

SOCI 355

The Corporation, Capitalism, and Globalization

Course Description

This course takes a critical approach to the sociological analysis of corporations, capitalism and globalization. We will work through three recent texts plus some articles and chapters, all of which view large corporations as centres of power that generate deep disparities within and among nation-states and communities. The agency of corporations is largely responsible for the deepening climate crisis. And the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed deep contradictions between public health/welfare and the capital-logic within which corporations operate. A third field in which corporate power significantly shapes our lives is in Internet-based communication, or 'platform capitalism'. Throughout the course, we will take up these three urgent issues.

Corporate power does not go unchallenged; indeed, in recent years grassroots opposition to the rule of transnational capital has burgeoned. In the final section of the course, we take up alternatives to the rule of corporate capital.

Our course begins with a focus on the myths and realities of contemporary capitalism, followed by an examination of the social organization of corporate power in Canada and the logic of global capitalism. A good portion of the term will be spent examining capitalism's complex dynamics and different facets. But by the end of term we will also have glimpsed forms of collective agency from below that are pressing for a deepening of democracy, a restoration of ecological health and, perhaps, a world beyond corporate capitalism.

Department of Sociology

Summer 2021, July 5-August 18
MW: 2.30 pm–4.50 pm Pacific
Delivered online
Instructor: Dr. Bill Carroll
Email: wcarroll@uvic.ca
Phone: (250) 721-7573
Office: A338 Cornett
Office Hours MW 1:30 pm—2:25 pm,
and by appointment

Course Materials

Textbooks

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

Malleson, Tom (2016) *Fired Up About
Capitalism*. Toronto: Between the
Lines.

Efe Can Gürcan et al (2021) *COVID-
19 and the Future of Capitalism*.
Halifax: Fernwood.

The first two texts are available as e-books. The Gürcan et al text is only available as hard copy, at the UVic Bookstore or through online purchase. Other readings are available on our course website.

Teaching Assistants (TAs)

Shreyashi Ganguly
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Course Evaluation

Participation 20%

Participation will be assessed through a combination of two factors: attendance/willingness to participate and quality of preparation exhibited via questions submitted by each student, based on assigned readings. **Students should come prepared to discuss the readings relevant to the stated theme that day.** The breakdown of the participation grade will be as follows: 12% for attendance/willingness to participate, 8% for discussion questions/comments. Prior to ten of our sessions, students will be asked to submit brief discussion questions or comments, based on our readings, to our Brightspace site. Your best eight submissions will be counted.

Reflective journaling (20%)

Beginning in our second week, by Friday at 11:59 pm each week, you should upload a brief reflection on the key insights you take from the week's readings and sessions. Five of these are required. Each should be no longer than 250 words, and should be *analytical* – going beyond simple description to provide a succinct critical reflection on some aspect of corporations, capitalism and globalization. Guidelines for this assignment are on our Brightspace site.

Group Presentation 10%

Students will spend some time in each session discussing issues in groups of four to six. Our final week will involve presentations by these groups. Each presentation should be 15-18 minutes in length, and can involve mixed media.

Take-home Final 15%

This essay test will be distributed at the end of our last class. It will be due at 11:59 pm, August 20.

Term Paper 35%

The term paper gives students an opportunity to apply knowledge from the course, on the basis of further library research. This paper should be no longer than 1800 words, not including references. It is due on August 27.

Important Dates

End-of-Term Group Presentations
Last week of class (two sessions)
August 16 and 18

End-of-term Final (brief essay summing up your most important insights from the term)
Distributed on August 18; due at 11:59 pm on August 20.

Term paper due
August 27, 11.59pm

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings
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NOTE: In each session listed below, the blank line marks off readings to be taken up in the first half from readings to be taken up in the second half of the session.

Week 1 July 5	Capitalism and its discontents	J. Bakan (2004) 'The externalizing machine.' In J. Bakan, <i>The Corporation</i> . Toronto: Penguin Malleon, Introduction and chapter 1, pp. 1-32.
July 7	Inequality and workplace hierarchy	Malleon, chapter 2, pp. 33-56. L.E.L. Gjerde (2019). 'Behind the veils of discourse: Analysing the connection between discourse and exploitation on the "social" internet.' <i>Capital & Class</i> . https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816819873377
	Consumerism, globalization and ecological crisis	Malleon, chapter 3, pp. 57-76. Ulrich Brand (2016) 'Green economy, green capitalism and the imperial mode of living: limits to a prominent strategy, contours of a possible new capitalist formation.' <i>Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences</i> 9: 107-21 https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1007/s40647-015-0095-6
Week 2 July 12	Corporate power and capitalism	Carroll and Sapinski, chapter 1, pp. 1-21.
	The Corporate Mapping Project	William K. Carroll (2021) "Introduction." In W.K. Carroll (ed.) <i>Regime of Obstruction</i> , pp. 3-31. Download the pdf of this book from https://read.aupress.ca/projects/regime-of-obstruction
July 14	The making of corporate power	Carroll and Sapinski, chapter 2, pp. 22-48. Julien Brave Noisecat (2017) "The Western Idea of Private Property Is Flawed. Indigenous Peoples Have It Right." <i>The Guardian</i> , 27 March https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/27/western-idea-private-property-flawed-indigenous-peoples-have-it-right
		Gürcan et al, Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. 1-31. Nick Srnicek (2017) <i>Platform Capitalism</i> . Cambridge: Polity Press, chapter 2, pp. 22-52.

<p>Week 3 July 19</p>	<p>Operational power: Management, labour and commodity chains</p>	<p>Carroll and Sapinski, chapter 3, pp. 49-68. Gürcan et al, chapter 3, pp. 49-61. Ursula Huws (2020) 'Crunch time for the platform management model.' <i>The Bulletin</i> 21 July https://socialistproject.ca/2020/07/crunch-time-for-platform-management/</p> <p>Benjamin Selwyn (2015) 'Commodity chains, creative destruction and global inequality: a class analysis.' <i>Journal of Economic Geography</i> 15(2), pp. 253-274. Thomas S. Eder (2018) 'Mapping the Belt and Road initiative: this is where we stand.' Berlin: Mercator Institute for China Studies, 7 June https://www.merics.org/en/bri-tracker/mapping-the-belt-and-road-initiative Ben Parfitt (2018) 'The petro state lackey: how BC's zest for natural gas fuels Alberta's oil sands.' <i>Corporate Mapping Project</i> 8 August https://www.corporatemapping.ca/the-petro-state-lackey-how-bcs-zest-for-natural-gas-fuels-albertas-oil-sands/</p>
<p>July 21</p>	<p>Strategic control and the allocative power of finance</p>	<p>Carroll and Sapinski, chapter 4, 69-83. Haberly, Daniel and Dariusz Wójcik (2016) 'Earth Incorporated: Centralization and Variegation in the Global Company Network.' <i>Economic Geography</i>, 93:3, 241-266, DOI: 10.1080/00130095.2016.1267561 Rainforest Action Network (2021) Banking on Climate Chaos. Rainforest Action Network https://www.ran.org/bankingonclimatechaos2021/</p>
<p>Week 4 July 26</p>	<p>Corporate elites and new global political economy</p>	<p>Carroll and Sapinski, chapter 5, pp. 84-98. WK Carroll (2018) 'Rethinking the Transnational Capitalist Class.' <i>Alternate Routes</i> 29, pp. 188-206. Gürcan et al, chapter 2, pp. 32-48, chapter 4, pp. 62-79.</p>
<p>July 28</p>	<p>Hegemony and corporate reach into culture and politics</p>	<p>Carroll and Sapinski, chapter 6, pp. 99-119. Shane Gunster, Robert Neubauer, John Bermingham, and Alicia Massie (2021) "'Our oil": Extractive populism in Canadian social media.' <i>Regime of Obstruction</i>, pp. 197-224. Shoshana Zuboff (2019) 'Surveillance Capitalism and the Challenge of Collective Action.' <i>New Labor Forum</i>, 28(1), pp. 10-29.</p>
<p>Week 5 Aug 4</p>	<p>Resistance and alternatives, 1</p>	<p>Malleson, chapter 5, pp. 77-98. Gürcan et al, chapter 5, pp. 80-96. Malleson, chapter 6, pp. 99-133.</p>

<p>Week 6 Aug 9</p>	<p>Resistance and alternatives, 2</p>	<p>Carroll and Sapinski, chapter 7, pp. 120-37. Gürcan et al, chapter 6, pp. 97-118.</p> <p>Workshop on cooperatives and social economy, with Iva Jankovic. Please read: Wayne Ellwood (2012) 'Can co-operatives crowd out capitalism?' <i>New Internationalist</i> July 1 https://newint.org/features/2012/07/01/co-operatives-international-year/ Hal Plotkin (2017) 'The Platform Cooperatives Movement Helps Light up the Commons.' <i>Creative Commons</i> January 24 https://creativecommons.org/2017/01/24/platform-cooperatives-movement-helps-light-commons/</p>
<p>Aug 11</p>	<p>Resistance and alternatives, 3</p>	<p>Carroll, William K. (2021) 'Conclusion.' In W.K. Carroll (ed.) <i>Regime of Obstruction</i>, pp 479-504. Gürcan et al, Conclusion, pp. 119-22. Theo LeQuesne (2019) 'From carbon democracy to carbon rebellion: countering petro-hegemony on the frontlines of climate justice.' <i>Journal of World-Systems Research</i> 25(1), pp. 15-27. The Leap Manifesto (2015) https://leapmanifesto.org/en/the-leap-manifesto/ 'A grey deal? Fossil fuel fingerprints on the European Green Deal' (2020) https://corporateeurope.org/en/a-grey-deal Vishwas Satgar and Bill Carroll (2020) 'A Climate Justice Charter for South Africa and the world.' Corporate Mapping Project October 8. https://www.corporatemapping.ca/climate-justice-charter/</p>
<p>Week 7 Aug 16, Aug 18</p>	<p>Student Group Presentations</p>	<p>There will 12 group presentations, six in each session. Presentations should be no longer than 15-18 minutes, leaving time for 4-7 minutes of Q&A after each presentation.</p>

Course Format

Beyond attendance, **participation is crucial to this course's success!** I will begin each session with a lecture, introducing the topic and readings, and giving you some background as to how they fit into our course problematic. But much of our time together will involve discussion.

A key vehicle for our discussions will be small groups. Students will form into small groups in our first week. Although there is no requirement for your groups to meet outside of class, this is certainly a good idea. Most of our sessions will begin with a brief orienting lecture, followed by small-group discussion. The discussion can take the form of a set of *concurrent roundtables*: in each group, **individuals present the discussion question or comments they have prepared for the session** (based on the assigned reading and reflections you may have on it), and the group as a whole tries to formulate a response of some sort.

For this approach to work, it is important that you do the required reading in advance.

The small-group discussion will be followed by a plenary session, involving the entire class. The plenary session gives us a chance to synthesize ideas coming out of the small-group discussions. So, **members of the small groups should present one key question or comment that you found especially interesting, insightful, or perhaps difficult.** Other members of the class can, in the plenary session, provide further ideas. The aim in all this is to develop a multifaceted understanding of course material, through active participation and engagement rather than through passive reception. For some of our sessions small groups may be asked to provide a second question or comment, or we may shuttle back and forth more than once between small-group and plenary mode.

Please post at least one discussion question or comment before each session (these posting will contribute to your overall participation grade). Within each small group, responsibility for facilitating the discussion will rotate among members, as will responsibility for keeping notes on the discussion and reporting key insights back to the class as a whole. See the **Guidelines for Participation and Discussion Questions**, for further details.

Work in this course will be assessed with these criteria in mind: clarity in presenting an analysis based in social-scientific theory and evidence; mastery and relevance of the texts with which you are engaging; fluidity and good organization in your prose or presentation.

Course Experience Survey (CES)

Your feedback on this course is valued. Towards the end of the term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback regarding the course and the instructor's teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. When it is time for you to complete the survey, you will receive an e-mail inviting you to do so. If you do not receive an e-mail invitation, you can go directly to <http://ces.uvic.ca>. You will need to use your UVic Netlink ID to access the survey, which can be done on your

laptop, tablet or mobile device. Please be thinking about this important activity, especially the following three questions, during the course.

1. What strengths did your instructor demonstrate that helped you learn in this course?
2. Please provide specific suggestions as to how the instructor could have helped you learn more effectively.
3. Please provide specific suggestions as to how this course could be improved.

Accessibility Statement

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the [Centre for Accessible Learning \(CAL\)](#) as soon as possible. CAL staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

Accommodations

The University of Victoria accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Centre for Accessible Learning. The University accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please let your instructor know in advance, preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation on these grounds. As per university policy, students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, cannot assume they will be accommodated, and should discuss their commitments with the instructor before the drop date.

Departmental Equity Policy Statement

The Department of Sociology is committed to inclusiveness and to a welcoming, friendly learning and working environment where members of all genders, races, ethnicities, religions, abilities, and structurally disadvantaged groups are treated fairly. We will not tolerate sexism, racism, classism, ageism, ethnocentrism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and discrimination based on religious beliefs or any other form of prejudice which undermines people's rights to fairness.

Official Grading Standards

Undergraduate Records, University of Victoria, 2016

Passing Grade	Grade Point Value	Percentage*	Description
A+	9	90 – 100	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
A	8	85 – 89	
A-	7	80 – 84	
B+	6	77 – 79	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.
B	5	73 – 76	
B-	4	70 – 72	
C+	3	65 – 69	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
C	2	60 – 64	
D	1	50 – 59	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
COM	Excluded Grade	N/A	Complete (pass). Used only for 0-unit courses and those credit courses designated by the Senate. Such courses are identified in the course listings.
CTN	Excluded Grade	N/A	

Failing Grade	Grade Point Value	Percentage*	Description
E	0	0-49	Conditional supplemental. Supplemental examinations are not offered by all departments and the allowable percentage may vary by program (e.g. 35-49). Students will be advised whether supplemental will be offered and if the percentage range varies when assessment techniques are announced at the beginning of the course.
F	0	0-49	F is earned by work, which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.
N	0	0-49	Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.
N/X	Excluded Grade	N/A	Did not complete course requirements by the end of the term; no supplemental. Used only for Co-op work terms and for courses designated by Senate. Such courses are identified in the course listings. The grade is EXCLUDED from the calculation of all grade point averages.

* The grading scale for the evaluation of course achievement at the University of Victoria is a percentage scale that translates to a 9 point GPA/letter grade system. The 9 point GPA system is the sole basis for the calculation of grade point averages and academic standing. Standardized percentage ranges have been established as the basis for the assignment of letter grades. The percentage grades are displayed on the official and administrative transcripts in order to provide fine grained course assessment which will be useful to students particularly in their application to graduate studies and for external scholarships and funding. Comparative grading information (average grade [mean] for the class), along with the number of students in the class, is displayed for each course section for which percentage grades are assigned.

University Course Policies

Examination and Assignment Policy

As per university policy, absence is only permitted in cases of illness, accident, family affliction, or religious obligations. Missing an exam for other reasons will result in an “F.” Students are responsible for providing official documentation to justify their absence, e.g. a doctor’s note. In cases of justified absences, the student has the right to request a make-up exam. Please note that exams will not be rescheduled to accommodate students’ personal circumstances, including travelling plans. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Grading

In accordance with Senate Regulations, grading on the curve is not permitted. The grades students receive in this course reflect their performance in relation to specified academic expectations. Students should retain a copy of all submitted assignments (in case of loss) and should retain all their marked assignments in case they wish to apply for a Review of Assigned Standings. Students have the right to view their marked examinations with their instructor, providing they apply to do so within a month of receiving their final grades. All exams remain the property of the University of Victoria.

Attendance

As per university policy, attendance to all classes is mandatory. Students who are unavoidably absent because of illness, accident or family affliction should report to the instructor as soon as possible. Absences that cannot be justified in accordance with university policies will be subject to penalty at the discretion of the instructor. If you are absent for reasons other than those specified under university policies, then it is not the responsibility of the instructor or the TA to help you catch up with missed lecture material.

Academic Integrity

The Department of Sociology fully and rigorously enforces the Senate Policy on Academic integrity. It is of utmost importance that students who do their work honestly be protected from those who do not. Because this policy is in place to ensure that students carry out and benefit from the learning activities assigned in each course, it is expected that students will cooperate in its implementation. Students caught cheating in the course will be expelled and reported to the Chair of the Department of Sociology and the Dean of Social Sciences for disciplinary action.

Plagiarism and Cheating

Students must note the statement on “Plagiarism” in the UVic Calendar, and all regulations under the “Policy on Academic Integrity.” Quotes and citations must be used for any material longer than 5 words in succession that is not the student’s original work.

Harassment

The Department of Sociology supports the University’s policies on harassment, and is committed to ensuring that all students, staff, and faculty are able to exercise fully their rights to participate in activities at the University without fear of harassment.

Classroom Netiquette

Distractions can easily hinder the process of conveying knowledge. Please observe standard online netiquette. For many of us, participating in online discussions via video-conferencing may be a new experience. Respectful responding and active listening will be crucial. It will be important for us to take turns and make sure that everyone who wants to has a chance to contribute.

Climate change denial

This course builds on existing climate science to understand some of the social, political and economic underpinnings of global warming and climate change. Global average temperature has already increased by 1.1°C since the 1800-1870 period largely because of the extraction and combustion of fossil fuels, with devastating effects on human and natural systems; further anticipated warming poses an existential threat to humanity and to non-human species. We will not spend time in class or in assignments debating the existence of global warming, or whether its causes are anthropogenic or not. Those interested in learning about the latest climate science are encouraged to register for a natural science course in climatology instead (such as EOS 110 Oceans and Atmosphere, or GEOG 272 Introduction to Climatology).

Campus resources

Centre for Academic Communication:

<https://www.uvic.ca/learningandteaching/home/home/centre/>

UVic Counselling Services: <https://www.uvic.ca/services/counselling/>

Centre for Accessible Learning: <https://www.uvic.ca/services/cal/>