

**DTS305H1 - Topics in Diaspora and Transnationalism**  
**The Anthropology of Free Trade**  
Centre for Diaspora & Transnational Studies  
University of Toronto  
Winter 2024

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Office Hours: Thursdays 2 p.m. – 3 p.m. (JHB 235)

Day and Time: Thursdays 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

**Course Description**

This course examines the historical transnational formation known as ‘free trade.’ We will focus on the Canada-United States-Mexico agreement (CUSMA, previously known as NAFTA), which for 30 years has created a trade block and a transborder region for the fast flow of capital and commodities while simultaneously constraining people’s movements by militarizing borders and strict migratory temporal labour schemes. ‘Free trade’ continues entrenching the neoliberal social and political project by consolidating a marketized ‘common sense’ at the scale of the nation-state while also constituting a de facto disciplinary multilevel governance structure that legally locks in the ongoing liberalization of the global political economy. Free trade agreements are one of the most undemocratic elements in contemporary politics that militate against, but also give rise to, transnational solidarities and social justice movements.

This interdisciplinary course will offer a glimpse into how the power organizing the present-day world order intersects with, and shapes, people’s everyday lives. With a focus on Mexico, we will explore the relationship among the environment, financial flows, legal systems, displacement, migration, the drug economy, and mining. We will examine free trade’s intrinsic contradictions, dislocations, and inequalities along with contestations. Rather than taking ‘free trade’ as a set of neutral laws and mechanisms of regulation and governance that manage contemporary global capitalism, the premise of this course is that ‘free trade’ imposes liberal frameworks of capital accumulation while entrenching U.S. geopolitical power as the organizer and guardian of an emerging world order. Thus, we will critically question the ways in which ‘free trade’ came to be, how historical power relations and inequalities are reproduced and reconfigured across scales and places, and who benefits from free trade while also considering possibilities for radical transformations. Throughout the term, we will discuss what the ethnographic method can contribute to our understanding of global transnational phenomena constituted across scales.

**Learning Outcomes**

This course aims to cultivate students’ critical thinking skills and equip them with tools for interdisciplinary research. By the end of the course students should be able to:

- 1) Understand free trade historically, critically, and through an interdisciplinary multi-scalar and multi-sited framework.

- 2) Have a critical, conceptual, and empirical understanding of how the North America geo-economic region emerged, evolved, and its implications for people and the environment through case studies.
- 3) Understand free trade beyond the lexicon of policy, economics, and mainstream media.
- 4) Situate NAFTA/CUSMA within the long durée of colonial capitalist trade.
- 5) Understand the reconfigurations of the liberal state in the era of global capitalism along with constitutional transformations beyond the confines of the nation-state.
- 6) Employ critical reading, writing, and research skills.
- 7) Participate generously in group discussions.

### **Course Materials**

Most articles and books (electronic and hard copies) as well as media can be found at Robarts Library. Some articles are posted on Quercus. Links to newspaper articles and CUSMA's chapters are included on the syllabus.

### **Books to review (you will be assigned ONE of these books):**

1. Beltrán, Héctor. 2023. *Code Work: Hacking Across the US/México Techno-Borderlands*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
2. Castellanos, Bianet M. 2020. *Indigenous Disposessions: Housing and Maya Indebtedness in Mexico*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press.
3. Doane, Molly. 2012. *Stealing Shining Rivers: Agrarian Conflict, Market Logic, and Conservation in a Mexican Forest*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
4. Yeh, Rihan. 2017. *Passing: Two Publics in a Mexican Border City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

### **Methods of Evaluation and Due Dates**

Component	Weight/Value	Due Date
Participation	10%	Ongoing
In-class quizzes (10)	10%	From week 2 to week 11
In-class presentation	10%	Throughout the term
Mini essays (4)	20%	February 1 <sup>st</sup> February 15 <sup>th</sup> March 14 <sup>th</sup> April 4 <sup>th</sup>
Documentary essay	10%	February 29 <sup>th</sup>
Book review	20%	March 21 <sup>st</sup>
In-class presentation of book review	5%	March 21 <sup>st</sup> & 28 <sup>th</sup>
Final essay	15%	April 10 <sup>th</sup>

## **Course Expectations**

**Participation:** Students are expected to come to class well prepared with questions and comments about what they have read, and ready to participate actively in class discussions. Participation will be evaluated according to the frequency and quality of interventions and the extent to which they contribute to class discussions. If you find it difficult to speak in front of other people and you think that this will inhibit your performance in this class, please let me know as soon as possible. While everyone has the right to be five minutes late to class on occasion, repeated tardiness is disruptive and disrespectful to your classmates and to me. Repeated lateness will affect your participation grade. The same applies to early departures. You are responsible for the material covered during each class, even if you are not present. Absences do not relieve you of the responsibility to submit coursework.

### **Ways you can participate:**

- initiate a topic or question.
- answer questions asked by professor or other students.
- offer a reaction to something under discussion (positive or negative).
- state clearly and respectfully when you disagree with the professor or other students and why.
- restate someone else's comment or an article's argument to ensure you understand.
- give examples when needed.
- summarize part of the discussion.

### **To participate effectively, you must:**

- have done all readings assigned for the week.
- share what you think you understand (remember, there is no right or wrong, or 'bad' question, you are in this class to learn, and to rethink and finetune your knowledge).
- be willing to say that you don't know or don't understand something and ask for further explanation.

**In-class quizzes:** Throughout the semester, you will complete ten quizzes. Quizzes consist of content questions related to the readings for that day (about 1-2 questions). They will take place right at the beginning of class. If you are late or miss class, you cannot take the quiz later.

**Mini essays:** Students will write four mini essays throughout the term (maximum 700 words). Mini essays will give you the opportunity to show, in a more thorough manner, your understanding of difficult texts. Mini essays are not summaries of the assigned readings. Instead, one week before the due date, I'll provide you with a question for your essay which you will answer in an essay format using the assigned readings. Essays will be submitted via Quercus.

Mini essays are a form of formal writing so you must proofread your work before submitting it.

If you find the class readings difficult, don't hesitate to come to my office hours.

**Final Essay:** You will write a strong, informed, and focused opinion piece (750 - 800 words) on an issue related to North American Free Trade Agreement. I'll provide you with guidelines in Week 10, and well as with the prompt.

**In-class presentation:** Each student will give an in-class presentation (10-15 mins) of the readings assigned for a particular week. On the first day of class, students will pick 3 weeks, from Week 2 to Week 11 and give me 3 ranked references. I'll do my best to accommodate you. Depending on the numbers, a maximum of 3 presenters are allowed per week.

**Presentations should provide a summary of the readings. At the same time, make sure to draw out connections, contradictions, complexities between the readings (you are also encouraged to bring in readings from previous weeks, if fitting). Make sure to also state the main idea of the texts and argument and to create 2-3 questions for discussion.**

The aim of this assignment is to strengthen students' presentation and communication skills, as well as their capacity to synthesize texts and to initiate a stimulating discussion. It also provides students with the opportunity to continue working on their skills of interpreting difficult scholarly texts, cultivate the skills of questioning and critical thinking, as well as present their ideas with sound evidence. Students not leading the presentation on that day will have the opportunity to participate by engaging with the presenters' questions and ideas.

**\*How to Formulate Questions for Discussion:** Create open-ended questions, that is, questions that are not looking for a specific answer but instead allow your peers to offer their perspectives on something. These types of questions aim at engaging with what students already know from their own life experiences and building on classmates' opinions.

Avoid content questions, that is questions to which the answer is found in the text, questions that ask your peers to recall facts, or questions to which the answer is yes or no. These types of questions are called 'closed-ended questions' because, once the answer is given, there is nothing to discuss.

**Critical documentary essay:** You will watch on your own the documentary "The New Corporation: The Unfortunately Necessary Sequel" (2020) **prior to February 29**. The documentary can be accessed via Robarts Library. On Feb 29, you will submit a critical review of this documentary. This assignment is NOT a summary of the documentary. It rather is a piece in which you critically engage with the documentary, bringing it into conversation with themes from the course. I'll provide more detailed guidelines in Week 5. The length of your essay should be 1000 - 1,200 words. I encourage you to also watch "[The Corporation](#)" (2003) which precedes the documentary you will review.

**Book review:** For this assignment, you will read, analyse, and evaluate a book that you will be assigned on the first day of class. Please note that a book review is not a summary of the book. Rather, it is thoughtful discussion of the book in which you identify the main argument, themes, and sub-arguments, and the evidence that supports them. Make sure to start reading the book as soon as possible so you can take your time to develop a thoughtful discussion of the book's contents. I'll provide you with more detailed guidelines in Week 7. The length of your book review should be about 1000 words.

**In- class presentation of book reviewed:** During week 10 and 11, you will give 10–15-minute group presentations on the book you were assigned. Please work together and prepare a Power Point for your presentation.

## **General Guidelines for Written Work**

Papers must have a title (be creative!). Pages should be numbered, and your name and date must appear on top of the first page. Font should be Times New Roman size 12. All texts used in each essay should be cited in-text—including page numbers—and in a bibliography following the [Chicago Manual of Style, 17<sup>th</sup> edition](#):

Book and book chapters:

- Weeks, Kathi. 2011. *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Anti-Work Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hediger, Ryan. 2023. “Unfree Labor: Slavery and the Anthropocene in the Americas.” In *Planet Work: Rethinking Labor and Leisure in the Anthropocene*. Ryan Hediger, ed. Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 75-94.

Article

- Millar, Kathleen. 2014 The Precarious Present: Wageless Labor and Disrupted Life in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. *Cultural Anthropology* 29(1): 32-53.

In-text

- (Millar 2014:45); (Weeks 2011)

**Remember that you can always seek support at [University of Toronto Writing Center](#).**

**Please note that both essays must be submitted electronically via Quercus.**

## **Late assignments and penalties**

I appreciate that students have busy lives with multiple commitments, and that unforeseen circumstances related to family challenges and/or personal illness will sometimes arise. In recognition of that fact, a student may take a 72-hour (three-day) grace extension with no penalty. After that, a penalty of 5% per day will be applied to the grade received on the assignment (e.g., if the assignment is one day late and receives 80%, once the penalty is applied, the assignment would receive 75%). No assignments will be accepted one week past the original due date. Additional requests for extensions will not be approved except under extenuating life circumstances, which will require documentation. **Please note that extensions only apply to the Critical Documentary Essay, Book Review, and Final Essay.**

- Accommodations for presentations might be given when possible but are not guaranteed. Please approach the instructor (or Accessibility Services) early on if you need an accommodation.
- Late mini essays will not be accepted.

## **Absences, Extensions & Documentation**

If you are absent from class for any reason (e.g., COVID, other illness or injury, family situation) and need consideration for missed academic work, documentation will be required to support your request. We will accept one of the following documents:

- Absence declaration via [ACORN](#)
  - Note: Students may submit **one absence declaration per academic term** in this course. The Absence Declaration Tool can be used to declare an absence for a maximum period of seven consecutive calendar days (retroactive for up to six days in the past, or up to six days in the future.) For absences that extend beyond the seven-day period, a VOI form will also need to be submitted.
  - [U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form \(VOI\)](#)
- College Registrar's letter

Documentation must be provided to the instructor. The instructor will not accept a detailed medical letter beyond the VOI form or letters from friends, parents or other family members.

For extended absences (beyond 7 days) and for absences due to non-medical reasons, you must contact your [College Registrar's Office](#) for assistance.

Full details are posted here: <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academics/student-absences>

### **Extensions**

Please alert the instructor to any difficulties that you may be experiencing in a timely manner so that appropriate assistance and/or direction can be provided.

### **Remarking term work policy**

A student who believes an individual item of work has been incorrectly or unfairly marked may ask the instructor for a re-evaluation. The request must be submitted in writing and include a detailed statement that highlights which specific questions or portions of the test/assignment you would like to be reviewed and why you feel the marks given do not reflect your answer. The statement may refer to course texts or lecture notes.

The instructor will remark the entire assignment/test and the student must accept the resulting mark as the new mark, whether it goes up or down or remains the same. Continuing with the remark means the student accepts this condition. It is not to your advantage to submit a request for a remarking unless you believe you will actually gain points.

The deadline for requesting a remarking is two weeks from the date the term work was made available to the student. Late requests will not be accepted.

### **Academic integrity**

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

1. Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement;
2. Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the

- instructor;
3. Making up sources or facts;
  4. Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On tests and exams:

1. Using or possessing unauthorized aids;
2. Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test;
3. Misrepresenting your identity; and
4. When you knew or ought to have known you were doing it.

In academic work:

1. Falsifying institutional documents or grades;
2. Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes; and
3. When you knew or ought to have known you were doing so.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If students have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, they are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from their instructors or from other institutional resources.

### **Use of Generative AI in Assignments**

**\*\*\*Use of Generative AI to do or support assignments is strictly prohibited in this course\*\*\***

Trust your own ability to think and write and take this course as an opportunity to refine your research and writing skills. If you need help, visit U of T Writing Centre and make sure to use the online advice files at [www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice) (including the ones on using sources), and make use of the individual writing instruction available at your college writing centre: see [www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres).

### **Cellphones**

**\*\*\*Use of cellphones in class is also prohibited so make sure you put your cellphone away as soon as lecture begins. If you use your cellphone during class, I'll ask you to leave the room\*\*\***

### **Copyright**

“Lectures and course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the *Canadian Copyright Act*. Students wishing to record lecture or other course material in any way are required to ask the instructor's explicit permission, and may not do so unless permission is granted. This includes tape recording, filming, photographing PowerPoint slides, Quercus materials, etc. Such permission is only for that individual student's own study purposes and does not include permission to “publish” them in any way. **It is absolutely forbidden for a student to publish an instructor's notes** to a website or sell them in other form without formal permission.” [Faculty of Arts & Science Academic Handbook for Instructors](#) Section 4.5 Taping/Recording/Photographing Lectures etc.

## **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion**

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights, and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

## **Students with accessibility needs**

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs. For more information on services and resources available to instructors and students, please see the [Accessibility Services website](#).

## **Religious observances**

The University also provides reasonable accommodation of the needs of students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays. Students have a responsibility to alert members of the teaching staff in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences, and instructors will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations, or other compulsory activities at these times. For more information, and to link to the University's policy on accommodations for religious observances, please see the website of the [Office of the Vice-Provost, Students](#).

## **Course Schedule**

### **I. Towards An Anthropology of Free Trade**

#### **Week 1: January 11 – Introduction to the course**

#### **Week 2: January 18 – On Methods and Methodology**

- Shore, Cris and Susan Wright. 1997. "Policy: A New Field of Anthropology." In *Anthropology of Policy: Critical Perspectives on Governance and Power*. New York: Routledge, 1-18.
- Apthorpe, Raymond. 1997. "Writing Development Policy and Policy Analysis Plain or Clear: On Language, Genre, and Power." In *Anthropology of Policy: Critical Perspectives on Governance and Power*. New York: Routledge, 43-58.
- Gershon, Ilana. 2011. "Neoliberal Agency." *Current Anthropology* 52(4):537-555.

#### **Week 3: January 25 – A Genealogy of Free Trade**

- Di Muzio, Tim. 2014. "Toward a Genealogy of the New Constitutionalism: The Empire of Liberty and Domination." In *New Constitutionalism and World Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 81-94.

- May, Christopher. “The Rule of Law as the *Grundnorm* of the New Constitutionalism.” In *New Constitutionalism and World Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 63-75.

#### **Week 4: February 1: Globalization, Globalism, and the Rise of the Corporation**

- Hoogvelt, Ankie. 2001. “Globalization.” In *Globalization and the Postcolonial World: The New Political Economy of Development*. Palgrave, 120-143; 153-162.
- Barkan, Joshua. 2013. “Introduction.” In *Corporate Sovereignty: Law and Government under Capitalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1-14.
- Sinclair, Scott. 2021. “[The Rise and Demise of NAFTA Chapter 11](#).” *Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives* (you only need to skim this report).

**\*\*\*First Mini Essay Due\*\*\***

## **II. Contradictions, Dislocations, and Reconfiguration of Inequalities**

#### **Week 5: February 8 – Labour**

- Zlozniski, Christian. 2019. “They Want First-Class Workers with Third World Wages: The Workplace Regime of Transnational Agriculture” and “Resisting the *Carrilla* in the Workplace: Forms of Labor Protest.” In *Made in Baja: The Lives of Farmworkers and Growers Behind Mexico’s Transnational Agricultural Boom*. Oakland: University of California Press, 107-126; 127- 152.
- *México Solidarity Bulletin*. 2023. “[Toothless: ‘Protections’ for Mexican Workers’ and VU Workers: Down but Not Out](#).” *México Solidarity Project*.

#### **Please skim**

- “[Labour Chapter Summary](#).” Government of Canada
- “[Chapter 23: Labour](#).” Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, Government of Canada.
- “[What have Rapid Response Labour Complaints Achieved for Mexican Workers](#).” *Maquila Solidarity Network*.

#### **Week 6: February 15 – Environment**

- Zlozniski, Christian. 2019. “Watercide: Export Agriculture, Water Insecurity, and Social Unrest.” In *Made in Baja: The Lives of Farmworkers and Growers Behind Mexico’s Transnational Agricultural Boom*. Oakland: University of California Press, 186-206.
- Sinclair, Scott. 2023. “[Toxic Legacy: Énergie Saguenay, Climate Action, and Investment Arbitration](#).” *Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives*.
- Seckel, Scott. 2018. “[How NAFTA created an impending crisis in Mexico](#).” Arizona State University New blog news.

**\*\*\*Second Mini Essay Due\*\*\***

## February 22 – Reading Week

### Week 7: February 29 – Mining, the Drug Economy, and Dispossessions

- Dawn Paley. 2014. “Profits,” “Anti-Drugs Cops Help Canadian Mining Companies,” “Territory, Community Police, and Self-defense Groups,” “Paramilitarized Extraction,” “Displacement and Real Estate,” and “Avocados and Limes at Gunpoint.” In *Drug War Capitalism*. Baltimore: AK Press, 129-138 and 151-168.
- Ferry, Elizabeth. 2011. “[Canadian Mining and the Cost to Workers: Notes on the El Cubo/Local 142 Strike, 2010-2011](#).” *Mining Watch Canada*.
- Hooegeven, Dawn. “Intimate Geographies of NAFTA and Canadian Mining in Mexico.” *Scapegoat* 6, 237-242 (on Quercus).

**\*\*Critical Documentary Essay Due\*\*\***

### Week 8: March 7 – Destruction of Ancestral Food Systems

- Gálvez, Alyshia. 2018. “People of the Corn” and “NAFTA: Free Trade in the Body.” In *Eating NAFTA: Trade, Food Policies and the Destruction of Mexico*. Oakland: University of California Press, 27-62 and 89-116.
- Office of the United States Trade Representatives. 2023. “[U.S. Establishes USMCA Dispute Panel on Mexico’s Agricultural Biotechnology Measures](#).”
- Arnold, Rick. 2023. “[Canada and the US bully Mexico to use GMO corn due to biotech lobby groups](#).” *The Council of Canadians: People, Planet, Democracy*.

#### Recommended:

- [Modifying Maize: How Genetically Modified Corn Changed Science, Academia, and Indigenous Rights in Mexico](#), Part 1 of 2. New Books Network Podcast.
- [Made of Corn: How Genetically Modified Corn Changed Science, Academia, and Indigenous Rights in Mexico](#), Part 2 of 2. New Books Network Podcast

### Week 9: March 14 – Temporal Work Migration Schemes

- Binford, Leigh. 2013. “The Dual Process of Constructing Mexican Contract Workers.” In *Tomorrow We All Going to the Harvest: Temporary Foreign Worker Programs and Neoliberal Political Economy*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 44-64.
- De León, Jason. 2015. “Prevention Through Deterrence.” In *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Oakland: University of California Press, 23-37.
- Walia, Harsha. 2021. “Temporary Labor Migration and the New Braceros.” In *Border & Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 131-145.

**\*\*\*Third Mini Essay Due\*\*\***

**Week 10: March 21 –The Energy Transition Bind**

- Howe, Cymene and Dominic Boyer. 2016. “Aeolian Extractivism and Community Wind in Southern Mexico.” *Public Culture* 28 (2 (79): 215-235 (on Quercus).
- Hackbarth, Kurt. 2021. “[AMLO is Nationalizing Lithium Supply.](#)” *The Jacobin*.
- Shalk, Owen. 2023. “[Canada is Trying to Stop AMLO From Putting Mexico in Control of its Own Resources.](#)” *The Jacobin*.

**\*\*\*Book Review Due**

**III. Re-imagining Economies, Social Relations, and Trade**

**Week 11: March 28 – Disrupting Free Trade**

- Escobar, Arturo. “Postdevelopment @ 25.” In *Pluriversal Politics: The Real and the Possible*. Durham: Duke University Press, 97-119.
- Zibechi, Raúl. 2023. “[Zapatistas at 30: Building and Inspiring Autonomy.](#)” *NACLA: Report on the Americas*.

**Week 12: April 4 – The Circular Economy**

- In-class screening: 4S 2023 Opening Keynote Speaker: Dr. Kamanamaikalani Beamer, Hawai‘inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa. Society for Social Studies of Science.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HweQRiVK7VQ&t=492s>
- Wrap-up

**\*\*\*Fourth Mini Essay Due\*\*\***

**\*\*\*Final Essay Due on April 10<sup>th</sup>\*\*\***