 6 “Conclusion: Three Implications,” <i>The Political Power of Global Corporations</i>	
TBD	Final Exam	