



INSTITUT DE HAUTES
ÉTUDES INTERNATIONALES
ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT
GRADUATE INSTITUTE
OF INTERNATIONAL AND
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Department of Anthropology and Sociology (ANSO)

Academic year 2020 - 2021

Illicit Economies

ANSO112 - Autumn - 6 ECTS

[Schedule & Room](#)

Course Description

The turn of the century augured a new era based on the rule of law and good governance. Despite the promises of declining underground activities and the integration of informal practices into the formal sector, illicit economies have become more prominent worldwide by taking advantage of technological developments, unhindered capital movements, and lax cross-border controls. From drug and gemstone contraband, counterfeiting or money laundering, new realms of the illicit have emerged, including bio-piracy, cybercrime, sophisticated financial and tax evasion, as well as heightened human and sex trafficking.

This seminar assesses the prevalence of informal and criminal spaces and flows in the global economy. Rather than framing illicit economies in strict opposition to lawful practices, or relying on categorizations that obscure key features of these economies, the course examines how illicit economies can emerge alongside, and at times in convergence with, regulated, lawful and formalized economies. How are underground spaces and practices organized and what are the effects of excluding or criminalizing these economies? How does the underground movement of people, capital, information and commodities reposition the limits of what is licit and illicit, formal and informal?

> PROFESSOR

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Syllabus

NB: This is a provisional version of the syllabus.

The final version of the syllabus will be made available one week before the start of the semester.

Procedures, Assignments

Completing the assigned readings and contributing to class discussions is a prerequisite to successfully attend this seminar. Please inform the professor if you have any preferred names or pronouns, as well as any other issue that may be relevant for your learning experience.

Absences should be communicated in advance by email and more than two unexcused absences will impact the final grade.

Bilingual policy: The Graduate Institute is a bilingual institution. Lectures will be held in English but participation in class and written assignments may be completed in French. If applicable, originals of the text or translations in French may be used.

Plagiarism constitutes a breach of academic integrity and will not be tolerated.

All written assignments should be sent electronically to the instructor. Specific deadlines and additional guidelines on each assignment will be provided in class.

Evaluation

Evaluation will be based on a variety of assignments and learning opportunities, including in-class and online exercises and short written essays, each designed to sharpen and develop your writing and research skills.

Each student will develop a research proposal on an illicit economy (e.g., an illegal commodity, trading practice or process, or a conceptual debate) by way of step-by-step and collaborative assignments, from defining a research object and case selection to data collection strategies. The final research proposal will also include a review of the relevant literature.

If you had to research an illicit economy, how would you go about it? What is the puzzle, gap, or problem about your research that would warrant investigation? What would be the empirical focus of your research or the case you are interested in? How would you plan to collect and analyze data? How would you overcome access issues, and what ethical questions would you have to consider?

Additional guidelines will be provided in class, but students will contribute to one of four possible research tracks: i) Commodity; ii) Market and exchange; iii) Conceptual mapping; iv) Legal and policy implications.

- a) Participation (20%)
- b) Research proposal I: Research object and case selection (20%)
- c) Research proposal II: Methods and data (20%)
- d) Final research proposal (40%)

Schedule of sessions

Part I – Concepts and definitions

Week 1. September 22 – Introduction, course overview

Week 2. September 29 – Licit and illicit, formal and informal

Week 3. October 6 – Economy at an awkward scale: Markets and actors

Part II – What’s organized about crime?

Week 4. October 13 – Regulation, Sovereignty, and Predation

Week 5. October 20 – Criminalizing race and poverty

Week 6. October 27 – Bribes and corruption

Part III – Illicit economies

Week 7. November 3 – Ethno-Erotic Economies

Week 8. November 10 – Drugs

Week 9. November 17 – Gold, gems and other minerals

Week 10. November 24 – Trafficking in bodies and antiquities

Week 11. December 1 – Cross-border movement, mobility and forced migration

Week 12. December 8 – Tax Havens, Evasion, and money laundering

Week 13. December 15 – Cryptocurrencies and the Dark Web

Week 14. December 22 – NO CLASS (reading week)