It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.

Albus Dumbledore

The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance—it is the illusion of knowledge.

Daniel J. Boorstin

GST 110: The Global Experience  
Spring 2010  
MWF  9:20—10:30  
Steve Braye  Belk/AVTL 114  
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Overview

The choices we make based upon the knowledge we believe we have: a good starting point for this class. How often do we truly reflect upon our millions of daily actions and the knowledge that may, or may not, inform those choices? Much of this class will ask you to do that, to examine and re-examine your beliefs and assumptions about the global community you act within.

We will use our time together to get outside the lines, to think about the world in new and challenging ways. So often, no matter how old we are, we see things the same over and over, forgetting to recognize how differently the world can be seen by others. This course will take us to something better. We can gain new perspectives that enable us to change both the world around us and ourselves. We can examine new ways of thinking and see what these ways can offer us. Finally, we can decide what we want to accomplish in our world and use these ways of seeing to help us develop innovative ways of acting in the world.

Ultimately, this is why you came to college. If you wanted the same world you lived in at high school, you would not be here now. You would keep the same friends, go to the same places, and work hard to maintain your same view of the world. You would want to stay inside the lines. Instead, you entered a world in the fall that challenged you both in and out of the classroom. You were expected to make your own sense of the world, to shape your own opinions and beliefs. This semester, we will continue to grow by exploring a diversity of
opinions, perspectives, and actions that exist in our world. You will be expected to question much from your protected, predictable past. And your understandings from this inquiry will help you decide how to shape your own culture.

Likewise, our individual efforts are essential to the success of the whole class. There is far too much going on in the world to read or experience most of it. Instead, we will collaborate, often working in different directions to discover what is happening and bringing what we have found back to the class with us. We each have the responsibility to add to the group conversation, to offer perspectives that will enable us to learn as much as we can in the short time we have together. So please take your responsibility to the success of the group seriously.

This class will assist you in three ways. First, we will explore what is means to learn, what it is that “becomes” knowledge. We will discuss how knowledge is generated, transmitted, and compartmentalized, often in ways we find difficult to understand. Second, we will develop habits of life-long learning. We will develop abilities we will use in school, our careers, and our daily lives. We will read a variety of texts, texts that will inspire, confuse, introduce, and challenge. We will understand the ways of research, from library expeditions and statistical tables to interviews and oral histories. We will question, form opinions, develop reasonable approaches, transform our ideas into written texts, and question again (and again!). We will work together to understand our dependence upon the intellectual work of others, and the value of working with others to achieve goals. Finally, we will explore the lives of others less privileged than ourselves. We will read about a wide range of people, and work with our reactions to their lives, in order to better understand our position in the world.

You will use this information to develop your own ways of thinking and acting, holding yourself responsible for how you decide to act in the world. Obviously, this class alone won’t enable you to gain all the perspectives you need to make sense of the world. All the courses in the General Studies Program and across the university work together to offer you a wide range of ideas and perspectives. Ultimately, your willingness to challenge yourself, play with new ideas, and reflect upon your own ways of thinking will determine how much you learn.

Global Themes

While there are general course goals for all General Studies courses, our course will focus upon six main themes. Over the semester, we will work to understand:

1. the importance of individual responsibility.
2. the relationship of humans to the natural world.
3. globalization and tribalization as powerful global forces.
4. the impact of imperialism and colonialism.
5. the nature of culture.
6. the plights of disempowered groups.
These goals will help us understand our connection to the world we inhabit, our responsibilities to this world, and the rights we possess as inhabitants. Filtering everything we read, write, and discuss through these themes will help us to ground the objectives in our world, to see their impact on the world we inhabit.

**Required Texts**

Here are the books I want you to have. We will also read much off the web, so be prepared for lots of shorter readings, too.


All these are available in our bookstore. Power’s book helps us see the historical forces that lead to our current context and shows how decisions have clear consequences that don’t always tie to our own values. Diamond’s book examines why some people in the world do better than others. This will help us see why we live in the current world we do. Bales’ book focuses on contemporary slavery and how it impacts us all in a variety of ways. Aslan’s book argues that we are in the middle of the Islamic reformation and understanding the religion will help us to make better sense of our world. Quinn’s book will get us started on our journey together. And Hosseini’s book, which you have already read, will help us see the complexity of our current global situation. We will read lots of newspaper and web articles, as well, but few of these will need to be copied.

> Man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellow-men.

*Gandhi*
Conversations

This course will focus on questions that have no single right answer--questions where a simple transfer of information from instructor to student is inadequate. This can prove to be a difficult challenge. We are often more comfortable dealing with “certainties,” even when they fly in the face of information available to us. We will talk, in class, outside of class, and in writing, about these questions in order to develop an understanding of the judgmental factors involved in evaluating the questions. This involves opening ourselves to new ideas, practicing how ideas can be explored, and making judgments (rather than generating a notebook filled with facts and prescribed conclusions).

For these conversations to be effective, we must expand our understanding of the term “discussion.” In our discussions, the participation of the teacher will be minimal and the students will help one another to learn. Moreover, the nature of the student to student conversations must develop beyond what we often classify as a discussion. As A.W. Combs puts it in The Professional Education of Teachers:

It is easy for a group of people to engage in talk but this does not mean that they are having a group discussion. A group discussion is not a debate. Neither is it a bull session. The purpose of a debate is to convince other people of the rightness of one’s position. “Convincing” may even precede argument irrespective of the merits of the position. A bull session, on the other hand, is a pleasant sort of pastime in which one seeks to regale others by description or stories of things he [sic] knows or events which have happened to him . . . . Good group discussions are neither to win an argument nor to amuse oneself. Its purpose is to help each member explore and discover personal meanings . . . through interaction with other people. Much of our everyday talk is made up of description in which we seek in one way or another to convey ideas to other people. It is usually concerned with what we know . . . . A learning group is far more tentative, even halting, in its progress, for it deals not with certainty but with search . . . listening to a group discussion, one is likely to hear such expressions as “it seems to me,” “I think,” “I believe” . . . group discussion does not seek to convince. Rather it deals with matters unsolved and seeks to help each member find meanings not existing before.

Conversations where each member discovers personal meaning do not just happen. They are part of a collaborative effort on the part of each participant. In any conversation, some members understand the issues being discussed well, while others do not. In the course of the discussion, though, all members can learn much from the conversation. Those who think they understand may find, while trying to explain, that they don’t understand it as well as they thought, or see aspects to the issue they failed to see originally. Those who thought they did not understand the issue may find, while formulating questions and expressing their difficulties, that they know more than they first thought, and may even answer many of their own questions. You need to note that in both cases expressing what you do not understand leads to learning.
Successful conversations also depend upon the roles each participant plays in the conversation. A destructive member can block learning. People who dominate, for example, tend to talk in monologues which stifle the free play of ideas important to learning. Those “too good” for the discussion weaken a discussion with their inattentiveness or silence. Finally, those who sidetrack the discussion, usually because they are unprepared, make learning more difficult. On the other hand, group members can adopt positive conversational roles which will facilitate learning. People who initiate discussions, listen carefully and ask questions, and compare and summarize ideas help the group discuss a specific topic. Members who encourage less assertive members to speak and keep track of time help the group achieve group objectives. Finally, those who offer positive reinforcement to ideas expressed and help the group relieve tension when disagreements become tense help the group collaborate more effectively. Strive to make your conversations as successful as possible.

*Academic Citizenship & Integrity*

Once you accepted your invitation to Elon University, you agreed to meet the high standards we value in the academic world. This means you will demonstrate personal honesty and respect the rights of others. You must take responsibility for all your actions, and submit work that you know to be your own. When using the ideas of others, you will demonstrate this using forms developed for this use.

*Course Requirements*

**Attendance and Participation**

It is my responsibility to make this class interesting and engaging; it is yours to practice academic citizenship, actively participating in each class session. I will seldom lecture (though I occasionally run off at the mouth). This means your participation and inquiry will drive the course. We will use your writing and ideas to explore new concepts and learn from one another. I expect you to bring your ideas/ questions/ writing to every class and be willing to work with it. Since we will frequently workshop in class, it is important that you be present and willing to discuss with the class. Obviously, if you aren’t in class, you can’t participate. If you must miss class, you are responsible for being prepared at the next class. Expect ANY absences to influence your final grade.

Turn off all cell phones when you enter the class. Off, not on vibrate. If you have a good reason to keep your phone on a specific day, just let me know and we will work it out. I will have mine off, as well.
We will work in a wireless environment. You are welcome to have your laptop on in class. It will be used ONLY for classroom work (note taking, web searching, etc.). If you use it for any other purpose, you will be asked to leave class and you will not be able to bring your laptop to class any longer. Please, I am not the brightest person in the world, but I can easily see when you are doing something on the laptop that is not class-oriented. If you cannot avoid the temptation of checking Facebook or email when your computer is on, don’t bring it to class.

Cultural Events

Between now and Friday, 23 April, you must attend and review ten cultural events. You may attend art shows, performances on campus, speakers, anything you would like to participate in and review. These reviews will be due within one week of the event. They should be at least one page long, typed. The review should both summarize the event and present your opinions of it, using our Global Themes as the basis for your response. The reviews will receive one of three grades: 10 (acceptable), 5 (it looks like a review, but it doesn’t sound like one), and 0 (a complete washout!). Since I am a parent, and I know how to be mean, I have little problem giving the latter two evaluations.

1. Due one week after the event.
2. Must contain a summary and your opinion.
3. One page in length.
4. Submit through email or Blackboard.

Suggested Events

There are no “required” event for the course. But there are many events I expect you to participate in this semester. Make sure you attend a wide variety of events. We have lots going on. Take advantage of it!! Here are some suggested events.

Monday, February 15 Michele Morano, nonfiction reading
Yeager Recital Hall, 7:30 p.m.
Part travel writer and part personal essayist, Michele Morano explores the intersections between place and identity in her first book, Grammar Lessons: Translating a Life in Spain. A professor at DePaul University, Morano has received awards from the Rona Jaffe Foundation and the McDowell Colony and has published work in The Georgia Review and The Missouri Review. Sponsored by The English Department and the William Maness Fund

Monday, February 15 Burma VJ – Reporting from a Closed Country, film screening
McEwen 011, 7:30 p.m.
A tenacious band of Burmese video journalists faced down death to expose the repressive regime controlling their country to document the 2007 street protests and extraordinary events of the "Saffron Revolution" led by Buddhist monks. The Human Rights International Film Festival supported by the Elon Fund for Excellence

Saturday, February 20
**Remnants of War, film screening** McEwen 011, 7:30 p.m.
In the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel, one million cluster bomb munitions rained down upon southern Lebanon with an estimated 35 percent failing to detonate. One year later, teams of locally recruited and trained de-miners race to clear the land before more civilians are injured or killed. The Human Rights International Film Festival supported by the Elon Fund for Excellence

Sunday, February 21
**The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo, film screening**
Koury Digital Theatre, 3 p.m.
The 2008 Sundance Film Festival Special Jury Prize for Documentary will be screened in its entirety in advance of the visit by director Lisa F. Jackson. Her presentation will be Thursday, February 25 (see related listing). Sponsored by the Liberal Arts Forum, General Studies, and The Human Rights International Film Festival

Monday, February 22
**William Chapman Nyaho, piano**
Whitley Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.
Dr. Nyaho brings a unique cultural background and extraordinarily eclectic sense of music to the concert hall, propelling an evening of music to reach great heights. Presented as part of the symposium Music and Art of Africa and the African Diaspora: Rhythm, Movement, Color. Supported by the Elon Fund for Excellence

Tuesday, February 23 **Works from the Elon University African Art Collection, opening reception**
Isabella Cannon Room, 5:30 p.m. An exhibition from the university's permanent collection will be on view as part of the symposium Music and Art of Africa and the African Diaspora: Rhythm, Movement, Color. Exhibition continues through April 21. Supported by the Elon Fund for Excellence

Wednesday, February 24
**Khaled Mattawa, poetry reading**
Yeager Recital Hall, 6 p.m.
Mattawa, who grew up in Libya, teaches in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Michigan. He is a poet who writes in English as well as a translator of poetry written in Arabic. He is the author of three collections of poetry, the most recent being Amorisco, and has also translated five books of contemporary Arabic poetry. Supported by the Elon Fund for Excellence and Middle Eastern Studies grant

Wednesday, February 24
**Nicholas Leichter Dance Company** McCrary Theatre, 7:30 p.m.
Drawing from traditional, contemporary, folk and popular dance forms, Nicholas Leichter choreographs vibrant multicultural narratives in which movement tells the story. Admission: $12 or Elon ID. Tickets available February 3. Elon University Lyceum Series

Thursday, February 25 **Lisa Jackson, "The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo"**
Whitley Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.
Violence against women in times of conflict has been called one of history's greatest silences. From the war zones of the Democratic Republic of Congo between 2006-’07, Jackson's film broke the silence of tens of thousands of women and girls tortured in the country's civil war. Sponsored by the Liberal Arts Forum, General Studies, and the Human Rights International Film Festival

Sunday, February 28
**Crude, film screening**
McEwen 011, 7:30 p.m.
The epic story of the "Amazon Chernobyl" in the rainforest of Ecuador, the largest oil-related environmental lawsuit in the world and one of the most controversial legal cases on the planet. The Human Rights International Film Festival supported by the Elon Fund for Excellence

Monday, March 8 **An-My Le, photography exhibition**
Arts West Gallery
An-My Le, a Vietnamese refugee, examines the complex culture of warfare through the combined lenses of traditional documentary photography and the drama of Hollywood films. Focusing on Vietnam War re-enactments and military training sites, she brings into question the depiction and realities of war. Exhibition continues through April 14.

Wednesday - Friday, March 10-12
**Speak Truth to Power: Voices from Beyond the Dark by Ariel Dorfman**
Yeager Recital Hall, 7 pm.
Human rights students at Elon perform this powerful play based on the stories and lives of human rights defenders from around the world, including the Dalai Lama, Vaclav Havel, Muhammed Yunus, Desmond Tutu, and dozens of others. **Sponsored by the department of Political Science and supported by the Elon Fund for Excellence**

Tuesday, March 16
**Sara Evans, "Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century's End"**
Yeager Recital Hall, 7:30 p.m.
The last third of the 20th century witnessed a revolution in the landscape of gender in the United States - from the workplace to the family to sexuality to the language of daily life. Evans traces the trajectory of that movement and the internal complexities that have left a new terrain on which the struggle for gender justice continues.

Tuesday, March 16
**Nina Totenberg, “The Supreme Court and Its Impact on You”**
Carolina Theatre, Greensboro, 7 p.m. **The Joseph M. Bryan Leadership Lecture Series**
The National Public Radio award-winning legal affairs correspondent breaks down the latest Supreme Court developments and current issues affecting our nation today, answers the most pressing questions, and offers predictions for what's to come.

Tuesday, March 30
**50 Years of Living and Working in India** Isabella Cannon Room, 4:15 p.m. Dr. Rolf Lynton and Mrs. Ronken Lynton read from their recently published memoirs based on life in India. **Part of Experience India Week, sponsored by the Periclean Scholars Class of 2012 and supported by the Elon Fund for Excellence**

Wednesday, March 31
**Bill Porter, "China's Hermit Tradition & The Beginning of Zen"** Location TBA, 7:30 p.m.
An acclaimed translator (under the name Red Pine), Porter is author of more than a dozen books about Chinese religion and poetry, including "Road to Heaven, the first book about the cultivation of solitude. **Sponsored by the departments of Philosophy, Religious Studies Department, Asian Studies with Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life and Iron Tree Blooming**

Thursday, April 1
**Edward Luce on Modern India** LaRose Digital Theatre, Koury Business Center, 7:30 p.m.
Financial Times (London) Washington bureau chief, formerly the FT Delhi bureau chief, and author of *In Spite of the Gods, the Rise of Modern India*, discusses current issues pertaining to the world's largest democracy. **Part of Experience India Week, sponsored by the Periclean Scholars Class of 2012 and supported by the Elon Fund for Excellence and the Liberal Arts Forum**

Tuesday, April 13
**Elon University Convocation for Honors with Nicholas Kristof** Alumni Gym, Koury Athletic Center, 3:30 p.m.
New York Times journalist and two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, Kristof is widely known for reporting on human rights offenses in Asia and Africa, especially the Darfur genocide. An astute chronicler of humanity, he has crossed over from journalism to activism. He encourages students to identify a cause they care about, and apply their academic pursuits to make a powerful difference in the world. **Admission: $12 or Elon ID. Tickets available March 16.**

Thursday, April 15
**Joyce Flueckiger, “When the World Becomes Female: Religious Festival in South India”** LaRose Digital Theater, Koury Business School, 7:30 p.m. Author of numerous books on Indian culture and religion, Flueckiger specializes in performance studies and anthropology of religion
with a particular interest in gender. She has carried out extensive fieldwork in India with both Hindu and Muslim popular traditions. She will speak about the goddess tradition and festival of Gangamma (one of seven village-godess sisters) based on experiences in Tirupati, South India. Sponsored by the Program for Ethnographic Research and Community Studies (PERCS), Project Pericles, Women’s/Gender Studies, International Programs, and the departments of Religious Studies, History & Geography, Sociology & Anthropology.

Thursday, April 22
Annie Leonard, “The Story of Stuff”
McKinnon Hall, 7:30 pm
An activist for sustainability and environmental health issues, Leonard has more than 20 years of experience investigating factories and dumps around the world. She wrote and narrated the Story of Stuff, a 20-minute film that takes viewers on a provocative tour of the real costs of our consumer-driven culture. Sponsored by the Office of Sustainability, the Center for Environmental Studies, General Studies and the Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life.

Blackboard

I will use Blackboard to post assignments, projects, some readings, and internet links. You should check the site every day. Occasionally, I will add things after class, when discussions have led me to add things here and there. I will email you when I have added assignments or posted things you need to look at. So get used to visiting the site regularly. We will sometimes use the Discussion board to explore your ideas outside of class, too.

Evaluation

How we are evaluated in the class is important for a number of reasons. As a long time teacher, I know you have been measured, graded, tested, poked, and prodded in all kinds of ways. But End of Grade and Course tests are behind you, and we are much more interested in how you think rather than what you know.

I know this can be unsettling for some of you. You are really good at those End of Grade/AP kinds of measures and there is concreteness to them that you can rely upon. They may not be good measures of your intelligence, but you can predict what they will be like and prepare for them with some reassurance.

Ultimately, what we do in the academic world is create arguments. We identify problems, address them with the knowledge we have, reflect upon our response, do our best to discover new ideas and perspectives, and create “better” arguments. These arguments may never arrive at “the” solution, but they will reflect how our thinking has evolved and developed over time.
If we have made progress, we have developed stronger arguments and supporting arguments
to act upon.

In order to make this progress, to grow in your own thinking, you must be willing to explore
what you think and to share it with others. While I will certainly share my ideas in our
discussions, the core of the class is your thinking, the goal of the class developing this thinking
to its fullest. So I will ask you to write often, some informal, some formal, so that you can both
reflect upon what you think and see your own thinking develop over the course of the class.

Some of this writing will be reflective, asking you to take a position on a complex issue prior to
doing any research. Sometimes, we will write when you know just a little. And sometimes you
will produce a formal, researched project. All assignments are intended to push your thinking
and reasoning process, to challenge your ways of seeing the world. Thus, some of your writing
will be messy, incomplete, and unsatisfying. Other pieces will give you more time to develop
your thinking, resulting in a satisfying, complete project.

I will do my best to make clear what we are doing when we do it, and then evaluate
accordingly. I try to base all assignments on specific verbs, so that I can evaluate your thinking
in comparison to what I asked. If I ask for a list, I’m asking for comprehension, and I will look
for a list, nothing more. If I ask for synthesis, a high level form of thinking, I will look for your
ability to clearly integrate various perspectives, demonstrating that you both understand
different ways of seeing the issue and have criteria for valuing some ideas more than others.
My goal is to evaluate your projects fairly based upon what the assignments asked you to do,
and enable you to evaluate the thinking of yourself and others more effectively.

Evaluating the formal pieces will be done in a traditional manner. We will identify objectives
for the assignment, make clear what standards you need to meet, then evaluate for your ability
to meet both low order criteria (documentation, organization, spelling) and high order criteria
(synthesis, analysis, etc.) Too often, students think because “everything you asked for is in
there” that a paper is as good as it can be. Ultimately, it is the quality of the thinking that
determines the worth of a paper. Surely, the Bush administration thought a great deal about
the war in Iraq from the moment they started considering an invasion. But it is clear that the
quality of their thinking and acting has not been what we had hoped. It is not merely making
an argument that matters. It is the strength and quality of that argument, things that require
time, effort, and persistence. You will have a formal midterm, final, and one project over the
course of the semester.

The informal pieces will be evaluated in a portfolio manner. A portfolio is a collection of one’s
work. It demonstrates one’s ability to produce and reflect upon ideas over a period of time. It
shows how much preparation one has done, how consistently one has worked, and how one
has changed one’s thinking in the writing process. Your portfolio will be the basis for your
evaluation for the informal writing. It will catalog your thinking over the semester and will demonstrate your growth and development.

The portfolio will consist of all informal writing assigned. Keep all drafts and notes in this portfolio. Every time you write something down, even if you want to discard it, remember that this text reflects your current thinking. Keeping this “garbage” provides a record reflecting your thinking process. This portfolio will be due at mid-term (right before Spring Break, Friday 19 March). I will evaluate the portfolio submitted, so any work not included will influence your evaluation.

One warning about the portfolio. If you think this type of evaluative system allows you to cruise along, writing little until the portfolio is due, think again. If you do not complete all the class assignments, your grade (as well as writing and thinking ability) will reflect it. My goal is for you to be as successful in this class as possible. The portfolio evaluative method best guarantees this.

Finally, there is no “curve” or “quota system” for determining final grades for the course. You will receive what you earn, and I would love to see each of you earn an A for the course. This also means that I will not grade you compared to the performance of your peers (“This paper is not as good as MJ’s so it can’t be an A”). A is for excellent work, B for above average, C for average, D for poor, and F for unacceptable. Remember that excellent work requires the high level thinking described above. Excellent work is where you show what you did on your own, to make connections in creative and original ways. This thinking takes time and effort, and earns you the evaluation you will achieve.

We will use the following scale for evaluation:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Events</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Boards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portfolio of informal writing</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project 1</td>
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<td>Final Exam/ Midterm</td>
<td>15%</td>
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