Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism
BRIEF CONTENTS

PART 1  Introduction: The Consumer, the Laborer, the Capitalist, and the Nation-State in the Society of Perpetual Growth  1
    Chapter 1  Constructing the Consumer  12
    Chapter 2  The Laborer in the Culture of Capitalism  35
    Chapter 3  The Rise and Fall of the Merchant, Industrialist, and Financier  57
    Chapter 4  The Nation-State in the Culture of Capitalism  99

PART 2  The Global Impact of the Culture of Capitalism: Introduction  127
    Chapter 5  Population Growth, Migration, and Urbanization  133
    Chapter 6  Hunger, Poverty, and Economic Development  168
    Chapter 7  Environment and Consumption  197
    Chapter 8  Health and Disease  220
    Chapter 9  Indigenous Groups and Ethnic Conflict  248

PART 3  Resistance and Rebellion: Introduction  275
    Chapter 10  Peasant Protest, Rebellion, and Resistance  282
    Chapter 11  Anti-Systemic Protest  306
    Chapter 12  Religion and Anti-Systemic Protest  329
    Chapter 13  Solving Global Problems: Some Solutions and Courses of Action  353
## CONTENTS

*Preface*  xiii

**PART 1** *Introduction: The Consumer, the Laborer, the Capitalist, and the Nation-State in the Society of Perpetual Growth*  1

- A Primer on Money: The Philosopher’s Stone  3
  - The Development of Commodity Money  5
  - The Shift from Commodity to Fiat or Debt Money  7
  - The Consequences of a System of Debt Money  8

**Chapter 1** *Constructing the Consumer*  12

- Remaking Consumption  14
  - Marketing and Advertising  15
  - The Transformation of Institutions  17
  - The Transformation of Spiritual and Intellectual Values  19
  - The Reconfiguration of Time, Space, and Class  21

- Kinderculture in America: The Child as Consumer  23
  - The Role of Children in Capitalism  23
  - The Social Construction of Childhood  25

- Exporting the Consumer  31

- Conclusion  34

**Chapter 2** *The Laborer in the Culture of Capitalism*  35

- A Primer on the Elements of Capitalism  36
  - The Baptism of Money  39

- The Construction and Anatomy of the Working Class  40
  - Characteristics of the Working Class  40
  - The Growth of Overseas Assembly Plants  45
  - The Creation of Free Labor  48
  - The Segmentation of the Workforce  49
  - Control and Discipline  52
  - Resistance and Rebellion  54

- Conclusion  55

**Chapter 3** *The Rise and Fall of the Merchant, Industrialist, and Financier*  57

- The Era of the Global Trader  60
  - A Trader’s Tour of the World in 1400  60
  - The Economic Rise of Europe and Its Impact on Africa and the Americas  65

- The Birth of Finance and the Tulip Bubble of 1636–1637  70
The Era of the Industrialist 74  
Textiles and the Rise of the Factory System 77  
The Age of Imperialism 78  

The Era of the Corporation, the Multilateral Institution, and the Capital Speculator 83  
The Rise of the Corporation 83  
Bretton Woods and the World Debt 86  
The “Second Great Contraction” 92  
Conclusion 97  

Chapter 4 The Nation-State in the Culture of Capitalism 99  
The Origin and History of the State 101  
The Evolution of the State 101  
The History and Function of the Nation-State 102  
Constructing the Nation-State 104  
Creating the Other 105  
Language, Bureaucracy, and Education 106  
Violence and Genocide 109  
Spin, Free Trade, and the Role of Energy in the Global Economy 113  
Manufacturing Consent: Spin 114  
Markets and Free Trade 118  
Energy and Technology 120  
Conclusion 124  

PART 2 The Global Impact of the Culture of Capitalism: Introduction 127  
A Primer on Market Externalities: Polanyi’s Paradox 129  

Chapter 5 Population Growth, Migration, and Urbanization 133  
The Malthusians Versus the Revisionists 135  
The Case of India and China 136  
The Issue of Carrying Capacity 138  
The Ideology of Malthusian Concerns 138  
Demographic Transition Theory 141  
A Primer on the Determinants of Population Growth and Decline 143  
Some Examples of Demographic Change 145  
Population Growth in the Periphery 148  
Wealth Flows Theory 149  
The Social Implications of Wealth Flows Theory 151  
The Question of Gender and Power 152  
Issues of Immigration 154
Chapter 6  Hunger, Poverty, and Economic Development  168
The Evolution of Food Production: From the Neolithic to the Neocaloric 169
From Gathering and Hunting to the Neolithic 170
Capitalism and Agriculture 171
The Neocaloric and the Green Revolution 173
The Politics of Hunger 176
The Anatomy of Famine 177
The Anatomy of Endemic Hunger 179
Solutions and Adaptations to Poverty and Hunger 184
Economic Development 184
The Nature and Growth of the Informal Economy 188
The Nature and Scope of the Informal Economy of Drugs 191
Conclusion 196

Chapter 7  Environment and Consumption  197
The Case of Sugar 202
Sugar Origins and Production 202
Uses of Sugar 202
The Development of the Sugar Complex 203
The Expansion of Sugar Production 203
The Mass Consumption of Sugar 204
Modern Sugar 205
The Story of Beef 206
Creating a Taste for Beef 207
The Emergence of the American Beef Industry 208
Modern Beef 212
The Impact of Production on the Environment: The Effects of Climate Change 213
The Environment, Sustainability, and the Nation-State 217
Conclusion 219

Chapter 8  Health and Disease  220
A Primer on How to Die from an Infectious Disease 225
The Relationship between Culture and Disease 229
Gathering and Hunting to Early Agriculture 229
Cities: “Graveyards of Mankind” 230
Diseases of Environmental Change 233
Diseases of Human Ecology: Chickens, Pigs, and Wild Birds 235
The Origin of Influenza: Avian Flu and H1N1 235
Aids and the Culture of Capitalism 238
How Did the Disease Spread? 240
Who Gets Infected with AIDS? 243
Who Gets Blamed? 245
Conclusion 246

Chapter 9 Indigenous Groups and Ethnic Conflict 248
The Fate of Indigenous Peoples 251
Some Characteristics of Indigenous Peoples 251
The Process of Ethnocide 252
The Guarani: The Economics of Ethnocide 259
History and Background 260
Contemporary Development and Guarani Communities 262
Disadvantaged Majorities and Their Revenge 264
Leveling Crowds 266
Genocide as an Externality of the Market 267
Conclusion 273

PART 3 Resistance and Rebellion: Introduction 275
A Primer on Terrorism 277

Chapter 10 Peasant Protest, Rebellion, and Resistance 282
Malaysia and the Weapons of the Weak 283
Malaysian Peasants and the Green Revolution 284
Fighting Back 286
Obstacles to Resistance 287
Protest and Change 288
Kikuyu and the Mau Mau Rebellion 289
The British in East Africa 289
The White Highlands 291
The Roots of the Rebellion 292
The Rebellion 294
“State of Emergency” 295
The Oath and the Detention Camps 297
Independence 298
The Rebellion in Chiapas 299
Poverty and Inequality in Chiapas 301
The Rebellion and the Global Economy 302
The Revolt and the Reactions of the Mexican Government 303
The Future of Peasants 304
Conclusion 305

Chapter 11 Anti-Systemic Protest 306
Protest as Anti-Systemic: The Two World Revolutions 307
The Revolution of 1848 308
The Revolution of 1968 310
The Protests of Labor: Coal Miners in Nineteenth-Century Pennsylvania 311
The Coal Industry and the Worker’s Life 311
Worker Resistance and Protest 314
Destroying Worker Resistance 316
Global Feminist Resistance 317
Gender Relations in the Culture of Capitalism 319
Strategies of Protest 321
Direct Action and Occupy Wall Street 323
Anarchism and Direct Action 325
Conclusion 328

Chapter 12 Religion and Anti-Systemic Protest 329
Indigenous Religious Movements as Anti-Systemic Protest 331
The Ghost Dance 331
The Cargo Cults 332
Zionism in South Africa 334
The Global Challenge of Anti-Systemic Religious Protest 336
Islamic Fundamentalism 338
Islamic Fundamentalism in Iran 339
Protestant Fundamentalism in North America 340
“Terror in the Mind of God” 345
Some Examples of Religious Violence 346
Understanding Religious Violence 351
Conclusion 351

Chapter 13 Solving Global Problems: Some Solutions and Courses of Action 353
The Central Dilemma of Growth 354
The Depletion of Natural Capital/Wealth 357
The Depletion of Political Capital/Wealth 358
The Depletion of Social Capital/Wealth 363
Things We Could Do 372
The Debt Strike 375
Conclusion 376
References 379
Name Index 392
Place and Culture Index 398
Subject Index 401
Over the past 400 to 600 years, a culture and society, originating for the most part in Europe and dedicated to the idea of trade and consumption as the ultimate source of well-being, began to expand to all parts of the globe. In many ways it is the most successful culture and society the world has ever seen, and its technology, wealth, and power stand as monuments to its success; however, accompanying its expansion have been problems—growing social and economic inequality, environmental destruction, mass starvation, and social unrest. Most members of this society and culture perceive these problems as distant from themselves or as challenges for them to meet. However, there is the possibility that these problems, which threaten to negate everything this culture has accomplished, are intrinsic to the culture itself. That is the possibility to be explored in this book.

The outline of this book emerged when, a few years ago, my colleagues at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh, James Armstrong and Mark Cohen, and I began developing a course on global problems. We wanted to create a course that would help students understand the major global issues that they confront in the mass media—problems such as the so-called population explosion, famine and hunger, global environmental destruction, the emergence and spread of new diseases, so-called ethnic conflict and genocides, terrorism, and social protest. We learned quickly that to make the course successful, we had to overcome the often-ethnocentric perspectives of the students, perspectives that were often reinforced by media coverage of global affairs. We needed also to compensate for the students’ lack of backgrounds in anthropology, history, and economics, all crucial for understanding the roots of the problems we were to examine. Finally, we needed to illustrate that the problems we examined were relevant to them, that the problems would affect them either directly or indirectly, and that their actions now or in the future would determine the extent to which the origins of these problems could be acknowledged, let alone ever addressed. The form of this book emerged from our efforts at dealing with these pedagogical issues and the classroom interactions that these efforts stimulated.

THE FOCUS OF THIS BOOK

We can summarize our approach in this book as follows: There has emerged over the past five to six centuries a distinctive culture or way of life dominated by a belief in trade and commodity consumption as the source of well-being. This culture flowered in Western Europe, reached fruition in the United States, and spread to much of the rest of the world, creating what some anthropologists, sociologists, and historians call the world system. People disagree on the critical factors in the development of this system and even whether it was unique historically, although most agree on certain basic ideas. Among the most important are the assumptions that the driving force behind the spread of the contemporary world system was industrial and corporate capitalism, and that the spread of the world system is related in some way to the resulting division of the world into wealthy nations and poor nations or into wealthy core, developed, or industrialized areas and dependent peripheral, undeveloped, or nonindustrialized areas.

The spread of the capitalist world system has been accompanied by the creation of distinctive patterns of social relations, ways of viewing the world, methods of food production, distinctive diets, patterns of health and disease, relationships to the environment, and so on. However, the spread of this culture has not gone uncontested; there has been resistance in the form of direct and indirect actions—political, religious, and social protest and revolution. How and why capitalist culture developed and the reasons why some groups resisted and continue to resist its development are among the questions posed in this book.

The answers to these questions are based on specific assumptions. First, a central tenet of anthropology is that personal, social, cultural, and historical factors determine the point of view
any person might have regarding a certain phenomenon. No less is true of those participating in
the culture of capitalism who have created a view of global events that we share. Consequently,
these views tend to be, to one extent or another, ethnocentric; that is, they describe, evaluate, and
judge events solely from a specific cultural perspective. Among the major purposes of anthro-
pology is to teach ways to avoid ethnocentrism and appreciate the importance of understanding
the beliefs and behaviors of others from their perspectives rather than from our own, a view
anthropologists refer to as cultural relativism. To some extent ethnocentrism is unavoidable, and
the job of the person who interprets global events—whether a journalist, economist, sociologist,
or anthropologist—is to make the event comprehensible to those people for whom that person
is writing. Our assumption is that to minimize cultural bias we must recognize that our views of
events are partially influenced by our culture and, for that reason, we must make our own culture
an object of analysis.

Second, we assume that an understanding of global events requires us to recognize that
no contemporary culture or society exists independent of what anthropologists refer to as the
world system, and that each falls within either the core or the periphery of that system. Using
this terminology to refer to different parts of the world permits us to avoid the more value-laden
distinctions implicit in the use of terms such as developed or undeveloped, modern or traditional,
and First, Second, or Third World. World system theorists often include a third category, semi-
periphery, to denote those nation-states or regions that are moving toward the core or that have
moved out of the core. These distinctions recognize that countries can move from one category
to another. For example, the three nation-states that world system theorists consider to have
been dominant in the past four centuries—the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United
States—all began as semiperipheral to the world system.

Third, we assume that global events and actions cannot be adequately understood without
considering the events that preceded them; we must develop a historical perspective. For
example, we live in a period of human history largely defined by a sequence of events that began
some four to five hundred years ago, loosely termed the Industrial Revolution. Because each
of us has lived during only a particular phase of that history, we tend to take it for granted that
the world has always been as it is today. Yet the modern industrial world order is, in historical
terms, a very recent event. We are deceived by our biology, by our limited life span, into thinking of sixty, seventy, or eighty years as a long time, but in the perspective of human history it is a fleeting moment. Human beings have for most of their existence lived as bands of gatherers and hunters, for a shorter time as agriculturists and farmers, and only recently as industrialists and wage laborers. Yet the Industrial Revolution has transformed the world and human societies as has no other event in history. We cannot understand the events, issues, and problems of today’s
world without understanding the how’s and why’s of the Industrial Revolution.

It will be clear that the emergence of capitalism represents a culture that is in many ways
the most successful that has ever been developed in terms of accommodating large numbers of
individuals in relative and absolute comfort and luxury. It has not been as successful, however,
in integrating all in equal measure, and its failure here remains one of its major problems. It has
solved the problems of feeding large numbers of people (although certainly not all), and it has
provided unprecedented advances in health and medicine (but, again, not for all). It has prom-
oted the development of amazingly complex technological instruments and fostered a level of
global communication without precedent. It has united people in common pursuits as no other
culture has. Yet it remains to be seen when the balance sheet is tallied whether capitalism repre-
sents the epitome of “progress” that some claim.

NEW TO THE SIXTH EDITION

Since the publication of the fifth edition of Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism,
we have experienced significant global upheaval as well as heightened concerns over global
immigration, urbanization, climate change, and regional conflict, as well as levels of protest,
all of which are addressed in this, the sixth, edition of the book. Specific changes include the following:

- Additional discussion of money as debt, the movement of money, and the consequences and the importance of perpetual growth.
- Material on advertising targeted to children and the scope of the practice.
- Coverage of immigration, its history, and its social, political, and economic impact.
- Coverage of urbanization and its impacts
- Discussion of climate change and its impact on the economy and society as a whole.
- Timely information on Occupy Wall Street and the philosophy and techniques of Direct Action.
- A new, comprehensive Chapter 13 discussing how to address many of the issues raised in the book.

Throughout this edition, I have tried to make the nature and origin of complex problems accessible to general readers and undergraduates without oversimplifying the gravity of the problems.

As always, I welcome comments and communications from readers and can be reached by email at richard.robbins@plattsburgh.edu. In addition, readers are encouraged to use the Web resources, including readings, online videos, and references created especially for the book, at http://www.plattsburgh.edu/legacy.

This text is available in a variety of formats—digital and print. To learn more about our programs, pricing options, and customization, visit www.pearsonhighered.com.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have contributed to the writing of this book. I have already mentioned my colleagues James Armstrong and Mark Cohen. Others include Alfred Robbins, Michael Robbins, Rachel Dowty, Tom Moran, Philip Devita, Gloria Bobbie, Douglas Skopp, Edward Champagne, Vincent Carey, Larry Soroka, Ellen Fitzpatrick, Ann Kimmage, Michael Miranda, John Hess, Jan Rinaldi, Tina Charland, Tim Harnett, Daphne Kutzer, Monica van Beusekom, Russell Kleinbach, Peggy Lindsey, Dan and Mary Abel, Amy Weisz Predmore, Mark White, Barbara Harris, Art Orme, Sam Baldwin, and Mary Turner, along with the many students who helped me better articulate important issues. I also thank members of the email list H-World, particularly its moderator Patrick Manning; Richard Winkel, moderator of the email list Activ-L (aml@webmap.missouri.edu), and its many contributors; and many of the students who used one or another version of this book and who provided invaluable feedback. I would also like to thank the book’s reviewers.

Reviewers of the first edition were John L. Aguilar, Charles O. Ellenbaum, Cynthia Mahmood, Richard Moore, Jon Olson, and Dave Winther. Reviewers of the second edition were Elliot Fratkin, Smith College; James Loucky, Western Washington University; Luis A. Vivanco, University of Vermont; and Vaughn Bryant, Texas A&M University. Reviewers of the third edition were Eric Mielants, Fairfield University; William Leggett, Middle Tennessee; Nancy McDowell, Beloit College; and Benjamin Brewer, James Madison University. Reviewers of the fifth edition were George Esber, Miami University, Middletown; Suzanne Scheld, California State University, Northridge; James Sewastynowicz, Jacksonville State University; and Miguel Vasquez, Northern Arizona University.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Sylvia Shephard for her initial support of the project; to Sarah Kelbaugh, Dave Repetto, Nancy Roberts, and Barbara Reiley of Pearson and Jennifer Jacobson and Dan Vest of Ohlinger Publishing Services for guiding the project through to its present edition; as well as to Shiny Rajesh, who managed the latest edition, and Sayed Zakaullah, whose copyediting will make reading the book far easier than it would have been otherwise. And special thanks go to Amy, Rebecca, and Zoey, who tolerated with unusual understanding my periods of self-imposed isolation. Needless to say, the final form of the book, for better or worse, is the result of my own decisions.