

GVPT409G-23 Seminar in International Relations and World Politics:
Corporations in the Global Political Economy



Syllabus v1.0
TTh 3:30-4:45pm Tydings 0102

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Have questions? Let's meet!

M2-4 in person or zoom

3117J Chincoteague or by
appointment

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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. They are key elements of our current political-economic system, often described as "corporate capitalism" in contrast to other forms of capitalism. Most people recognize their power and influence, yet this is not always a core feature of political science courses.

Can we hold global corporations accountable? This is the central question of this course. Do corporations have too much power in the global system? What motivates them? How do they shape different areas of policymaking? Are they the cause of global problems—or potential solutions? We explore questions in both scholarship and popular debates over the nature of capitalism today and the impact of corporate interests and norms in specific issue areas. The readings include different ideas, approaches, and empirical evidence. The aim is to help you develop a sophisticated understanding that goes beyond bumper sticker slogans maligning corporations or celebrating unfettered capitalism.

****READ THIS!****

UNIVERSITY COURSE POLICIES

These are part of the course but too much to put in the syllabus:

Attendance, Academic Integrity, etc.

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



Absences: *Do not come to class if you are sick.* Notify me about unscheduled absences right away—preferably prior to class. Provide documentation if you miss an exam or will be absent for more than one class.

Accommodations: *Please let me know by February 7* if you need accommodation of any sort—religious observances, military service, etc. The ADS will notify me if you registered with them. Please communicate!

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](#).

Your first stop should be me—I am happy to help in any way I can!

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

Subject matter librarians are eager to assist you in person or online at www.lib.umd.edu Click the Get Help tab and find the aid you need.

Everyone faces challenges at some point and could use 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>

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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:

- Report the experience to me
- Report the experience to the GVPT Director of Undergraduate Studies
- Report the experience to the GVPT Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee, led by Professor Antoine Banks at abanks12@umd.edu
- Report to the [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 an 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.

Disclosures made to faculty *are not confidential* and must be reported 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 and due dates, recordings of lectures, lecture slides, and other material. I communicate with you through the Inbox and Announcements. Much of the material is also available on this syllabus but any changes and updates appear first on ELMS-Canvas.

Readings: NEW! Required book: *Chokepoint Capitalism* by Rebecca Giblin/ Cory Doctorow. The rest of the readings are scholarly and journalistic articles, chapters, and reports available at ELMS-Canvas>Files or by URL. I apologize for any ads and extraneous material that come with these readings! If you have trouble accessing 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, wash your hands, and be careful.

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. Social annotation of selected readings (8@4=32 points)
2. Participation in class discussion (10)
3. Meme demonstration of concepts (8 points)
4. In-class exam (25)
5. Research project on the politics of a company or industry (21 total)
6. Before/ after knowledge survey (2@2 pts= 4)

PART ONE: GLOBAL CORPORATIONS AND POWER	
WEEK ONE Can we hold global corporations accountable?	DUE
<p>January 26 How can we hold corporations accountable? The disjuncture between global firms and sovereign states. How corporate choices shape our political environment.</p> <p>(Optional: Walzenbach, "Global Political Economy" in ELMS>Files)</p>	Review syllabus and ELMS-Canvas
WEEK TWO How did we get here?	
<p>January 31 What is a corporation? Micklethwaite and Wooldridge, <i>The Company: A Short History of a Revolutionary Idea</i> Introduction and Chapter 8</p> <p>February 2 What is the history of corporations and empire? Suwandi and Foster, "Multinational Corporations and the Globalization of Monopoly Capital"</p>	
WEEK THREE What is the purpose of a corporation?	
<p>February 7 Are corporations beholden only to owners? Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to increase its Profits" Henderson, "The Case against Corporate Social Responsibility" Misamore, "Apple & Google Approach...Principal-Agent Problem"</p> <p>February 9 What about stakeholders beyond the owners? Schwab, "What is Stakeholder Capitalism?" The Davos Manifesto Goodman, "Stakeholder Capitalism Gets a Report Card"</p>	Prior Knowledge Survey due Feb 7
WEEK FOUR What kinds of power do firms have?	

<p>Feb 14 What are sources 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</p> <p>Feb 16 How autonomous are firms from states? Ruggie, "Multinationals as Global Institution: Power, Authority, and Relative Autonomy," <i>Regulation and Governance</i> 2018 Bauerle-Danzman, 2022. "CHIPS+ could change the U.S. semiconductor supply chain, and more. But do industrial incentives work?" <i>The Monkey Cage</i> August 9, 2022</p>	
WEEK FIVE Are there global constraints on corporations?	
<p>Feb 21 How are MNCs governed globally? Bartley, "Transnational Corporations and Global Governance"</p> <p>Feb 23 What are examples of new forms of global governance? Kell, "12 Years Later: Reflections on the UN Global Compact" Galvão Ferreira, "The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative"</p>	Paper topic and sources due Feb 23
WEEK SIX How does interdependence create structural power?	
<p>Feb 28 How does interdependence create structural power for states? Farrell and Newman, "Chokepoints," <i>Harvard Business Review</i> Jan-Feb 2020</p> <p>March 2 How does interdependence create structural power for corporations? Giblin/ Doctorow, "Chokepoint Capitalism" Chs. 1-3</p>	
WEEK SEVEN How does corporate concentration affect power?	
<p>March 7 How does corporate concentration change competition? Knight, "The Spectacular Power of Big Lens," <i>The Guardian</i> May 10, 2018 Interview with Michelle Meagher "Competition is Killing Us" Pitchfork Economics Dec 8, 2020 transcript is available</p> <p>March 9 Is there such a thing as a "too big" corporation? Clapp, "Mega-Mergers on the Menu" 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>	First Meme is due March 7
WEEK EIGHT EXAM	

March 14 IN-CLASS EXAM	
March 16 NO CLASS!	
March SPRING BREAK March 19-26	
WEEK NINE What are countervailing forces to corporate power?	
<p>March 28 How does corporate lobbying influence foreign policy? Kim and Milner, "Multinational Corporations and their Influence through Lobbying on Foreign Policy"</p> <p>March 30 How do corporations shape public debate via discursive power? Oreskes/ Conway, "Merchants of Doubt" Mufson, "More than 450 Scientists call on PR and Ad Agencies..." <i>Washington Post</i></p>	
PART II: CAN WE HOLD CORPORATIONS ACCOUNTABLE?	
WEEK TEN What is the power of labor?	
<p>April 4 How does the anti-sweatshop movement work? Bartley/ Child, "Shaming the Corporation: The Social Production of Targets and the Anti-Sweatshop Movement," <i>American Sociological Review</i> 2014 Lütke/ Turuban, "The Complicated Path to Avoiding Cotton from Xinjiang"</p> <p>April 6 What are sources of power for workers? Williams, "Global Solidarity, Worker Empowerment, and the Transnational Labor Movement," <i>Labor Studies Journal</i> July 2020 Johnston, "The US Labor Movement is Popular but Shrinking" Scarabelli, "Chris Smalls and Steven Donziger aren't Afraid of Amazon" Interview</p>	
WEEK ELEVEN Are businesses responsible for human rights?	
<p>April 11 What is the role of business in protecting human rights? Deva, "From 'business or human rights' to business and human rights" <i>Research Handbook on Human Rights and Business</i> 2021</p> <p>April 13 How are extractive companies addressing human rights? Olsen, et al, "Human Rights in the Oil and Gas Industry" <i>Business and Society</i> 2021</p>	
WEEK TWELVE What accountability for corporations on climate?	

<p>April 18 How have companies prevented action on climate? Interview with William Carroll, "Breaking through Big Oil's Regime of Obstruction" Policy Alternatives Canada Supran/ Oreskes, "The Forgotten Oil Ads that Told Us Climate Change was Nothing"</p> <p>April 20 What is the power of climate activists? Fisher, "What will it Take to Get Successful Climate Action?" Green, "Private Standards in the Climate Regime"</p>	
WEEK THIRTEEN How has corporate power influenced public health?	
<p>April 25 How has the pandemic affected business power? Sell, "What COVID-19 Reveals about 21st century capitalism" <i>Development</i> Boland, "Why Big Pharma had a Responsibility to profit from the pandemic"</p> <p>April 27 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>Second Meme is due Apr 27</p>
WEEK FOURTEEN How can we hold Big Tech accountable?	
<p>May 2 How can we hold tech companies accountable? Giblin/ Doctorow, Chs. 13,14,17,18</p> <p>May 4 Can Big Tech Save Democracy? Farrell and Weyl, "Can Big Tech Serve Democracy?" <i>Boston Review</i> 2021 Madrigal, "The Coalition out to Kill Big Tech as we Know it," <i>The Atlantic</i> June 2019</p>	<p>Research paper/ video due May 3</p>
WEEK FIFTEEN What is the future of global corporate capitalism?	
<p>May 9 What are the arguments for an alternative to corporate capitalism? Milanovic, "Transcending Capitalism Three Different Ways," <i>Global Policy Opinion</i> 2020 Interview with R. Henderson, "Reimaging Capitalism in a World on Fire" Interview: Johan Norberg discusses capitalism, socialism, and stakeholder capitalism</p> <p>May 11 Where do we go from here?</p>	<p>Response to videos due May 9</p> <p>Survey due May 11</p>