SOC 1871R (CRN25245)

Knowledge Networks and Global Transformations Spring 2014

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Thursdays, 4:00-6:20

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How do refined knowledge and the social relations that organize and distribute it influence changes in the institutions, inequalities and cultural systems and practices that define particular world regions and global formations?  And how do global transformations influence the trajectories of knowledge production themselves?

The Arab Uprisings have not only challenged political power, but influenced how democracy is conceived, geopolitical power is exercised, and intellectual recognition is distributed in ways far different than the 1989 end of communist rule in Europe. Occupy Wall Street has put inequality on the public knowledge agenda, and not only the sociological one. The mobilization around ACTA and its successors has raised in public awareness the significance of intellectual property’s regulation. Pussy Riot invokes Dostoyevsky to extend freedom in their challenge to Russian state and religious authorities. At the same time, each of these movements not only mobilized resources in moments of political opportunity with the right cultural frames, but significant knowledge work was undertaken in anticipation of those movements and transformations. Sometimes you can trace that directly, as in the intellectual articulation of the 1% vs. 99%, while in others, the knowledge transformations are more removed, as in the relationship between distributed knowledge production and anti-ACTA mobilization. And this is just a start.

We will examine particular knowledge-identified agents, including intellectuals, universities, and knowledge networks, to consider why they approach global transformations in the ways that they do. And we will consider how particular kinds of global transformations, from social movements to the transformation of information/communication technology, affect knowledge production itself.  By exploring intersections between global complexity and reflexivity in this fashion, we hope to increase our own capacities for seeing the world not only as it is, but to understand how knowledge might be used in making better alternatives for the future.

This last sentence might be understood as the principal goal for this course, but I hope you take it as a lifelong ambition as well. This course will extend your preparation for that long term by helping you understand some of the principal variations in the organization of knowledge production and how they relate to various kinds of global transformations both historical and emergent.

Such an account of course goals helps us think about course objectives too. By semester’s end, you will be able to communicate authoritatively on a particular knowledge/transformation nexus, and be able to situate that connection in a larger array of informed comparisons and generalized knowledge. Simply put, I want you a) to learn more about a nexus that inspires you (for example, how sociology responds to the occupy movement’s challenge or how foundations partner with knowledge networks to promote development); b) to be able then to explain how that relationship is similar to others (how anthropology responds to that occupy movement or how foundations partner to promote democracy), and c) to recognize how these cases contribute to our more general understanding of the mutual influence between knowledge production and global transformations. And finally, you will be able to claim a distinctive first read of my forthcoming volume.

When I taught this course in 2011 and 2012, I used the seminar as a way to flesh out how to organize a book whose data I had been collecting for more than ten years. Over the course of the past couple years, I have written “Articulations of Globalizing Knowledge: Cosmopolitan Intellectuality and Consequential Solidarity” to be published by Stanford University Press. I will invite you to read it, chapter by chapter, alongside other readings. Each of those chapters, assigned in the readings below, represent my own synthesis of fairly substantial fields, but I want you to go beyond my own conclusions. Indeed, that is part of your assignment.

**Format and Requirements**

1) From the second week through the tenth, all students are expected to do the required reading, and two students, in each seminar, are each expected to draft discussant commentary 24 hours in advance of the seminar, to be shared with me. I expect you will each do this twice. Each of these 1000 word briefs is worth 10% of the final grade.

2) Each seminar will begin with my brief summary of the issues involved, followed by each discussant’s contribution based on their own preparation and my commentary (on those days we have guests, the seminar will begin with guest commentary). These contributions, as well as broader class participation, are worth another 20% of the final grade.

3) To provide one more datum on your engagement with the readings and class, I may on any given class day ask you to write your answer to a question, in class, about the readings for that day. Your overall performance in those impomptu invitations to share your learning will contribute to that 20% of your grade.

4) Each student is expected to write a fully referenced 5000-7000 word analysis of some intellectual or knowledge institution/network and their articulation with global transformations, reflecting one of the themes identified in the weekly foci below. A proposal of 500 words, identifying the problem and the data, is expected to be submitted electronically before the fourth class meeting. That proposal is worth 10% of the grade.

5) One day before the 12th class, each student will identify their key problem and key findings in 1000 words and distribute those findings electronically to the class, so that all papers might be discussed together in the 11th and 12th classes. That summary is worth 10% of your final grade.

6) During those classes, in a kind of intellectual round robin, Student A will be asked to summarize Student B’s proposal, and say 2 things good, and 1 thing challenging, about it, to be followed by 10 minutes of other students’ reactions. The author’s response will be found in the paper’s final version.

7) The final paper, due on May 8 at 5:00 pm is worth 30 % of the final grade. Late Policy: no excuses. For each 6 hours the paper is late, your grade for that paper is reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade. You can, however, submit the paper early.

8) An Intellectual Exercise: Choose one intellectual engagement at Brown over the course of the term and explain in 500 words how it reflects, challenges, or augments the issues we discuss in this class. I mention some of those events in this syllabus, and will mention others throughout the term. You are also free to pose them to me and others in the class. The quality of this exercise, to be submitted within 48 hours of the event’s conclusion, is worth 10% of your grade.

**Provisional Schedule**

**January 23:** Week 1: *Introduction: Knowledge Networks and Global Transformations*

We’ll begin with an open discussion of the meanings of knowledge, the variety of transformations, and how they are, and might be better, connected.

**January 30**: Week 2: *The Sociology of Knowledge*

Moving from the classic conceptions of ideas derived from interests and ideological conditions, we consider how fields, practices, and institutions, as well as the larger global transformations in which they are embedded, shape the production, distribution and validation of different kinds of understandings.

Readings:

1. Chapter 1, “Knowledge: Articulation and Consequence in Global Transformations”
2. Barış Büyükokutan, “Toward a Theory of Cultural Appropriation: Buddhism, the Vietnam War, and the Field of U.S. Poetry” American Sociological Review August 2011 vol. 76 no. 4 620-639

**February 6**: Week 3: *The Sociology of Transformations*

From epochal change to shifts in public policy motivated by collective action, transformations have many different kinds of theories, but their variety might be understood better by considering the cultural schema and forms of knowledgeability articulating them.

Readings:

1. William Sewell, Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

2.Michael D. Kennedy (2011) “Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street and Historical Frames: 2011, 1989, 1968” Jadaliyya <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2853/arab-spring-occupy-wall-street-and-historical-fram>

**February 13**: Week 4: *The Sociology of Intellectuals*

The challenge of demarcation and generalizing substance lead many to abandon the term, but I find it critical to retain for the normative implications of identifying someone an “intellectual”. Nevertheless, recognizing the stakes of the fields in which intellectuals practice enhances the sociological realism with which that intellectual responsibility can be recognized and enhanced.

Readings:

1. Chapter 2, “Responsibility: Intellectuals in Worldly Theory and Practice”

2. (2010) Gil Eyal and Larissa Bucholz, “From the Sociology of Intellectuals to the Sociology of Interventions” Annual Review of Sociology 36:117-37

**February 20 Proposal for paper due**

**February 20: Week 5:** *The Sociology of Universities*

Although there are other kinds of knowledge institutions, universities claim distinction in ways that extend the values associated with intellectuals. However, as organizations with other kinds of logics and imperatives, the tensions between advancing knowledge and institutional success are sometimes hard to articulate, much less put into practice.

Readings:

1. Michael Burawoy, “The Public University – A Battleground for Real Utopias” <http://www.realutopias.com/proposal-sessions/proposal-sessions-l-z/real-utopia-proposal-session-the-public-university-as-a-real-utopia/> (if you wish to hear the discussion’s recording of his proposal at the American Sociological Association meetings, I can share it with you)

2. Wendy Brown, “Save the University: A Teach-In on the UC Crisis” September 23, 2009. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aR4xYBGdQgw>

3) Scott E. Page, “Counterfactual Campus: Scott Page, 2112 and the Resilient Idea” accessed December 23, 2012 <http://vimeo.com/55045254>

4) Jeffrey J. Williams, “Deconstructing Academe: The Birth of Critical University Studies” Chronicle of Higher Education February 19, 2012 <http://chronicle.com/article/An-Emerging-Field-Deconstructs/130791/>

5). Chapter 3: “Legitimations: Knowledge Institutions and Universities of the World”

**February 25:** Hiro Saito, “Experts and Citizens: Rethinking Democracy in Post-Fukushima Japan” Brown University Sociology Department Colloquium, 12:00 pm optional intellectual exercise.

**February 27: Week 7**: Publics

The revolution in information and communication technologies has made communicatively constituted “publics” a new kind of actor in social and global transformations. No longer a passive recipient of authorities’ proclamations, publics have become more capacious in affecting change, just as intellectuals, and sociologists in particular, have become differently critical in their engagement and elaboration of publics. Knowledge institutions have not yet considered the full implications of this public empowerment, however.

Readings:

1) (2007) Michael Burawoy, “For Public Sociology.” American Sociological Review 70(1): 4-28 and his website: <http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/PS.Webpage/ps.mainpage.htm>

2) (2012) Craig Calhoun, “Libyan Money, Academic Missions and Public Social Science” Public Culture 24:1: 9-45

3) Todd Gitlin, Occupy Nation: The Roots, the Spirit, and the Promise of Occupy Wall Street. New York: IT Books, 2012.

4. Chapter 4: “Engagements: Knowledgeable Publics”

March 4, Hiro Saito at Brown.

**March 6**: Week 8: Global Contexts

Knowledge is stratified not only within societies, but across global contexts. Knowledge institutions are ranked on global scales, and the quality of knowledge productions is valued in shaping that hierarchy. However, the qualities of social transformation and accompanying knowledgeabilities within different contexts are differently recognized, and implicated, in the accumulation of globalizing knowledge. While sociological factors shape that inequality, particular kinds of interventions can reshape that distribution of knowledge.

Readings:

1) Raewyn Connell Southern Theory Cambridge: Polity, 2007.

2) Ashraf Ghani 2011 ““Sovereignty in Afghanistan” Lecture at Brown University, May 5, 2011 <http://www.engagingafghanistan.org/videos-and-essays/democratic-possibilities>

3) Chapter 5: “Difference: Recognizing Global Contexts”

**March 13: Week 9: Global Flows**

The movement of knowledge, people, wealth and weapons across the world is not new, but its speed is. The organization of scholarship around any of these flows is not new, but the importance of figuring their connections to one another has grown. The articulation of global flows knows no comprehensive approach, but it is increasingly critical in figuring global alternative futures, especially around energy.

Readings:

1. Timothy Mitchell Carbon Democracy London: Verso 2011.
2. Chapter 6, “Connectivity: Understanding Global Flows”

**March 20** Week 10: *Knowledge Networks, Emergent Knowledge and New Media*

The qualities of knowledge to develop in the wake of the ICT revolution are dramatic, and have yet to be fully recognized by knowledge institutions, or even in our conception of intellectuals themselves. We are beginning to appreciate the independent and interactive effects of virtual knowledge sharing on global transformations as well, but those full communication powers are still to be realized, and understood in association with different kinds of global flows, and especially, of knowledge networks. Knowledge is not only embodied in intellectuals and organized in institutions, but it flows across networks that are purposively driven. Whether in international development, the World Economic Forum, or Open Society Foundation, networks are both more agile than universities and more consequential than intellectuals and their ideas. But how these networks reflect and shape change requires more theory, research and practice.

Readings:

1. (2011) Douglas Thomas and John Seely Brown, A New Culture of Learning: Cultivating the Imagination for a World in Constant Change. Createspace Publisher.
2. Bassam Haddad. “Jadaliyya: A New Form of Producing and Presenting Knowledge in/of the Middle East (Interview with Bassam Haddad by Julia Elyachar)” (this interview appeared in a series of articles in the journal *Cultural Anthropology*) February 8, 2012 <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/4278/jadaliyya_a-new-form-of-producing-and-presenting-k>
3. Ernst Stetter, Karl Duffek, and Ania Skrzypek (eds.) Next Left: Building New Communities FEPS Belgium. <http://www.feps-europe.eu/en/publications-next-left>)
4. Chapter 7 “Design: Knowledge Networks in Transformation

**April 3:** Week 11

*Intellectuality, Crisis and Transformation*

We are living through a global crisis. We are witnessing an explosion of new forms of political expression. We seek to make sense of the systemic contradictions animating these problems even as we look for new ways to transform the power relations and cultural systems that produce them. Where might we look for inspiration? What might we do to refashion our knowledge institutions and networks to address the present to make a better alternative future?

Readings:

1. Albin Kurti “International Protectorate” <http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/TedxVienna-Albin-Kurti-Internat> TedX Vienna. November 9, 2011. Accessed January 12, 2014
2. Chapter 8: “Cosmopolitan Intellectuality and Consequential Solidarity”

**April 10**: Week 12 Students’ Principal Findings from their Research

**April 17:** Week 13 Students’ Principal Findings from their Research

**April 24:** Week 14 Ricardo Lagos and the Transformational Intellectual

An exemplar of intellectual and institutional responsibility, Ricardo Lagos not only marshaled his expertise in economics and political acumen in helping to unseat, non-violently, Chilean dictator Pinochet. Lagos’s presidency also carried forward the same innovation and agility in transforming Chile’s place in the world. Relying on his published autobiography, but also engaging him in how he crafts his own role on the world stage, we shall conclude the substance of the course by asking him to work with us in figuring the relationship between knowledge and global transformations, and especially in extending cosmopolitanism’s disposition to realize consequential solidarity.

Readings:

1. Ricardo Lagos. The Southern Tiger: Chile’s Fight for a Democratic and Prosperous Future. Palgrave MacMillan 2012.

**May 1:** Week 15 Final Synthesis