

## **Women and Work in the Global Economy**

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University of Colorado  
Department of Sociology  
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M & W 4:00 PM-5:15 PM  
Location: HLMS 267

### **Course Description**

This course examines women workers in the global economy. We will focus on the relationship between women and development in the global South, asking why female labor has been such an important part of many countries' economic development strategies; why gender matters for the process of increased trade and economic integration frequently referred to as globalization; and what the consequences of this labor force participation are for women, their families, and their communities.

The course is divided into three main sections. First, we will look at the key concepts that orient this course—globalization, gender, and development. We will ask what these terms mean, and how they relate to each other. The second section of the course focuses on women in the global factory. To understand the role of women in today's manufacturing sector, we will focus in some detail on Mexico's border assembly plants, or maquiladoras. To put the maquiladoras in global perspective, however, we will also read about women working in export factories in Asia. Finally, in the third section of the course we focus on the global service sector, including two of the oldest and most feminized types of labor in the global economy, domestics (maids and nannies) and sex workers.

### **Course Format**

This class will be run as a cross between a lecture course and a discussion-intensive seminar. I will use the beginning of each class (sometimes 15 minutes, sometimes 45 minutes) to put a particular reading in context, provide background information that supplements the reading, or explain a particularly challenging part of the day's assigned text(s). After that, we will have a general discussion in which all questions and contributions are welcome. Each week, one or more students will serve as "discussion leader"; this job entails having a set of questions or observations about the reading ready to start off our discussion or to get it going in case it stalls.

There are four books available for purchase at the CU bookstore: 1) *Genders in Production: Making Workers in Mexico's Global Factories* by Leslie Salzinger; 2) *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work* by Rhacel Parreñas; 3) *Working the Night Shift: Women in India's Call Center Industry* by Reena Patel; and, 4) *Juki Girls, Good Girls: Gender and Cultural Politics in Sri Lanka's Global Garment Industry* by Caitrin Lynch. All other assigned readings will be available at the D2L site for this course, so you can access and print these materials on your own. We will view three films over the course of the semester. These movies are an integral part of the learning experience provided by this course, so if you miss one, you will need to make arrangements to view the videos independently.

**Please be aware that this is an upper-division, reading-intensive course (more on this below). Simply put, it is really difficult to do well in this course if you aren't prepared to put in the time required to complete and process the assigned reading each week.**

Here are the components of the course on which you will be graded:

Attendance and participation in discussion (5% of final grade)

The most important factors affecting success in this course are regular attendance and consistent participation. Please note that simply attending regularly is not sufficient to do well on this portion of the grade; rather, students are also expected to *actively participate* in discussion and demonstrate familiarity with the readings. On average, you will complete 40 to 80 pages of reading a week for this course; some weeks may be slightly less, and others a little more. You should understand that completing this reading on a weekly basis is the foundation for the learning experience that this course offers.

I do not expect that you will necessarily understand everything you read before we discuss it in class. However, I do expect that you arrive to class having engaged the assigned material by formulating questions about what you didn't understand and/or developing criticisms about what you did. If you're not sure what I mean by "engaging the material," here are some useful questions to ask yourself while you're reading: What is the main argument or idea of this text? How convinced am I? What kind of data or other evidence does the author use to illustrate her point or defend her position? Is a different interpretation of that data plausible? As the course proceeds, an important part of engaging the material will be thinking about the relationship between the week's assigned readings and other course material—so, for example, how does Salzinger's description of women workers in Mexico's maquiladoras differ from Fernandez-Kelly's? What are the similarities and differences between export-processing factories in Latin America and Asia? How is "pink collar" work (such as call centers) different from factory work?

**Attendance will be taken regularly. More than three unexcused absences (see course policies below for what constitutes an excused absence) will negatively impact your final grade, as follows:**

- 4-5 absences: 5 points off final point total out of 100
- 6-7 absences: 10 points off final point total out of 100
- 8-9 absences: 15 points off final point total out of 100
- 10 absences or more will result in automatic failure from course

Reading Quizzes (20% of final course grade)

We will often begin class with either a reading quiz or a short writing exercise in which I ask you to respond to a prompt that relates to the day's assigned reading. The purpose of these exercises is two-fold: 1) to assess how carefully and completely you've read the assigned texts; and 2) to get you focused on and thinking about the day's material prior to our collective discussion. There will be approximately twelve of these exercises over the course of the semester. They are worth two points each, and I will take your ten best scores.

Reading Response Papers (15% each for 30% of final grade)

You will write two short papers that ask you to reflect and react to assigned texts. There will be four opportunities to write response papers, and you can choose to complete any two topics.

Discussion Leader (5% of final grade)

During the semester, all students will serve as "discussion leader" for a particular class. Students will sign up for a particular class and will work with one or more other students to come up with discussion questions that will be sent via email to the professor **by 12 PM the day before the class meeting**. I will then distribute the questions to the rest of the class, and all students are expected to have looked over the questions prior to the class meeting.

Unit Exam (15% of final grade)

We will have one unit exam after the first part of the course.

**Final Exam (25% of final grade)**

There will be a cumulative final exam for this course, which will be a mix of objective, (true/false, multiple choice), short answer and essay questions. All students must take the exam at the date and time scheduled by the registrar. Please be sure to keep this in mind when making your end of the semester travel plans.

**Course Policies**

*Excused absences:* Policies with regard to excused absences are listed below. Absences for any other reason should be discussed with me.

- University athletics: Please provide an email or letter from your coach or athletic director noting the dates of events that conflict with class time. Since season schedules are set in advance, this information should be provided within the first three weeks of the semester.
- Religious observance: An email or letter stating the date and name of the religious observance in question must be presented ahead of time.
- Incapacitating illness: Please provide a doctor's note with specific dates that student was ill and absent from class or unable to complete assigned work.

*Late work:* No late papers will be accepted and no make-up exams given without documentation of illness or legitimate emergency. (Printer problems do not qualify.) If you know ahead of time of a conflict, please ask about the possibility of an extension.

*Disabilities and Accommodations:* If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services as soon as possible so that we can be sure your needs are addressed.

*Honor Code:* All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council. Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Serious violations of the honor code (e.g. plagiarism) will result in failure of the course.

**Course Syllabus and Schedule** (Books available for purchase are underlined)

**Part I: Gender, Globalization and Development**

Aug. 24: Introduction to the course

Krugman, Paul (1997) "In Praise of Cheap Labor: Bad Jobs at Bad Wages are Better than No Jobs at All." *Slate*, April 27; available online at <http://www.slate.com/id/1918>.

Aug. 26 and Aug. 31: The Sweatshop Debate, Part 1: Apple in China

Duhigg, Charles and David Barbosa (2012) "In China, Human Costs Built into iPad." *New York Times*, January 25 (Aug. 26).

Chen, Hanqing (2012) "Who's Really to Blame for Apple's Chinese Labor Problems?" *The Atlantic*, March 2 (Aug. 26).

Litzinger, Ralph (2013) "The Labor Question in China: Apple and Beyond. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112(1): 172-178 (Aug. 31).

Sept. 2: The Sweatshop Debate, Part 2: Clothing Companies in Bangladesh

Powell, Benjamin. 2014. "Meet the Old Sweatshops: Same as the New." *The Independent Review* 19(1): 109-122.

Ross, Robert. 2015. "Bringing Labor Rights Back to Bangladesh." *American Prospect* (summer): 74-79.

Sept. 7: Labor Day-University Closed

Sept. 9, Sept. 14 and Sept. 16: What do we mean by globalization?

Film, "The Global Assembly Line" (Sept. 9).

McMichael, Phil (2000) "Development and the Global Marketplace." In *Development and Social Change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Sept. 14)

Fröbel, Folker, Jürgen Heinrichs, and Otto Kreyes (1978) "The new international division of labour." *Social Science Information* 17(1): 123-142. (Sept. 16)

### **Reading Response #1 Due Sept. 16**

Sept. 21 and 23: Why are women the preferred workers on the "global assembly line"?

Elson, Diane and Ruth Pearson (1981) "Nimble Fingers Make Cheap Workers: An Analysis of Women's Employment in Third World Export Manufacturing." *Feminist Review* 7: 87-107. (Sept. 21)

Carraway, Terri (2007) "From Cheap Labor and Export-Oriented Industrialization to the Gendered Political Economy Approach." In *Assembling Women: The Feminization of Global Manufacturing*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. (Sept. 23)

### **Sept. 28: Exam on the First Unit of the Course**

#### **Part II: Women in the Global Factory**

Sept. 30 and Oct. 5: The Birth of Mexico's Maquiladoras

Fernandez-Kelly, María Patricia (1983) *For We Are Sold, I and My People: Women and Industry in Mexico's Frontier*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, chap 6 (Sept. 30).

Iglesias Prieto, Norma (1997) *Beautiful Flowers of the Maquiladora: Life Histories of Women Workers in Tijuana*. Austin: University of Texas Press, chap. 5 (Oct. 5).

Oct. 7 and Oct. 12: Violence in the Maquila Capital

Gapsar de Alba, Alicia (2003) "The Maquiladora Murders, 1993-2003." *Aztlán* 28(2): 1-17 (Oct. 7).

Livingston, Jessica (2004) "Murder in Juarez: *Gender, Sexual Violence*, and the Global Assembly Line." *Frontiers* 25(1): 59-76 (Oct. 7).

Film, "Señorita Extraviada" (Oct. 12).

Oct. 14, Oct. 19 and Oct. 21: Morality and Modernity in Sri Lanka

Lynch, Caitrin. 2007. *Juki Girls, Good Girls: Gender and Cultural Politics in Sri Lanka's Global Garment Industry*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Selections TBA.

Oct. 26 and Oct. 28: Spirit Possession among Women Workers

Ong, Aiwha (1987) *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline*. Albany: SUNP Press, chaps. 8 and 9 (Oct. 14).

Wallace, Julia (2014) "Workers of the World, Faint." *New York Times*, January 17 (Oct. 19).

### **Reading Response #2 Due Oct. 28**

Nov. 2, Nov. 4 and Nov. 9: From “why women?” to “how women?”

Salzinger, Leslie (2003) *Genders in Production: Making Workers in Mexico’s Global Factories*.  
Berkeley: University of California Press. Selections TBA.

Nov. 11: A look inside the “workshop of the world”

Film, “Mardi Gras, Made in China”

**Part III: Women in the Global Service Sector**

Nov. 16 and Nov. 18: From the factory to the call center

Patel, Reena (2010) *Working the Night Shift: Women in India's Call Center Industry*. Stanford,  
CA: Stanford University Press. Selections TBA.

**Reading Response #3 Due Nov. 18**

Nov. 30, Dec. 2, and Dec. 7: Migrant workers and transnational families

Parreñas, Rhacel Salazar (2001) *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic  
Work*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Dec. 9: Sex Work

Wonders, Nancy and Raymond Michalowski (2001) “Bodies, Borders, and Sex Tourism in a  
Globalized World: A Tale of Two Cities-Amsterdam and Havana.” *Social Problems*  
48(4): 545-571.

Cabezas, Amalia L. (2004) “Between Love and Money: Sex, Tourism, and Citizenship in Cuba  
and the Dominican Republic.” *Signs* 29(4): 987-1015.

**Reading Response #4 Due Dec. 9**

Cumulative Final Exam TBA