

SOSC 2299 – The Rise and Fall of Globalization

Prof. Wenjuan Zheng

Spring Semester, 2026

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Office: Academic Building 2346

Office Hours: Wednesday 3:30-4:50PM

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Course Website: Canvas (canvas.ust.hk)

Class Time & Venue: Monday & Wednesday, 12:00–13:20, Room 5583

Course Description

This course examines the rise and fall of globalization as a dynamic and historically contingent process rather than a linear or inevitable trajectory. Students explore how globalization expanded rapidly in the late twentieth century through the neoliberal turn, market integration, and technological innovation, and why this phase of hyper-globalization has since faced mounting challenges, disruptions, and political backlash. Rather than treating “fall” as a simple reversal, the course emphasizes globalization’s cycles of acceleration, tension, suspension, and reconfiguration.

Beginning with competing definitions and theories of globalization, the course traces how global economic and political structures were built and how they generated uneven benefits and risks. It then examines technology and platform capitalism as forces that both intensify global connectivity and expose new forms of inequality and governance dilemmas. Through empirical cases—including migration, Global China, China–Africa relations, and the global pandemic—students analyze how global transformations are experienced and negotiated in local contexts. Throughout the course, students learn to link global structures with everyday life, developing analytical tools to understand globalization’s rise, its apparent fall, and its possible futures.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Use key concepts and theoretical frameworks to enhance understanding of globalization;
2. Apply critical thinking and analytical writing skills to examine global affairs;
3. Assess the validity of existing arguments based on empirical evidence;

4. Develop a logical argument or theory that can be evaluated using evidence.

Intended Learning Activities

- Lectures
 - Classroom discussions and group activities
 - Close reading of academic and policy texts
 - Research tasks
 - Analytical writing
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Required Textbook

Ritzer, George, and Paul Dean. *Globalization: The Essentials* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

(An electronic copy is reserved at the HKUST Library for limited-time access.)

Recommended reading:

Mathews, Gordon. *Ghetto at the Center of the World: Chungking Mansions, Hong Kong*. University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Assessment and Grading

Assessment Task	Details	Weight (%)	Deadline
Participation & News Engagement	(a) submission of a one-sentence response identifying a recent globalization-related news event (with link to the news) and explaining why it matters. We will randomly ask students to share the news (10%) (b) thoughtful contributions to class discussions (5%) (c) participation in randomly scheduled in-class polls or quizzes (10%)	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weekly (ongoing)• Weekly news touchpoints due weekly by 8 P.M. Sunday
Chung King Mansion Experiential Module	(a) Guest Lecture Reflection Memo (10%): 500–800 words reflecting on an NGO leader’s talk on immigrant experiences in Hong Kong, connecting insights to course concepts (b) Group Site Visit & Analytical Brief (15%): In groups of 4–5, conduct a visit to Chung King Mansion (or approved alternative site) and submit a 2,000–2,500 word analytical brief linking observations to “low-end globalization”	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflection memo: within one week after guest lecture• Group analytical brief: TBA (mid–late semester)
Midterm Exam (Multiple Choice)	Covers lectures and required readings from the first half of the course. Focuses on key concepts, definitions, and major theoretical distinctions.	20%	March 25

Assessment Task	Details	Weight (%)	Deadline
Final Exam (Non-cumulative)	Covers materials from the second half of the course only. Emphasizes application of concepts to cases, analytical reasoning, and synthesis.	30%	Exam period (TBA)
Total		100%	

Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Assessment Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
Participation & News Engagement (weekly news touchpoints, class discussion, polls/quizzes)	ILO 1, ILO 3	This assessment evaluates students' ability to recognize and interpret globalization-related events using key concepts and frameworks introduced in the course (ILO 1), and to make informed judgments about real-world claims based on empirical information (ILO 3).
Chung King Mansion Guest Lecture Reflection Memo	ILO 1, ILO 2, ILO 3	This task assesses students' ability to apply course concepts to empirical experiences (ILO 1), communicate analytical insights in written form (ILO 2), and evaluate arguments and claims using evidence discussed in class and the guest lecture (ILO 3).
Chung King Mansion Group Site Visit & Analytical Brief	ILO 2, ILO 3, ILO 4	This assessment evaluates students' analytical writing skills (ILO 2), their ability to assess empirical evidence derived from field observations (ILO 3), and their capacity to develop a coherent explanatory argument or interpretation that can be evaluated using evidence (ILO 4).
Midterm Exam (Multiple Choice)	ILO 1, ILO 3	The midterm exam assesses students' understanding of key concepts and theoretical frameworks related to globalization (ILO 1) and their ability to distinguish and evaluate arguments presented in lectures and readings (ILO 3).
Final Exam (Non-cumulative)	ILO 1, ILO 2, ILO 3, ILO 4	The final exam evaluates students' ability to apply theoretical frameworks to empirical cases (ILO 1), demonstrate critical and analytical reasoning in written responses (ILO 2), assess arguments using evidence (ILO 3), and construct logical explanations or arguments based on course materials (ILO 4).

Final Grade Descriptors

Grade	Description	Performance Criteria
A	Excellent	Demonstrates outstanding conceptual mastery, analytical depth, and clarity
B	Good	Shows solid understanding and coherent analysis with minor weaknesses

Grade	Description	Performance Criteria
C	Satisfactory	Meets basic requirements with adequate comprehension
D	Marginal Pass	Limited understanding and weak analytical engagement
F	Fail	Does not meet minimum course requirements

Grading Scale

A+	100% to 95%
A	<95% to 90%
A-	<90% to 87%
B+	<87% to 83%
B	<83% to 80%
B-	<80% to 77%
C+	<77% to 73%
C	<73% to 70%
C-	<70% to 67%
D	<67% to 60%

1. Participation (25%)

Participation is assessed based on **consistent preparation and engagement**, rather than frequency of speaking. It includes:

- Weekly Discussion Questions (10%)
submission of a one-sentence response identifying a recent globalization-related news event (with link to the news) and explaining why it matters or via Canvas by **8:00 PM every Sunday**. (Alternatively, submission of one or two discussion questions related to the assigned readings.)
- In-class Discussion Contribution (5%)
Thoughtful contributions that demonstrate engagement with course concepts and peers' ideas.
- In-class Polls or Quizzes (10%)
Participation in ten randomly scheduled polls or quizzes designed to check understanding of lectures and readings.

2. Chung King Mansion Experiential Module: Low-end Globalization (25%)

This module examines **Chung King Mansion as a site of “low-end globalization”**, where global flows of labor, goods, and culture intersect with migration, informality, and inequality in Hong Kong.

(a) Guest Lecture Reflection Memo (10%)

Guest Lecture Theme: *Migration, Marginality, and Low-End Globalization: A Journey into Chung King Mansion*

Description:

This guest lecture features **Jeffrey Andrews**, one of the first non-Chinese social workers in Hong Kong and a long-time advocate for refugees, asylum seekers, and marginalized migrant communities. Drawing on decades of frontline social work experience, Andrews will share his personal and professional journey working with marginalized populations in Hong Kong, with a particular focus on Chung King Mansion as a key site of migration, informality, and low-end globalization.

Following a guest lecture by an NGO leader on immigrant experiences in Hong Kong, students will submit a **short reflective memo** (800–1,000 words).

The memo should:

- summarize key insights from the lecture,
- connect the speaker’s experiences to course concepts (e.g. globalization, migration, inequality),
- reflect on how the lecture reshaped the student’s understanding of globalization in Hong Kong.

This assignment emphasizes **analytical reflection**, not personal opinion alone.

(b) Group Site Visit & Analytical Brief (15%)

In self-organized groups of **four to five**, students will conduct a visit to **Chung King Mansion** (or an approved alternative site related to migration or informal globalization) and provide picture proof.

Each group will submit a **short analytical brief** (2,000–2,500 words total) that:

- describes key observations (economic activities, social interactions, spatial organization),
- analyzes how the site illustrates “low-end globalization,”
- links observations to relevant course theories and readings.

Students should follow ethical guidelines during the visit. Ask permission before taking photos or recordings of identifiable individuals.

✦ *Students who are uncomfortable visiting Chung King Mansion for personal, ethical, or accessibility reasons may request an alternative site with instructor approval.*

3. Midterm Exam (20%)

The midterm exam consists of **multiple-choice questions** covering lectures and required readings from the **first half of the course**. The exam focuses on:

- key concepts and definitions,
 - major theoretical distinctions,
 - comprehension of core arguments.
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4. Final Exam (30%) — *Non-cumulative*

The final exam covers **materials from the second half of the course only**. The format includes both multiple-choice questions and short answer questions. It emphasizes:

- application of concepts to empirical cases,
- analytical and comparative reasoning,
- synthesis of course themes.

Further guidelines for exams will be disseminated in due course.

In this course, no make-up exam will be granted. Only exceptions: officially documented surgical procedure, emergency room visit (in this case, a doctor's note stating you are ill do not suffice). All made-ups consist of **long answers** and **an oral defense** with professor and teaching assistants.

Student Rubrics (Summary)

Major written and research tasks are evaluated based on: - Conceptual understanding - Analytical reasoning and use of evidence - Organization and clarity - Research execution (where applicable) - Academic integrity and citation practices

Detailed rubrics will be provided on Canvas.

Communication and Feedback

Course announcements and materials will be posted on Canvas. Students should email the instructor regarding course content and grading issues, and contact TAs for technical or administrative questions. Emails will normally be answered within 48 hours on weekdays.

Course AI Policy

Students may use AI tools for brainstorming, transcription, or language polishing where explicitly permitted. Any use of AI tools must be transparently acknowledged. Unauthorized use of AI for assessments constitutes academic misconduct.

Academic Integrity

Cheating and plagiarism are strictly prohibited and subject to university disciplinary procedures. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with HKUST's academic integrity regulations.

INTRODUCTIONS

Module 1. Introducing Globalization

Week 1: Introduction to The Course: Requirements, Objectives, and Scope

Monday, February 2 & Wednesday, February 4

- Chapter 1, Conceptualizing globalization

Recommended:

- Keohane, Robert and Joseph Nye, "Globalization: What's New What's Not? (And so What?)," Foreign Policy 118, (Spring) 2000: 104–118.

Week 2: The Neoliberal Turn

Monday, February 9 & Wednesday, February 11

- Chapter 2, Theorizing Globalization

Module 2. Free Market Dilemma

Week 3: Flattening the World

Monday, February 16

- Chapter 3, Structuring Global Economy
- Chapter 4, Global Economic Flows

Week 4: Experiencing Global Economy

Monday, February 23 & Wednesday, February 25

- Chapter 4, Global Economic Flows

Module 3. Technology: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Week 5: Tech for Globalization?

Monday, March 2 & Wednesday, March 4

- Chapter 6, High Tech Global Flows and Structures

Module 4. Experiencing Chung King Mansion as the Getto at the Center of the World

Week 6: Low-end globalization

Monday, March 9 & Wednesday, March 11

- Field trip week
- Mathews, Gordon. *Ghetto at the Center of the World: Chungking Mansions, Hong Kong*. University of Chicago Press, 2011.
 - Chapter 1: “Chungking Mansions as Place”
 - Chapter 3: “Goods and Trade in Chungking Mansions”

Week 7: Vote with One’s Feet

Monday, March 16 & Wednesday, March 18

- Chapter 8, Global Flows of Migrants

Guest Speaker: Jeffrey Andrews

Director, Christian Action Centre for Refugees (Hong Kong)

Week 8: Midterm Recap and Exam

Monday, March 23 & Wednesday, March 25

Midterm: March 25th

Week 9: Global Culture

Monday, March 30 & Wednesday, April 1

- Chapter 7, Global Culture

Week 9: Study Break

April 6th, Monday Ching Ming Festival, No class

April 8th, Wednesday Midterm break

Module 5. The Political Turn

Week 10: The Rise of Populism

Monday, April 13 & Wednesday, April 15

- Chapter 5, Global Political Structures and Process
- J. Lawrence Broz, Jeffrey Frieden, and Stephen Weymouth, “Populism in Place: The Economic Geography of the Globalization Backlash,” *International Organization* 75, (S2) 2021: 464–494.

Module 6. Global Challenges

Week 11: Escaping the Poverty Trap

Monday, April 20 & Wednesday, April 22

- Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (Crown Publishing Group, 2012).
 - Read pages 46–87
- Ang, Yuen Yuen. *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*. Cornell University Press, 2017.
 - Chapter 1 — Introduction: Co-evolutionary Development Processes

Week 12: Global Pandemic

Monday, April 27 & Wednesday, April 29

- David Stasavage, “Democracy, Autocracy, and Emergency Threats: Lessons for COVID-19 From the Last Thousand Years,” *International Organization* 74, (S1) 2020: E1–E17.

Week 13: Together for a Shared Future

Monday, May 4 & Wednesday, May 6

- Chapter 13, Dealing with, Resisting, and the Future of Globalization

The syllabus is subject to change in response to pedagogical needs or university policies.

RULES AND PROCEDURES

Course Policy

1. Cheating and plagiarism are strictly forbidden. These violations of academic integrity will result in serious consequence besides failing the class, like a note on your official transcript about cheating, which will significantly impact your future career. You can find the university's regulations on academic integrity from the following website: <http://ugadmin.ust.hk/integrity/student-1.html>.
2. Attendance and participation requirements and exam arrangements are subjected to change if the university switches to mixed mode teaching in the middle of the semester.
3. Assignments and exams will be graded by TA. If you have disputes about the grade, you can ask for a blind re-evaluation by the instructor in a four-day time window after the grade is released (refer to future class announcements for further details). After the re-evaluation, your grade may increase, decrease, or remain the same. So, think carefully before you file for a grade dispute on exams.

Email Policy:

1. Please email the instructor for any issues related to the course content and grade.
2. Please email the teaching assistants (both) for questions regarding Canvas, Zoom, Library, and class attendance.
3. Please title your email SOSC2290-Your Name-Issues. You will NOT reach out to us via Canvas Inbox.
4. Late submission will be subject to a penalty of 20% deduction of grade per day.
5. During the workdays (Monday-Friday), we will try to respond to your email within 24 hours. Please send us a reminder if you do not hear back from us in two days. Expect a delay in response until the next workday if you contact us during the weekend or holidays.

Special Notes

1. A special note to **students considering taking another course by Prof. Zheng:** As Understanding Society classes, it is unavoidable that there will be some overlap between these two classes. I do not encourage you to take both classes. It is better that you get a broader perspective in the social sciences by taking classes from other professors. If, however, you do decide to take both classes, please allow other students in class to answer questions that you may already know the answer to from Sosc1850. I do appreciate your cooperation with this.
2. A special Note to **Final Year Students**. This is an introductory core course, and it is designed primarily for First Year Students. Their English and study skills may not be as developed as yours and they may be taking a social science course for the first time. I care that every student performs well, so I will be making special efforts to go slowly and make frequent summaries of what we have covered so that they can follow. I do appreciate your patience while I do this. I encourage you to take more advanced classes if you feel that this course is too introductory for you.

Special Needs

We are still in the midst of pandemic. If you think you need extra help, please reach out to special education needs at <https://sen.hkust.edu.hk/>.