Course Booklet SP226

**Comparative Themes in Society, Politics and Culture.**

## Semester 1 2017-2018

Dr Kathy Powell

Room 321

Aras Moyola

[Kathy.Powell@nuigalway.ie](mailto:Kathy.Powell@nuigalway.ie)

**Office hours**: **TBA**

**Lecture Venue: Tuesday 2-3 AM250 & Friday 12–1 IT125G**

**Course description**

This course involves the study of selected issues in social, political and cultural fields from a comparative perspective, using case study materials from various regions of the world, with an emphasis on Latin American populations. The contextual framework for the course is the global emergence of neoliberalism

as a dominant model over the last 30 years or so. We will consider issues relating to a couple of the major characteristics of this period: firstly, high and increasing levels of inequality, both within and between regions of the world, and secondly, the global spread ofdemocratization.

**Inequalities**

Inequalities are evident in a wide range of areas, from levels of income, standards of living, structures of opportunities, to political power, physical vulnerability, respect for political rights, and are experienced through relations of class, race, gender and ethnicity. While inequality is the unifying theme of the course, we will focus throughout on specific ways in which people respond to and confront the challenges which issue from increasing inequalities: these responses have notably included changes in household reproduction strategies, and increases in informality, migration, and criminality.

The course begins by outlining the contextual framework, and establishing a theoretical framework for analyzing the specific sets of case studies which focus on these responses: this includes the concept of social reproduction, a relational theory of class processes, and a consideration of the relationship between structure and agency, a central problematic of social and political studies.

The first of our case studies examines household and livelihood strategies for coping with social and economic change and crisis. We then consider increasing participation in the large and growing “informal” sector economies which characterise many countries, and labour migration, exploring the nature and significance of “informal” sector work and migratory processes, as well as the overlap between informality and migration. Finally in this section we consider the links between inequality, marginalization, and criminality.

**Democratization**

While a second notable feature of the neoliberal period has been the ‘global’ spread of democracy, this has done little to significantly improve either socio-economic or political inequality. In this light, we will consider political inequalities within and between regions of the world, concentrating on the nature and quality of democratic ‘transition’ processes in specific countries, and questioning the relation between these processes and the increasing social and political exclusion which fuels problems such as rising urban violence.

The course will use comparative and inter-disciplinaryframeworks to demonstrate the importance of examining global processes through the specific historical, socio-cultural and political *contexts* in which they unfold, in order to reach a fuller understanding of social realities, and of the similarities and differences between one context and another. This enables us to move beyond taken-for–granted assumptions that we may have, based on our own context and experience, about different social and political worlds.

**Course organization:**

**Teaching:**

Teaching is by two weekly lectures and two classes in the General Seminar course.Lecture notes will be available on Blackboard, as will any relevant announcements. The lecturer will be available during office hours to discuss questions / problems students may have.

**Course Assessment**

The course is assessed by examination and one essay (in General Seminar course). ***The examination will reflect the entire course and will be designed to assess student’s knowledge of the course as a whole.***

**Student responsibilities**

Students are expected to participate fully in the learning process.

This includes:

* attending all lectures and seminar classes in an engaged manner, and showing consideration for all other class members.
* keeping up with required reading, making full use of bibliographic resources.Those references provided in the Course Programme below which are marked with asterisks (\*\*) are key texts and essential reading.Additional readings are for essay / exam preparation and background reading. Copies of readings are available in the library: where possible articles will also be made available on Blackboard.
* handing essaysin on time (to General Seminar tutor), accompanied by an essay submission form.
* regularly checking communication channels (email, Blackboard notices)

***It is important to remember that taking the course involves attending lectures and reading / studying the course material. Students will be examined on their knowledge and understanding of the course material and their ability to answer questions framed during the course through a discussion of this material.***

**Course aims and objectives**

# The learning objectives of the course are to familiarize students with literature in the social and political sciences which engages a range of compelling issues in an increasingly “globalised” and increasingly unequal world, including household reproduction, informality, migration, crime, and democratization, and to consider varieties of experience in these areas; to introduce students to substantive material from several of the world’s regions; to equip students with a comparative perspective and conceptual tools for establishing historical, socio-cultural and politico-economic context as a grounding for analysis.

**Learning outcomes**

Having successfully completed the course, students should be able to:

(i) demonstrate an understanding of the issues addressed in the course through close analysis of published research.

(ii) explain the historical developmentof contemporary processes of informality, migration and democratization

(iii) relate theoretical ideas of class to the literature.

(iv) discuss some of the complexities of global processes as they differentially affect people in specific contexts

(v) access and critically evaluate information gathered from the literature.

(vi) use this information to construct concise and coherent answers to challenging questions.

**Course Programme**

***Note that the following sections do not necessarily correspond to one week.***

**1. Contextual framework and the concept of social reproduction.**

**Reading:**

SusanaNarotzky 1997 *New Directions in Economic Anthropology.*London, Chicago: Pluto Press. Chapter 4 “Social reproduction”.

Alejandro Portes and Kelly Hoffman 2003 “Latin American Class Structures: Their Composition and Change during the Neoliberal Era”, in *Latin American Research Review* Volume 38, No.1, pp. 41-82.

William I. Robinson 2004 ‘Global Crisis and Latin America’, in *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 23, No.2, pp. 135-153.

# David Harvey 2000 *Spaces of Hope.*Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Chapters 2 & 3.

# 2. Household reproduction, changing social economies and class processes.

**Reading:**

\*\*Margaret K Nelson and Joan Smith 1999 *Working Hard and Making Do: Surviving in Small TownAmerica.*Berkeley: University of California Press. **Chapters 2 & 3.**

\*\*Daniel Dohan 2003 *The Price of Poverty: Money, Work and Culture in the Mexican American Barrio.*Berkeley: University of California Press. Introduction and Part II.

Ellen Meiksins Wood 1995 *Democracy against Capitalism: renewing historical materialism.* Cambridge: CambridgeUniversity Press. Chapter 3, “Class as process and relationship”, pp 76-107.

Mercedes González de la Rocha 2006 ‘Vanishing Assets: Cumulative Disadvantages Among the Urban Poor’, in Patricia Fernández-Kelly and Jon Schefner, (eds), *Out of the Shadows: Political Action and the Informal Economy*in Latin America. Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 97-124.

# 3. The growth of “informal” social economies: marginal labour and migration, structure and agency.

**Reading:**

\*\*Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz 2010 “Willing to Work: Agency and Vulnerability in an Undocumented Immigrant Network”, in *American Anthropologist* Vol. 112, No. 2.

\*\*Nik Theodore 2007 “Closed Borders, Open Markets: Immigrant Day Laborer’s Struggle for Economic Rights”, in Helga Leitner, Jamie Peck and Eric S Sheppard (eds), *Contesting Neoliberalism: Urban Frontiers,* New York, London: The Guildford Press. Pp. 250-265.

\*\*Sassen, Saskia (1998) *Globalization and Its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money*: Chapter 8 “The Informal Economy: Between New developments and Old Regulations”, pp. 153­–172. New York: The New Press.

\*\* Breman, Jan 2009 “Myth of the Global Safety Net”, in *New Left Review* No.59, 29-36.

**\*\***PierretteHondagneu-Sotelo 2001 *Domestica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence.*Berkeley: University of California Press. **Chapters 1 & 2.**

**\*\***Daniel Rothenburg 2000 *With These Hands: The Hidden World of Migrant Farmworkers Today.*Berkeley: University of California Press. **Chapters 1 & 2.**

Miguel Angel Centeno and Alejandro Portes 2006 ‘The Informal Economy in the Shadow of the State’, in Patricia Fernández-Kelly and Jon Schefner, (eds), *Out of the Shadows: Political Action and the Informal Economy* in Latin America. Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 23-48.

J.J. Thomas 1995 *Surviving in the City: the urban informal sector in Latin America.*London: Pluto Press. Chapters 1 & 2.

# 4. Mexican and Central American – US migration: social networks across borders and deadly journeys.

**Reading:**

\*\*Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand and Nolan J. Malone 2003 *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

\*\*Nik Theodore 2007 “Closed Borders, Open Markets: Immigrant Day Laborer’s Struggle for Economic Rights”, in Helga Leitner, Jamie Peck and Eric S Sheppard (eds), *Contesting Neoliberalism: Urban Frontiers,* New York, London: The Guildford Press. Pp. 250-265.

Jeffrey Passel, D’Vera Cohn and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera 2012 ‘Net Migration from Mexico Falls to Zero – and Perhaps Less’. Report for the Pew Hispanic Centre ([www.pewhispanic.org](http://www.pewhispanic.org))

\*\*Cecilia Menjívar 2000 *Fragmented Ties. Salvadoran Immigrant Networks in America.*Berkeley: University of California Press. **Chapters 1, 4 & 5.**

\*\*Wendy A. Vogt 2013 ‘Crossing Mexico: structural violence and the commodification of undocumented Central American migrants’, in *American Ethnologist* Vol.40, No.4, pp 764-780.

Robin Reineke& Daniel E. Martínez 2014 ‘Migrant Deaths in the Americas (United States and Mexico)’, in Tara Brian & Frank Laczko (eds.) *Fatal Journeys: Tracking Lives Lost during Migration.* Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration (IOM). Chapter 2, pp. 45-84.

Douglas Massey, Rafael Alarcon, Jorge Durand and Humberto González 1987 *Return to Aztlán: The Social Process of International Migration in Western Mexico.*Berkeley: University of California Press. **Chapter 6.**

# 5. Criminality, social marginalization and poverty.

**Reading:**

\*\*Philippe Bourgois 1995 *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio.* Cambridge: CambridgeUniversity Press. Introduction and Chapter4.

\*\* Peter Kwong 2001 ‘Poverty despite Family Ties’, in Judith Goode and Jeff Maskovsky (eds) *The New Poverty Studies: The Ethnography of Power, Politics and Impoverished People in the United States,* New York and London: New York University Press, pp 57-78.

Orlando J Pérez 2013 ‘Gang Violence and Insecurity in Contemporary Central America’, in Eric A. Johnson, Ricardo D. Salvatore and Pieter Spierenburg (eds.), *Murder and Violence in Contemporary Latin America.* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, ILAS.

Daniel Dohan 2003 *The Price of Poverty: Money, Work and Culture in the Mexican American Barrio.*Berkeley: University of California Press. Introduction and Part III.

Daniel Rothenburg 2000 *With These Hands: The Hidden World of Migrant Farmworkers Today.*Berkeley: University of California Press. **Chapters 4 & 5.**

6. Democratization and inequality.

**Reading:**

\*\*JochenHippler (ed.) 1995 *The Democratisation of Disempowerment. The Problem of Democracy in the Third World.*London: Pluto Press with Transnational Institute. **Chapter 1, plus one of the other papers, e.g. chapter 2, 4 or 11.**

Guillermo O’Donnell 2007 *Dissonances: Democratic Critiques of Democracy.* Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. **Chapter 1.**

Greg Grandin 2006 *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism.* New York: Holt Paperbacks. **Introduction, chapters 1 and 5.**

Barry Gills, Joel Rocamora and Richard Wilson (eds.) 1993 *Low Intensity Democracy. Political Power in the New World Order.*London: Pluto Press. **Chapters 1 & 9.**

# 7. Democratic “transitions” and the legacy of military regimes.

**Reading:**

**\*\***Kees Koonings & Dirk Kruijt 1999 *Societies of Fear. The Legacy of Civil War, Violence and Terror in Latin America.* London: Zed Books. **Introduction, chapters 8 & 9 on Chile and Brazil.**

Patricio Silva 2004 “Doing Politics in a Depoliticised Society: Social Change and Political Deactivation in Chile”, in *Bulletin of Latin American Research,* Vol. 23, No.1, pp. 63-78.

Julia Paley 2001 *Marketing Democracy: Power and Social Movements in Post-Dictatorship Chile.* University of California Press.

Jasmine Gideon 2007 “Excluded from Health? Informal Worker’s Access to Health Care in Chile”, in *Bulletin of Latin American Research,* Vol. 26, No.2, pp. 238-255.

Manuel Riesco 2007 “Is Pinochet Dead?”, in *New Left Review,* Vol. 47, pp. 5-20.

**8. Problems with ‘democracy’: inequality, exclusion and urban violence**

**Reading:**

\*\*Elizabeth Leeds 2007 ‘Rio De Janeiro’, in KeesKoonings& Dirk Kruijt (eds)*Fractured Cities: Social Exclusion, Urban Violence & Contested Spaces in Latin America.*London, New York: Zed Books, pp 23-36,

\*\*Kees Koonings& Dirk Kruijt 2007 *Fractured Cities: Social Exclusion, Urban Violence & Contested Spaces in Latin America.*London, New York: Zed Books. Introduction and Chapter 1.

Fernando Lannes Fernandes 2013 “Youth Gang Members in Rio de Janeiro: The Face of a ‘Lost Generation’ in an Age of Fear and Mistrust”, in *Bulletin of Latin American Research,* Vol. 32, No.2, pp. 210-223.

Orlando J Pérez 2013 ‘Gang Violence and Insecurity in Contemporary Central America’, in Eric A. Johnson, Ricardo D. Salvatore and Pieter Spierenburg (eds.), *Murder and Violence in Contemporary Latin America.* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, ILAS.

Teresa P. R. Caldeira 2001 *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation and Citizenship in Sao Paulo.*Berkeley: University of California Press. **Chapter 5**

Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Daniel Hoffman 1998 “Brazilian Apartheid: Street Kids and the Struggle for Urban Space”, in Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Carolyn Sargent (eds.) *Small Wars: The Cultural Politics of Childhood*, pp. 352–388. Berkeley: University of California Press.

**9. Course review and exam revision.**