

ANTH 372

ECONOMIC UNDERWORLDS AND GLOBALIZATION

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Mélissa Gauthier

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course explores the other side of globalization by looking at the theory and ethnography of “illicit” and “informal” economies in the contemporary world. It aims at challenging dichotomies such as legal/illegal, licit/illicit and formal/informal, by examining the everyday practices of people making a living in “the gaps” or “shadows” of globalization in culturally diverse contexts. Several topics are explored including drug-trafficking, transnational migration, global informal economies, conflict resources, and the ethnography of the organs-trafficking underworld. This course also addresses some of the difficult ethical and methodological challenges these extra-legal activities pose to anthropologists. By the end of the course students should:

- Have a greater degree of familiarity with contemporary debates on globalization and the parallel growth of the legitimate global marketplace and illicit global economies.
- Increase their understanding of how different social, political, economic, and cultural processes contribute to what many people regard as illicit forms of commoditization.
- Become familiar with some of the methodologies and critical perspectives employed by anthropologists to understand “illicit” economies and extra-legal activities.
- Learn to see the categories of legal/illegal, licit/illicit and formal/informal as cultural and political constructs rather than as pre-existent neutral categories of analysis.

SKILLS DEVELOPEMENT

Aside from the content of this course, students will also gain valuable experience in independent research, critical analysis, academic writing and use of referencing. This course is designed to help students improve their ability; to analyze and communicate their understanding of anthropological texts in written and spoken contexts; to construct coherent and logical arguments, particularly in written form, which combine general theoretical writings with the discussion of ethnographic data; to use online research resources and search tools for academic research more effectively.