INTRODUCTION

This course investigates the role of technology and culture in international commerce. These factors are generally assumed to be constant (the *ceteris paribus* condition) in most economic analyses. This course takes technology and culture to change and exercise both short-term and long-run effects on international commerce. The first part of the course introduces major concepts and theories while parts two and three introduce current global issues associated with technology and culture in the global economy. Part I emphasizes theoretical and historical understandings, while parts II & III take a problem-solving approach toward current issues such as global value chains, digital technologies, data privacy, cultural anxieties, and migration.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand ways to integrate technology and culture with theories of international trade and development. This includes the analyses of property rights and institutions of international commerce.

- Ability to distinguish between long-run and short-run dynamics in the global economy associated with technology and culture.

- Operationalize and provide evidence for technological and cultural factors in international commerce.

- Problem-solve current issues in TCC. These range from cryptocurrencies to cultural anxieties, and immigration to Internet governance.

- Provide policy-advice on a current debate or controversy in international commerce that arises out of technological or cultural change

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Come prepared to class. Attendance and participation comprise 10 percent of the grade. You are allowed one unexcused absence, one excused absence. Any further absences are strongly discouraged. Consider taking this class another semester if you expect to miss more than two classes this semester.
2. Each person will participate in at least one debate in the class on a topic to be assigned the week prior to the debate. The debate and the ability to address counter-arguments and questions will be 10 percent of your grade. Debates begin March 2.

3. You will write three short papers/mid-term, one for each section of the course. Each paper will be between 1500-2000 words and worth 25 points each for the first two papers and 30 points for the last paper. The papers address topics covered in each of the three sections in the syllabus. Each of the papers addresses the class readings directly but also provides an opportunity for you to synthesize the readings and shape your own argument. In doing so, you are encouraged to carry out your own empirical research. I especially advice that you examine the experience of a couple of countries or regions that interest you in each paper. Please use a professional citation format such as APA, APSA, Chicago or Harvard for all papers.

- Instructions for the first paper are attached to this syllabus. The paper will be due Sunday, March 1 before midnight.
- The second paper will a mid-term consisting of questions to be given out on Monday, March 30, and the exam will be due Sunday, April 5 before midnight.
- The third paper will be a policy options brief dealing with a recent cultural controversy in international commerce. Whatever your topic, you will be expected to do the following: (a) the introduction will specify the economic and cultural issue or dilemma for which you are proposing policy options, (b) provide a brief historical and conceptual background for understanding the policy dilemma, (c) specify at least three or four policy options and the feasibility of pursuing each option or a mix of the options. This paper should apply to a group of countries facing the same problem. In exceptional cases, and after consultation, I will allow the policy memo to be addressed toward one specific country. The paper will be due Monday, May 10 before midnight.
## PART I: HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

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<th>DATES</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>READINGS</th>
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<td>OR</td>
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<td>Singh, J.P. 2020. “Political Economy, Markets and Institutions: Preference Formation as a Point of Entry” <em>Global Perspectives.</em> (fully explained version of Schar School essay relevant for understanding TCC readings)</td>
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<td>McCloskey, Deirdre N. 2010. <em>Bourgeois dignity: Why economics can't explain the modern world.</em> University of Chicago Press.</td>
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EXTRA READING ON AGRICULTURE  
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<tr>
<th>Week 8: March 23</th>
<th>Telecommunications and Internet</th>
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<th>Week 9: March 30</th>
<th>Intellectual Property</th>
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<td>Gu Bin. 2020. “Americans are wrong to paint China as an intellectual property thief.” <em>Financial Times</em>. <a href="https://www.ft.com/content/26903a94-3617-11ea-ac3c-f68c10993b04">https://www.ft.com/content/26903a94-3617-11ea-ac3c-f68c10993b04</a> [OR LOG ON TO LIBRARY]</td>
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## PART III: CURRENT ISSUES IN CULTURE

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Lena Maria Schaffer & Gabriele Spilker (2019) Self-interest versus sociotropic considerations: an information-based perspective to understanding individuals’ trade preferences, Review of International Political Economy, DOI: [10.1080/09692290.2019.1642232](10.1080/09692290.2019.1642232) [Log ON TO LIBRARY]  
EXTRA READING:  


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ITRN 605: TECHNOLOGY, CULTURE AND COMMERCE
George Mason University
Fall 2019

Professor J. P. Singh

Assignment #1

Notes

• This assignment needs to show your competence over the readings for Part I of the course. Cite as many as you can to support your answer.

• The first two-thirds of the paper is a literature review showing your competence over the readings and outlining your argument. Therefore, two-thirds of the total word limit needs to pertain to the readings.

• Please use a professional citation format. APA/Chicago/APSA preferred. MLA discouraged.

• As noted in the syllabus, the paper needs to be argumentative and you should reference specific country examples (at least two) that you have researched.

• Please provide an appropriate title for your paper.

• When finished, upload the paper to the Blackboard site, no later than midnight on Sunday, March 1 before midnight.

Topic (Choose only one of the following)

1. How and to what extent do technology and cultural factors influence international commerce?
2. How and to what extent do technology and cultural factors influence economic development?
3. How do cultural factors influence technology adoption and economic development?
4. How do cultural factors influence technological change and international trade?

Choice of countries

Depending on your argument/explanatory factor, choose two countries that are somewhat different on the dimension that forms part of your explanation. Varying your explanatory factor will, in turn, allow you to observe varying effects on trade or development issues. For example, Acemoglu and Robinson vary “political replacement effect” to observe how different types of countries adopt new technologies.
CLASS POLICIES

Specific Course Policies

- This is a discussion intensive class. Should there be an emergency and you are unable to attend class, please provide appropriate documentation. I discourage absence for any reason other than a medical or family/personal emergency.

- We will work closely with each other on all assignment and deadlines will need to be respected. Any delayed assignment will get a grade lower for one day it is late, two grades lower for two days of late work, and so on and so forth.

- Please turn off your cellular phones or switch them to silent or vibrate mode before coming to class. You are allowed one free incoming ring in the class.

- Use of laptop computers is allowed in class. Use of social media and e-mailing during class hours is not allowed. The only exception will be times when we look up global networks on social media sites to fulfill class goals.

- You can drink or eat in class as long as you do not disrupt the class with loud sounds, making a mess, or filling the class with exuberant aromas! I especially do not want foods in the class, which necessitate loud crunchy sounds.

A few George Mason Policies are essential for the conduct of this class.

- Academic Integrity: The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using Harvard or APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.
• **Diversity at Mason:** George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth. An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected.

• **Disability:** If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; http://ods.gmu.edu) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

• **Privacy:** Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See http://masonlive.gmu.edu for more information. I will send you any information related to your grade only on your MasonLive email account.