Globalization and International System

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Course Overview

The overall goal of this course is to provide students with a set of conceptual, theoretical, and empirical tools to better understand the phenomenon of globalization and its impact on contemporary international order and world politics.

The course is designed for undergraduate students who completed at least two years of university studies majoring in International Relations, Political Science, Sociology or Public Administration. This syllabus can also be incorporated as a unit into courses with broader subjects such as “World Politics” and “Contemporary International Relations”.

The course is divided into eight units. Each unit takes two weeks and consists of one lecture and one discussion session. The lecture provides students with basic facts, main theoretical and ideological approaches concerning the unit’s subject. The discussion session (or seminar) is a moderated discussion during which students are expected to speak and debate on the respective unit’s topics.

The specific objectives of the course are:
- to help students understand globalization as a complex, dynamic and multi-dimensional phenomenon;
- to identify the driving forces of globalization;
- to analyze how globalization affects the international system;
- to identify the benefits as well as negative effects of globalization;
- to analyze the impact of globalization on Russia and students’ home region (e.g. the Russian Far East);
- to analyze how globalization transforms our individual lives and what we can do to make the most of globalization while minimizing its negative effects.

Ideally, students should walk away from this course with an understanding that globalization concerns each of them and that it is up to them, as active and creative individuals, to benefit from globalization and even shape its future direction.

**Course requirements:**

To get credit for the course, students are required to attend lectures and be actively engaged in discussion sections (at least, six of the total eight). They also must do at least two assignments which are included in each unit. Assignments should be done in the written form and submitted to the instructor.

During the first class meeting, students will be asked to respond to a questionnaire on globalization (see Appendix). They can choose among the provided items or give their own answers. The survey will give students a general idea of what they should expect during the course and help stimulate their reflective thinking on the subject. During the final class, the students will be required to fill out the same questionnaire. This time they will not only have to simply choose the answers provided, but also explain their answers in writing. This will play a role of the final course exam. It would also be interesting to compare the results of the initial and final surveys.

Students taking this course must keep abreast of current developments in world politics that pertain to the subject matter of the course. They should read high-quality Russian or international newspapers and magazines available for free online such as *Kommersant, Vlast’, Expert, The Economist, The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Financial Times, The International*
Unit 1. The concept of globalization: various interpretations.

Topics for discussion
1. What are the basic approaches to defining globalization?
2. How does globalization manifest itself?
3. What are the principal driving factors of globalization?
4. Were there in the world’s history any periods similar to contemporary globalization?
5. What is the relationship between the concepts of globalization, modernization and westernization?
6. Is there any relationship between globalization and democratization?
7. What does “glocalization” mean?

Required readings:

Additional readings:

Assignment:
A) Formulate your own definition of globalization (using one sentence and no more than 45 words).
B) Draw up a glossary of globalization-related terms (like glocalization, deglobalization, antiglobalization and so on). Include in the glossary as many such terms as possible.

Unit 2. Nation-States and Non-State Actors in the Era of Globalization
Topics for discussion

1. In what way is globalization transforming the role of nation-states?
2. Can the nation-state still be considered the principal actor in the world politics?
3. How does globalization encourage emergence and growth of non-state actors in world politics? What are these new actors?
4. What is the concept of a global (world) city?

Required readings


Additional readings:

14.

**Assignment:**

A) Find the maximum possible number of reasons for the nation-state retaining its primary role in contemporary world politics and those for diminishing significance of nation-states. What is your conclusion on the overall balance?

B) Can you ever imagine Vladivostok (the biggest city in the Russian Far East) as a global city? Draw up your action plan aimed at transforming Vladivostok into a global city.¹

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**Unit 3. The dynamics of economic globalization**

**Topics for discussion**

1. What are the manifestations of economic globalization?
2. What is the role of global multilateral institutions (such as WTO, IMF, World Bank) in managing economic globalization?
3. What are the main approaches in the debate on global free trade?
4. How does globalization affect the problems of energy and food security?

**Required readings:**


**Additional readings:**


¹ Instead of Vladivostok, any other major Russian city can be chosen for this assignment, depending on students’ home region.
Assignment:
Find, read and analyze speeches on economic globalization by a) the US president or the US high-ranking official; b) the head of a global multilateral economic institution (such as IMF, World Bank or WTO); b) the leader of a developing country. Compare their speeches. Are there any similarities or differences? How can they be explained?

Unit 4. Globalization and Knowledge Society

Topics for discussion
1. What are the meanings of the concepts of postindustrial society, information society, knowledge society?
2. What are the benefits and disadvantages of knowledge societies?
3. What is the knowledge gap? Can it be overcome? How?

Required readings:
Additional readings:


Assignment

What is your idea of a postindustrial society? Can you see any elements of such a kind of a society immediately around you? How do you assess your own prospects for success in a globalized postindustrial, or knowledge, society? How are you preparing to be competitive in a knowledge society? Write a brief essay answering these questions.

Unit 5. Globalization and Hegemony

Topics for discussion

1. Can globalization be directed, managed and controlled?
2. What is the role of the West and the United States in shaping globalization?
3. Can America be viewed as the world’s dominant empire and the principal beneficiary of globalization? Why?
4. Does globalization amount to Americanization?

Required readings:

Additional readings:

Assignment
What are the benefits and burdens for America of its global leadership? Is the world ultimately better off with the United States as the most influential power? Write a brief essay.


Topics and issues for discussion
1. Do you agree that globalization leads to more inequality? Why?
2. Does globalization engender new risks and dangers? In what ways?
3. What is the relationship between globalization and terrorism?
4. Is there any possibility that globalization might come to an abrupt or even disastrous end?
5. What are the forms of resistance to globalization?
6. Could you join the anti-globalization movement? Why?

Required readings:

Additional readings:

Assignment:
Present a case-study of a particular situation or a problem illustrating negative sides of globalization.

Unit 7. Globalization and East Asia

Topics and issues for discussion
1. What is the relationship between globalization and regionalism?
2. What kind of impact does globalization have on the countries in East Asia?
3. What is the mutual relationship between globalization and East Asian regionalism? Are they conflicting or reinforcing each other?
4. Which countries in East Asia have achieved the biggest success in terms of globalization? Which countries have been unsuccessful? Why?
5. What lessons, if any, can Russia draw from East Asia’s experience with globalization?

Required readings:


Additional readings:


**Assignment:**
Present a brief case-study of an East Asian country engaged in globalization. How is it involved in globalization? Overall, does this country benefit or lose as a result of globalization? Why?

**Unit 8. Globalization and Russia**

**Topics and issues for discussion**

1. Is it possible to say that Russia is “globalizing”? Why?
2. What are the positive and negative effects of globalization for Russia?
3. Is Russia as a nation-state getting stronger or weaker as a result of globalization?
4. What policies should Russia pursue to make the most of globalization?
5. Which social strata and regions in Russia benefit from globalization most? Why?
6. In terms of globalization, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the Russian Far East?²

**Required readings:**


**Additional readings:**


² Instead of the Far East, any region of Russia can be used as a reference point, depending on where and to whom the course is taught.
Assignment:

Analyze several policy speeches or articles by Russian state leaders or high ranking officials (over the period of the past two years) in which they refer to globalization. What are their views of globalization? How can they be explained?

Appendix to the Course

“Globalization and the International System”

Questionnaire for students taking the course

Students will be asked to respond to a questionnaire on globalization during the first class meeting. They can choose among the provided items or give their own answers. The survey will give students a general idea of what they should expect during the course and help stimulate their reflective thinking on the subject. During the final class, the students will be required to fill out the same questionnaire. This time they will not only have to simply choose the answers provided, but also explain their answers in writing. This will play a role of the final course exam. It would also be interesting to compare the results of the initial and final surveys.

1. Do you know what globalization is?
   A) Yes, I know very well.
   B) I have some vague knowledge.
   C) I have no idea.

2. Which of the following definitions of globalization are the most relevant? (you can choose from one to three answers):
   A) Globalization is the growth of interdependence between the world’s peoples and states.
   B) Globalization is the emergence of a single global space.
   C) Globalization is the emergence of a global economic and financial system.
   D) Globalization is the result of rapid development of new technologies (computers, internet and so forth).
   E) Globalization is the spread of unified political, economic and cultural standards worldwide.
   F) Globalization is the global spread of western values.
   G) Globalization is the erosion of state boundaries and barriers, leading to freer flows of people, goods, capital and information.
   H) Globalization is the spread of democracy worldwide.
   I) Other (propose your own definition) ________________________.
   (Explain your answer(s)).

3. Which of the following items is the most relevant manifestation of globalization? (choose one answer)
   A) PC with the internet access
B) Cell phone
C) Plastic credit card
D) Supermarket
E) Airline flight Vladivostok – Bangkok
F) Shopping trip to Suifenhe (a Chinese city just across the border, a popular destination for tourists from the Russian Far East).
G) Other (suggest your own answer) ___________________________.
(Explain your answer).

4. Who of the following persons are the most relevant symbols of globalization? (choose two answers):
   A) Osama bin Laden
   B) Vladimir Putin
   C) Bill Gates
   D) George W. Bush
   E) The Pope (of Roman-Catholic Church).
   F) Britney Spears
   G) Other (suggest your own answer) ___________________________.
(Explain your answers).

5. Which of the following countries benefit the most from globalization? (choose two answers):
   A) Zimbabwe
   B) Great Britain
   C) China
   D) Mongolia
   E) The United States
   F) Iran
   G) Brazil
   H) Japan
(Explain your answers).

6. How does globalization affect Russia? (choose one answer):
   A) Globalization is good for Russia and brings it considerable benefits.
   B) In general, globalization is positive for Russia, but it has certain negative consequences.
   C) Overall, globalization is detrimental to Russia, though it still has some positive effects.
   D) Globalization is outright bad for Russia.
(Explain your answer).

7) Do you personally benefit from globalization? (choose one answer):
   A) Globalization benefits me a lot.
   B) In general, globalization is good for me, but, in certain regards, it makes me worse off.
   C) In general, globalization makes me worse off, although it still has some benefits for me.
   D) Globalization is outright bad for me.
(Explain your answer).
8) Can globalization be managed? Or is it not subject to any control and regulation?  
(choose one answer):  
A) Globalization is a consciously designed and managed process.  
B) Globalization can be regulated, although this is not easy.  
C) Globalization is, by its very nature, not subject to any control and regulation.  
(Explain your answer).

9) If globalization is managed and regulated to any extent, who controls its leverage?  
(choose one answer):  
A) All the world’s states collectively.  
B) The biggest and most powerful states.  
C) The Western states.  
D) The United States.  
E) Transnational corporations and banks.  
F) Global financial and economic institutions (WTO, IMF, World Bank).  
G) Other (propose your own answer) __________________________ .  
(Explain your answer).