

SOCI 355 ¹

The Corporation, Capitalism, and Globalization

Instructor: Jason Miller, jamiller@uvic.ca

Course Description:

As the dominant economic system organizing labour, production, and the distribution of wealth, capitalism exerts a ubiquitous influence over our lives and world. Its logics and patterns shape everything from the nature of our social relationships and interactions to the lives of other species and literal ground we walk on. Today, in an era of increasing globalization when transnational corporations wield unprecedented power—often dwarfing that of nation-states—and intersecting environmental, financial, political, and cultural crises appear to threaten civilizational breakdown, questions about capitalism’s viability and that of alternatives are once again coming to the fore. This online course offers a critical sociological approach to these and other important questions about the corporate-capitalist imperatives, values, and processes that permeate our daily experiences—often in destructive and oppressive ways. Through engagement with a variety of multimedia resources and an emphasis on critical discussion, the course aims to give students conceptual tools for better understanding and acting on the social systems they are part of.

Mode of Delivery:

This is a fully online course. Class time is split into two, roughly equal, synchronous and asynchronous components. For the synchronous component, one “live” meeting will take place each Thursday, from 2:00 – 3:15 pm Pacific Time. The asynchronous part involves self-directed activities assigned each week, such as watching videos and engaging in reflective writing. Because half of the official class time happens outside the digital classroom, students should expect to spend more time on self-directed activities each week than in a regular, fully synchronous class. Consistent, effortful participation is therefore required for success.

Course Objectives:

¹ This outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. A detailed course outline will be made available in August before the first day of class. Only that outline is to be considered official.

Students will gain a good rudimentary understanding of capitalism's inner-workings, the roles they play in its ongoing function, the ways that it shapes their lives and the world around them, and some social movements and practices that challenge its primacy. Assignments and activities will support the development of oral and written communication skills.

Course Pre-requisites:

None beyond other 300-level Sociology courses

Topics May Include:

Corporate-capitalism and the climate crisis; global capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism; race, gender, and sexuality under capitalism; economic, political, and cultural modalities of corporate power; capitalist ideology and hegemony; capitalism and popular culture; the development of Canadian capitalism; capitalism, technology, and media

Required Resources May Include:

Carroll, W.K. and J.P. Sapinski (2018) *Organizing the 1%: How Corporate Power Works*. Halifax: Fernwood.

Brand, Ulrich and Markus Wissen (2021) *The Imperial Mode of Living: Everyday Life and the Ecological Crisis of Capitalism*. London: Verso