WELCOME to FLC 302/SOC 393-F

January 27, 2004

Semester theme:
Global Identities, Civilizations & Citizenship: Introduction
Instructor: Professor Hermann Kurthen

Course website: www.stonybrook.edu/flcglobal
Office Hours: Tue/Thu 3:00-5:00 pm at SBS-S443
TA: Stephanie McLean, Tue/Thu 1:00-2:00 pm
TA: Aaron Kagan, Mon/Wed 4:00-5:00 pm

At the end of this session, you should be able to understand
1. Course syllabus, format, requirements, grading
2. Student projects (extra credit)

Course format & requirements (with grade percentages)
1. Regular attendance and active participation in class, including UN visit March 29 = 20%
2. Regular short quizzes based on the required reading of a given day. No make up if late or absent. Lowest score will be dropped = 30%.
3. A short, open-book mid-term essay on March 23 covering readings/discussions of the first part of the semester. = 20%
4. A final take home essay covering the full semester and consisting of several questions from which students can choose. Students will have two weeks time to submit their answers and document their sources. The essay questions will be handed out on April 27. A spell-checked and proof-read hardcopy of the essay is due at Prof. Kurthen’s office before May 14 at 5 p.m. No late submissions will be accepted. = 30%
5. Students can receive extra credit if they engage individually or as groups in student projects agreed upon by the instructor and related to the class topic, such as researching a global organization or issue, maintaining our class web site, conducting a global survey/interviews, writing an issue related article for a paper, or preparing a presentation using slides, graphs, statistical charts & power point. Projects need to be approved no later than March 9 and finished before May 4. = 15%

Course expectations: give & take
- 5 P's: presence, preparation, participation, punctuality, politeness
- Open and honest interaction and feed back
- Read & comply with email messages from instructor or TA’s.
- Office hours (Mo/Tue/Wed/Thu) by instructor & TA’s at SBS-S443
- Small budget from reader sale will be used for weekly food/drink and project expenses.
- Two students have to sign-up each week and are responsible to bring food & drinks. Return receipts to instructor and receive reimbursement of 20$
Class organization
- ADDRESS LIST (please write legibly)
- ATTENDANCE LIST (mark during first & second part of each session)
- ATTENDANCE OF FEDERATED CLASSES LIST
- UN Visit & AMBASSADOR BRIEFING: Monday, March 29, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. at UN Headquarters on the East River/Manhattan. Details will follow.
- GUEST PRESENTATIONS by federated instructors. Important is preparation (reading) and participation in Q&A sessions

Voluntary Student Project Examples (15% extra credit)
- Start a campus campaign (collect signatures, write letters, rally)
- Organize to educate the public through vigils, picketing or peace walks
- Organize a letter writing campaign to your congresspersons
- Actively contribute to a SBU diversity event
- Write an article for a student paper (e.g. Statesman) about a global event or a conference
- Do a campus survey about globalization
- Make a videotape about a global issue
- Analyze and compare U.S. news media
- Prepare a lesson plan for a high school class
- Contact/interview/research a non-governmental organization

Today’s Topic

Video: Bowling for Columbine (Michael Moore)

Objectives of the video
1. To thematize what sets the U.S. as “culture” or “civilization” apart from other countries and regions, in particularly the role of gun violence, aggressive individualism, and white male chauvinism/racism
2. To illustrate how the U.S. - the richest and strongest nation on earth - has become both the master and victim of enormous amounts of violence, fear, and aggression—and how the media, politicians, and corporations handsomely profit from this fact
3. To point out how the U.S. media are different from those in other nations, in particularly their tendency to nurture and - at the same time – to exploit fear and stereotype/criminalize African Americans and non-white poor
4. To make a point why so many people around the world hate the U.S., i.e., its foreign & military policy and the activities of U.S. global corporations.
5. To link the nation's violent domestic tendencies with its propensity for solving problems abroad with violence

Historical facts mentioned in the film Bowling for Columbine
1954: U.S. overthrows democratically elected President Arbenz of Guatemala. 20,000 civilians killed.
1963: U.S. backs assassination of South Vietnamese President Diem.
1977: U.S. backs military rulers of El Salvador. 7,000 Salvadorans and four American nuns are killed.
1980s: U.S. trains Osama bin Laden & fellow Muslim terrorists to kill Soviets. CIA gives them $3 bio
1981: Reagan administration trains & funds “Contras” to fight government. 30,000 Nicaraguans die.
1982: U.S. provides billions in aid to Saddam Hussein for weapons to kill Iranians.
1983: The White House secretly gives Iran weapons to kill Iraqis.
1989: CIA agent Manuel Noriega (also serving as president of Panama) disobeys orders from Washington. U.S. invades Panama and removes Noriega.
1990: Iraq invades Kuwait with weapons from U.S.
1998: U.S. bombs “weapons factory” in Sudan. The factory turns out to be making aspirin.
1991-making of the film: U.S. planes bomb Iraq on a weekly basis. The United Nations estimates that 500,000 Iraqi children die from bombing and sanctions.

Questions about the Video

1. Clarification questions--What references did you not understand? What new terms/concepts were used in the video?
2. What was the most important thing you learned from the video?
3. What important questions remain unanswered? Did you find faulty reasoning or questionable facts?
4. What is the film-maker’s purpose? His main idea?
5. How is the video related to globalization?
6. After watching this film, what else do you want to know?
7. Why would you (dis)agree with Michael Moore’s statement? “In my movie, I'm trying to connect the dots between the local violence and the global violence, and I think they're part and parcel of the same American way: Kill first, ask questions later. We create this climate of violence in what we do to each other, how we treat each other as a society. It's so strange, because we're actually good people. We really are. After 9/11, look at the outpouring, what people gave.”
8. Why would you (dis)agree with Michael Moore’s statement? “Our ethic is 'Every man for himself. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps. Me, me, me, me, me.'” Moore contends that the United States punishes its poor citizens for being poor. "No wonder there is so much violence in the poor community," he says, "because there are so many acts of state-sponsored
violence against the poor.”

9. Why would you (dis)agree with the Los Angeles Times calling “Bowling for Columbine” a "scattershot," "haphazard" and "all over the map," or The New York Times accusing Moore of "slippery logic, tendentious grandstanding and outright demagoguery?"

10. Why would you (dis)agree with Michael Moore’s answer with the question why America is so violent and why Americans shoot each other so much more than people do in other developed countries? “It can't just be the video games, because the Japanese play more of them and watch more brutally violent movies. It can't be our history of violence, because the Germans don't have as much trouble. It can't be poverty, ethnic tension or the number of guns, because the Canadians have just as many minorities, just as many unemployed and just as many guns per head. It can't be Marilyn Manson, because everybody listens to Marilyn Manson…In Switzerland, it's the law, you have to have a gun in every house, because they have no standing army. Virtually every home has a gun, and yet they only had 70 or 80 murders last year… The fabric of violence in our culture is made up of lots of little threads, and I want to look at all of them, not just the ones that the evening news wants you to look at."

11. Why would you (dis)agree with Michael Moore’s statement? "The most patriotic thing one can do is to try and make (the United States) a better place for everyone who lives in it. America is about asking questions, and the freedom to think, and to dissent. There's nothing more American than that."

12. Is there a possible connection or not? Discuss Michael Moore asks the Lockheed manager if kids think, “Dad goes off to the factory every day and builds missiles. These are weapons of mass destruction. What's the difference between that mass destruction and the mass destruction over at Columbine High School?” The Lockheed manager suggests that there is not a connection.

Questions for our Class Discussion 7

1. How do the media impact our daily lives? Give specific examples.
2. Discuss your views about violence in the United States compared to violence in other countries.
3. What or who creates violent individuals? Who is responsible when a child or young adult commits a crime?
4. What do you fear in our society and why? What do you think causes your fears?
5. Where do you stand on gun ownership and gun control issues? Be specific
6. What questions about the United States are raised in the film?
7. Why is it important to examine U.S. history when asking these complex questions?
8. What additional information would be helpful when seeking solutions to problems presented in the film? Brainstorm examples of short-term solutions vs. long-term solutions.
9. Why is there so much violence particularly in the U.S.? Who is to blame for it? How much have we all been “infected” by our culture of violence? How much is our violent domestic & foreign policy related?
Student Responses:

1. There is no single explanation or answer possible. A multitude of factors is at work such as:
2. The influence of mass media, movies, games, music culture…
3. Politicians and corporations exploiting fear & insecurity amongst large sections of the population for their political or economic gain
4. Organizations that promote guns & aggressive individualism (NRA)
5. A public “culture” that prevents “healthy reasoning” about the causes and effects of violence, gun possession, aggressive (male) individualism, fear, demonizing/scapegoating of minorities and the poor….