

10-2012

## Readings in Globalization: Key Concepts and Major Debates

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### Recommended Citation

Sondrol, Paul C. (2012) "Readings in Globalization: Key Concepts and Major Debates," *International Dialogue*: Vol. 2, Article 15.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32873/uno.dc.ID.2.1.1050>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/id-journal/vol2/iss1/15>

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# Review

## ***Readings in Globalization: Key Concepts and Major Debates***

George Ritzer and Zeynep Atalay (eds). Wiley-Backwell: Malden, MA, 2009. 477pp.

Paul C. Sondrol<sup>\*</sup>

George Ritzer and Zeynep Atalay's unique anthology introduces students to major concepts in globalization via chapters from a variety of disciplinary approaches to familiarize the reader with the broad sweep of globalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Readings in Globalization* integrates easily digested synthesis into well-crafted essays. More experienced tastes will appreciate the mixing of new primary research in with older data found in some of the chapters. These findings by distinguished authors offer a rich assessment of the globalization in international relations.

The collection of essays endeavors to explore the complexity of globalization by analyzing different aspects of globalization. At the political, globalization transfers power of decision-making from local political elites to unelected technocrats and macro-economic international organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The "Structural Adjustment" in the developing world, particularly, is shown by some authors to be the economic equivalent of the grape-fruit diet, belt-tightening and

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complete with purgatives. It is shown by many critics in the text that globalization promotes economic growth and increased production of consumer goods, pushing increasing numbers of working class families in Third World into unemployment and poverty.

There are a wide range of concepts covered in the text (colonialism, neoliberalism, structural adjustment, internationalization and McDonalization, to name but a few). Globalization's emphasis on the creation of wealth via market forces is also shown to create extensive environmental degradation; the cost of damage reparations (if any reparations) are then passed on to the state and the people. The volume shows that globalization can be seen in a number of different ways: as global economy, as global culture, the technical revolution, deterritorialization, and liberalization.

In an economic sense, globalization signifies the process of internationalization markets. It is shown by powerful arguments that the term hides the fact that the world economy may not integrate as much as it polarizes. At one level, globalization refers to the increased internationalization in transactions among states and peoples, reflected in flows of trade, investment and capital and fueled by the technological revolution in travel, but particularly modern communications (internet, satellite communications and high-tech computers).

Accelerated by the technological revolution, deterritorialization is described as the declining influence of territorial places, distances and national boundaries.

On another level, globalization is shown to be a field of structural relations of power between nation-states, and between classes of people. In other words, about hegemony, hierarchy and exclusion. The book demonstrates a number of discourses on globalization; conservative, liberal and critical. Conservative discourse sees globalization as only a contemporary phase in the age-old interstate competition for power and denies much further significance. In other words, contemporary globalization differs not in kind, but in degree. Liberals recognize globalization as a far-reaching process with profound, mainly beneficial, consequences; believing that globalization involves the diffusion of market forces, multi-party democracy and international cooperation. These together are seen by some authors as increased opportunity for a better life for humanity.

In this formulation, there is little room for recognition of the creativities of non-European cultures like those of indigenous peoples as valued contributions in emerging global structures and processes. Happily, the text covers chapters and concepts on

Orientalism, civilizations and colonialism. But critics thus see a cultural of imperialism, the agenda of which is to fossilize indigenous cultures and secure the cultural homogenization on a world wide scale through Anglo-Saxon European hegemony and its overseas extension in North America. By introducing an exogenous and centralizing kind of development, critics see globalization as destroying the potential of for self-development of nations and peoples.

What about global culture? A major theme of the book is the relationship between culture and globalization. The book does an excellent job in explaining that spread of technology is indeed bringing about a certain type of global homogenization of expressions of culture. It affirms the rationality of the market, before which we must bow and purge all other forms of thought. It is an expression of modernity and therefore faces strong resistance from those who seek to preserve their own identity and who do not wish to be considered as a mass of potential consumers. This is the culture of the governing class that produces a commercialization of life itself.

With contributions from leading scholars across a variety of disciplines, these readings help clarify our knowledge and advance our understanding of globalization. This book fills an important gap by making available, in a single volume, a variety of interpretations of issues critical to the topic of globalization. It is a very good read.