

GVPT409G-23 Fall Seminar in International Relations and World Politics:

Corporations in the Global Political Economy



**Prof. Virginia Haufler
GA Sebastian Suarez**

Syllabus v1.0

In-Person TTh 2:00-3:15pm

Tydings 0117

The expansion in size, number, and influence of multinational corporations (MNCs) is one of the most striking features of the modern global economy. Business is at the center of political debates 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.

This course is organized around a central question that is particularly pressing today: Can—and should—we hold global corporations accountable at home and abroad? This raises issues of power, identity, values and interests as they shape debates over global governance. Ultimately, we ask whether global corporations cause the global problems we face—and whether they can provide solutions.

****READ [THIS!](#)****

UNIVERSITY POLICIES FAQ

Great summary of common questions related to courses—Attendance, Academic Integrity, etc.



Absences: *Do not come to class if you are sick.* Let me know before class if you will be absent. Provide documentation if you will miss a major requirement or will be absent more than one day. If you are struggling in any way—let me know so that we can discuss ways I can help.

Accommodations: If you need accommodation of any sort—disability, religious, military deployment, etc.—let me know within the first two weeks of class.

Expectations: *Cheating of any sort is unacceptable.* Suspected cases of plagiarism or cheating will be referred to the Student Honor Council. See resources at the [Office of Student Conduct](#). Note that you can use new technology such as ChatGPT but only as an aid to your own work.

Recording: I will record lectures and also post lecture slides on ELMS-Canvas.

Tech Use in Class: Only use for class-related purposes!

Your first stop should be me—let me know if you need help. There are many ways to get in touch with me:

- Via the inbox in ELMS-Canvas
- Directly by email vhaufler@umd.edu
- By phone 301-405-4122
- Drop by to see me Tuesdays 3:30-5 or Wednesdays 4:30-5:30pm in 3117J Chincoteague
- Make an appointment

Check out tutoring.umd.edu for academic support resources.

Our librarians are eager to assist you in person or online at www.lib.umd.edu

Everyone faces challenges at some point and could use expert support. Find it at counseling.umd.edu—it is free to UM students.

If you struggle with basic needs (food, housing, health care) there are resources for you that can help at <https://studentaffairs.umd.edu>

Course Objectives:

1. Demonstrate understanding of key political science concepts, questions, and theoretical approaches used to analyze the role of global corporations in world affairs.
2. Describe the evolution of relationships among corporations, states, and civil society in the struggle over accountability in meeting global challenges.
3. Be able to compare and contrast different theoretical and empirical approaches and critically analyze and evaluate them. own position with regard to major debates about corporations and contemporary capitalism and communicate it effectively.
4. Develop your own position with regard to major debates about corporations and contemporary capitalism and communicate it effectively.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in GVPT Courses

The Government and Politics department deeply values the voices and perspectives of all people. We are committed to having a diverse department that recognizes and appreciates differences in race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, abilities, class, nationality, and other factors. Students are invited to share their thoughts and engage with a diversity of opinions.

As political scientists, we study the impact of diversity in multiple ways. We examine inequity as an aspect of politics. As a teacher, I seek to provide an inclusive environment. I expect you to communicate respectfully even when disagreeing with others—including me. Your goal should be to persuade others, provide insights or interpretations, and to listen thoughtfully to other perspectives. Any speech that encourages intolerance or contains threats of violence is prohibited.

Reporting Racism and Other Forms of Hate and Bias

If you experience racism or other forms of bias, I encourage you to report it to any one (or all) of these:

- Report the experience to me
- Report it to the GVPT Director of Undergraduate Studies Prof. Patrick Wohlforth
- Report it to the GVPT Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee
- Report it to the University [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#) and the [Bias Incident Support Services](#)

Addressing Sexual Harassment and Violence

The University of Maryland is committed to providing support and resources, including academic accommodations, for students who experience sexual or relationship violence.

- To report an incident and/or obtain academic accommodation, contact the [Office of Civil Rights and Sexual Misconduct](#) at 301-405-1142
- To speak with someone confidentially, contact [CARE to Stop Violence](#) at 301-741-3555
- Note: Disclosures made to faculty *are not confidential* and the faculty member must report it to the Office of Civil Rights and Sexual Misconduct

Course Information: Your main guide to the course is the ELMS-Canvas course platform. This is where you will find the schedule, assignments, due dates, recordings of lectures, lecture slides, and other material. Any changes and updates to the course appear first on ELMS-Canvas.

Course Material: The readings represent a range of scholarly and journalistic material that provide different perspectives, substantive information, and examples. I apologize for any ads and extraneous material that is inevitable when you go online! If you have trouble finding any material please let me know immediately.

Health Precautions: The pandemic is not over and we now have other viruses circulating so I encourage you to wear a mask or stay home if you are ill.

Late Policy: You have a *24-hour grace period for assignments* before I start deducting points for lateness. Talk to me if you encounter problems!

Assignments: Detailed descriptions and expectations are at ELMS-Canvas>Assignments.

1. Prior Knowledge Survey 10 points
2. Participation and engagement in class 20 points
3. Perusall reading assignments 30 points
4. Individual project 70 points
5. Midterm exam 120 points
6. Final exam 150 points

Final Grade Cutoffs									
+	97%	+	87%	+	77%	+	67%	+	
A	93%	B	83%	C	73%	D	63%	F	<60.0%
-	90%	-	80%	-	70%	-	60%	-	

Perusall

While all the material for the course is required (unless noted otherwise), I have selected one thing each week for you to comment on collectively. We will use the Perusall platform (<https://www.perusall.com/>) for these assignments.

Perusall helps you **learn faster** and **remember more** by sharing your questions and comments with other students directly on the readings. You can get questions answered by other students and share opinions and debates. It also lets you help others to understand the material or to share what you know. It also helps me understand what I need to explain, where I should put my attention, and what information I should provide in class.

Go to [Perusall](https://www.perusall.com/) and register as a student. Use code **HAUFLER-W90XF** to access this course. Once there, you will see weekly assignments. For each one, simply start reading and when you see a key concept, idea, perspective, or anything at all that you think is important—highlight it. You can then put your question or comment relating to the highlighted part in the chat box on the right. Provide thoughtful questions, answer the questions of other students, and engage in conversation. You can respond to threads started by others, upvote

comments you think make an important point, and respond directly to someone using @ and their name. The class is divided into smaller groups to make this more manageable, so you will only see the comments and questions of a subset of the class.

Be sure to review the overview of Perusall and the introductory material to help you understand the purpose of the platform, how to use it, and how to get a good grade.

PART ONE: GLOBAL CORPORATIONS AND POWER	
Perusall material is marked with an asterisk; all material is required	
WEEK ONE Can we hold global corporations accountable?	DUE
<p>Aug 29 How can we hold corporations accountable? Why is there debate over corporate accountability. The disjuncture between global firms and sovereign states. Corporations and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Course details, review of ELMS and Perusall. Podcast: "Why we Can't Quite Elon..." On with Kara Swisher 8/24/2023</p> <p>Aug 31 What are the issues? Why are some observers critical of corporations? What do they view as problematic about them? Are these problems political? Are corporations good or bad? --in class: part of "The New Corporation" documentary 1:47 --Leyden, "The Great Progression" 30pp --optional: The Pursuit documentary 1:16</p>	<p>Review syllabus, ELMS-Canvas, and sign up for Perusall</p>
WEEK TWO How did we get here?	
<p>Sept 5 What is the place of corporations in the global economy? What is a corporation? What is FDI? --The Economy online textbook parts 1.6-1.10</p> <p>Sept 7 Are corporations tools of empire? What is the relationship between states and companies? How has it changed historically? Consider the British East India Company and similar historical models. --Dalrymple, "The Original Evil Corporation" 4pp. --Suwandi and Foster, "Multinational Corporations and the Globalization of</p>	

Monopoly Capital" 25pp.	
WEEK THREE What is the purpose of a corporation?	
<p>Sept 12 What are the characteristics of the modern firm? --Micklethwaite/Wooldrige, "Introduction: Utopia Limited,"12 pp. --Misamore, "Apple & Google Approach...Principal-Agent Problem" 3pp.</p> <p>Sept 14 Shareholders vs Stakeholders --Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to increase its Profits" 5pp. --Merrick, "Is the Friedman Doctrine Still Relevant in the 21st Century?" 38pp.</p>	<p>Drop/Add Period Ends</p> <p>Prior Knowledge Survey due September 12</p>
WEEK FOUR What types of power do firms have?	
<p>Sept 19 What are sources of corporate power? --Fuchs, "The Commanding Heights? The Strength and Fragility of Business Power in Global Politics" 33pp.</p> <p>Sept 21 Debate over Business Power in a Democracy What is the "privileged position of business" argument? How are corporations viewed by some as authoritarian organizations? --Vogel, "The New Political Science of Corporate Power" 17pp.</p>	
WEEK FIVE Are there global constraints on corporations?	
<p>Sept 26 How autonomous are firms from states? --Ruggie, "Multinationals as Global Institution: Power, Authority, and Relative Autonomy" 17pp. --Bauerle-Danzman, 2022. "CHIPS+ could change the U.S. semiconductor supply chain, and more. But do industrial incentives work?" 3pp. -- Bartilow "Corporate power, US drug enforcement and the repression of indigenous peoples in Latin America"</p> <p>Sept 28 How does interdependence create power—and for whom? --Farrell/Newman, "Chokepoints" 11pp.</p>	
WEEK SIX What are other forms of structural power?	

<p>Oct 3 Racing to the Bottom or Climbing to the Top How does competition among countries for corporate investment affect government policies? Does it give corporations power? --Mosley/ Uno, "Racing to the Bottom or Climbing to the Top?" 26pp</p> <p>Oct 5 Are there any global constraints on corporations? --Bartley, "Transnational Corporations and Global Governance" 24pp.</p>	
<p>WEEK SEVEN How does corporate concentration affect power?</p>	
<p>Oct 10 How does corporate concentration change competition? --Knight, "The Spectacular Power of Big Lens" 26pp --Interview with Michelle Meagher "Competition is Killing Us" Pitchfork Economics Dec 8, 2020 transcript is available</p> <p>Oct 12 Is there such a thing as a "too big" corporation? --Clapp, "Mega-Mergers on the Menu" 22pp. --Interview with Timothy Wu, "The Curse of Bigness" both transcript and audio --Land of the Giants Podcast, "The case for and against breaking up Google" April 1, 2021 transcript available</p>	
<p>WEEK EIGHT EXAM</p>	
<p>Oct 17 IN-CLASS EXAM</p> <p>Oct 19 NO CLASS!</p>	<p>EXAM</p>
<p>PART II: CAN WE HOLD CORPORATIONS ACCOUNTABLE?</p>	
<p>WEEK NINE What is the power of labor?</p>	
<p>Oct 24 What is the power of labor? --Williams, "Global Solidarity, Worker Empowerment, and the Transnational Labor Movement" --Johnston, "The US Labor Movement is Popular but Shrinking" --Scarabelli, "Chris Smalls and Steven Donziger aren't Afraid of Amazon" Interview</p> <p>Oct 26 What about sweatshops in global supply chains? --Bartley/ Child, "Shaming the Corporation: The Social Production of Targets and the Anti-Sweatshop Movement" Lütke/ Turuban, "The Complicated Path to Avoiding Cotton from Xinjiang" Video: True Cost</p>	

WEEK TEN Are businesses responsible for human rights?	
<p>Oct 31 What is the role of business in human rights protection? --Deva, "From 'business or human rights' to business and human rights" --Van Buren, et al, "Business and Human Trafficking"</p> <p>Nov 2 How are extractive companies dealing with human rights? --Olsen, et al, "Human Rights in the Oil and Gas Industry" --McAteer/ Pulver, "Shareholder Transnational Advocacy Networks Targeting Oil Companies in the Ecuadorian Amazon"</p>	
WEEK ELEVEN What about accountability for corporations on climate?	
<p>Nov 7 How did industry undermine climate action? --Hull, "Exxon Knew About Climate Change..." --Lamb et al, "Discourses of Climate Delay"</p> <p>Nov 9 What has been done to change the debate? --Fisher, "What will it Take to Get Successful Climate Action?" --Green, "Private Standards in the Climate Regime" --Interview with William Carroll, "Breaking through Big Oil's Regime of Obstruction"</p>	
WEEK TWELVE Can we talk about money?	
<p>Nov 14 How can we tax global corporations? --Saez/Zucman "How to Stop the Spiral" --Lassourd, "What does the Global Minimum Tax Deal Mean for Developing Countries?" --Eden, "Tax Cooperation Letter to the UN" ELMS>Files>Readings</p> <p>Nov 16 Are we teetering on the brink of a new financial crisis? --Liu, "The SVB Collapse Shows US Vulnerabilities Amid Great Power Competition" --Barron, "Effects of the Silicon Valley Bank Collapse"</p>	
WEEK THIRTEEN How has corporate power influenced public health?	
<p>Nov 21 How does Big Food affect public health? --Busscher et al, "Civil society challenges the global food system" --Gertner/ Rifkin "Coca-Cola and the fight against the global obesity epidemic" Thunderbird Case Study</p> <p>Nov 23 THANKSGIVING BREAK</p>	

WEEK FOURTEEN Are Big Corporations Compatible with Democracy?	
<p>Nov 28 What is the debate over Big Pharma? --Sell, "What COVID-19 Reveals about 21st century capitalism" Google Docs --Boland, "Why Big Pharma had a Responsibility to profit from the pandemic"</p> <p>Nov 30 Does Corporate Power Benefit Society? --Kaplan, et al, "Does Corporate Lobbying Benefit Society?" ELMS>Files>Readings --Davis, "Corporate Purpose Needs Democracy" Google Docs</p>	INDIVIDUAL PROJECT DUE
WEEK FIFTEEN What is the future of global corporate capitalism?	
<p>Dec 5 What are the arguments for an alternative to corporate capitalism? --Raworth, "Doughnut Economics" Interview with R. Henderson, "Reimagining Capitalism in a World on Fire"</p> <p>Dec 7 Revisiting Friedman</p>	
FINAL EXAM	