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## Contributing Disciplines

Interdisciplinary scholars value the separate disciplines: “[T]he disciplines are foundational to interdisciplinary studies because they have produced the perspectives and insights that contribute to our ability as humans to understand our world” (Repko, Szostak, & Buchberger, 2014, p. 29). However, “the (various) disciplines . . . were not designed to address such complex situations, though the partial insights they provide are absolutely essential to understanding individual aspects of a complex situation” (Newell, 2010, pp. 9, 11). For Global Studies, the social sciences and other relevant disciplines provide us with the necessary information and scholarly analyses and perspectives to study, understand, and potentially solve or manage complex global processes and issues. They are the “necessary precondition for and foundation of the interdisciplinary enterprise” (Repko et al., 2014, p. 28). To build on that foundation, we must have a basic understanding of relevant disciplines and their perspectives. As noted in Chapter 1, different universities and colleges may include different disciplines in their Global Studies, International Studies, or International Affairs majors. Five disciplines that commonly contribute to Global Studies majors are included here: Anthropology, Economics, Geography, History, and Political Science. Suggestions for how to learn about additional disciplines and their perspectives are provided later in this chapter.

### Anthropology

Translated literally from the Greek, anthropology is the study of humanity. That is, of course, a very broad subject and one that also includes the subjects of other disciplines contributing to Global Studies. Anthropology is intentionally interdisciplinary to begin with; some anthropologists argue that anthropology “encompasses all other disciplines related to humans” (Magli, 2001, p. 2). Yet it is still possible to differentiate anthropology from other social sciences disciplines: Anthropology encourages the study of how human life began and evolved and how human beings lead their daily lives. In the United States, the discipline is broken down into four subdisciplines, which include archeology, linguistics, physical anthropology, and cultural anthropology.

Global Studies commonly includes cultural anthropology.<sup>1</sup> This is because, while all subdisciplines of anthropology contribute to our knowledge of the world, understanding the similarities and differences between—and within—the cultures of the various countries and peoples of the world especially helps us manage complexity in our world. As the American Anthropological Association (2018) points out, “a central concern of anthropologists is the application of knowledge to the solution of human problems.”

Modern cultural anthropology dates to roughly the turn of the 20th century, but has roots that go much further back. We know ancient scholars such as Plato were interested in the worldviews of different peoples, and worldview is a fundamental aspect of culture. As European countries sought colonies in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, members of their militaries, missionaries, colonial administrators, and travelers began telling and publishing stories of the different peoples they encountered and how they lived their day-to-day lives in their local communities. Such stories were usually based on each person’s experience with other peoples’ religions, traditions, families, and food and shelter, not academic analyses. However, throughout this period this secondhand data was used by European thinkers to lay the foundation for the scientific study of other cultures. Today’s trained anthropologist studies many of the same subjects, but from a very different perspective.

## Subjects of Study

Cultural anthropology focuses on understanding how people in different countries, different communities, and different groups live their lives, how they view the world, and how they view their place within the world. There is, however, no single agreed-on definition of culture. When possible, many anthropologists seek to use more specific terms in place of the ill-defined term *culture*. Anthropology started as the study of other cultures understood to be discreet units as they were discovered during colonial eras; anthropology has proceeded to become more diversified and complex through the decades due to modernization, globalization, and so forth. As a discipline tied to real-world problems, anthropology itself has also become increasingly complex and, consequently, many cultural anthropologists are less dedicated to the study of “culture” per se and more dedicated to complex problems for which culture provides significant context.

Anthropologists study the formation of identities, social relationships, and group affiliations, often broken down into smaller topics such as kinship, family, and marriage. Religions, rituals, and traditions also make up our daily lives and so anthropologists

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<sup>1</sup>*Cultural anthropology* is the term used in the United States; the American Association of Anthropologists uses the term “cultural anthropology” for the subdiscipline while at the same time utilizing “sociocultural anthropologists” for those within the field. European, particularly British, anthropologists utilize the term *social anthropology*.

study them. Individual and community conceptions of health are important to how people live their lives. Common daily activities such as preparing and eating food, labor (employment), and leisure activities are all subjects of study. As are the economic exchanges that may be needed for people to grow or obtain food and other objects, necessary or desired. Society can be a subject of study and a term that can also be ill-defined, but generally refers to the groups formed as individuals choose to live and interact with one another, including the structures, functions, and rules of those groups. Monaghan and Just (2000) make the distinction that “we may *have* a culture, but we *belong* to a society” (p. 53; emphasis in original). Within societies, humans often live within or identify with even smaller groupings, so additional subjects of study can include language and communication, socioeconomic class, race/ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, age, and personhood. Interactions between and across societies and countries also impact culture, so transnational activities and globalization are subjects of study, as are geographical location and the natural environment. Laws and customs governing all this—including politics—also constitute what anthropology studies.

### Key Concepts

Culture encompasses all this—and more. As noted above, disciplinary subjects of study and concepts can overlap. Culture remains a complex concept in anthropology in part because it remains under study and debate. While there is no single, agreed on definition, most definitions include an emphasis on identifiable, if evolving and varied, behaviors or ways of life common to a particular time, group, and/or place that people learn and share through social interactions. Anthropologists must understand culture as a concept at the same time they refine it through further study.

When Magli (2001) asserts that anthropology “aims at understanding the global significance of a people’s life, calling that significance—though with countless different shades of meaning—‘culture’” (p. 8), she is explaining not only culture but also raising the equally important concept of comparison. Just as concepts can overlap with the subjects of study, they can also overlap with research methods; comparative analysis is common in the social sciences and is, quite simply, the search for similarities and differences. In the case of anthropology, that would be the similarities and differences between cultures and their ways of life. Anthropologists can use these similarities and differences to generalize about cultures—or to criticize other anthropologists’ generalizations.

Comparison is inherent to as well as a tool to study different cultures’ systems of classification. Classification is the act of separating people, animals, objects, ideas, events, and such into different categories to define and order them. Categories help humans understand, for example, that a chair is something one sits on, even if there are many different types of chairs—rather than relearning each time one sees a new type of chair that it is an object to sit on. A single person, object, or idea may fit more than one category, because categories can overlap and change in meaning over time as well as place. Race is another example of classification, where humans divide themselves and

each other into categories based on physical characteristics. Historically, some believed that different races were divisions or subspecies among humankind; today, we know from DNA technology that there are no such divisions or subspecies—only culturally assigned understandings of physical differences. Anthropologists seek to understand the similarities and differences between the classification systems of various cultures, as such systems can help us understand how a culture and individuals within it see the world and their place within it.

Researchers must be very careful in how they make their comparisons, create categories, or study classifications systems, however. During the 18th and 19th centuries, some anthropologists understood culture to be a measure of how “civilized” a society was based on such things as art, architecture, and technology. European colonizers thus believed themselves superior to the “primitive” peoples in the new lands they discovered and conquered. Believing they could enlighten and civilize “the natives,” imperial Europeans changed the ways of life in their colonies without understanding the inherent cultures. This was destructive in many ways and, coupled with the economic exploitation of colonization, has had lasting detrimental effects in many former colonies even now that they are independent nations. Today, we use the term *ethnocentrism* to describe the feeling that one’s own group is superior and anthropologists actively work to ensure that cultures and classification systems are seen as different, not better or worse.

To avoid the racism and prejudice built into ethnocentrism, Frank Boas, a German emigrant known today as a founder of American anthropology, developed the concept of cultural relativism, which insists that every culture should be examined on its own merits and that no culture is superior to another. Cultures can be carefully compared, to understand the similarities and differences, but not judged as better as or worse than another. While unscrupulous scholars can misuse cultural relativism—most notably during Apartheid in South Africa (Lavenda & Schultz, 2008)—it should enable anthropologists to set aside their own prejudices as they study other cultures and communities.

Holism and context are related, key concepts for the discipline of anthropology. Holism is, simply put, the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of all its parts: As individuals interact to learn, share, and influence their ways of life, “culture” is created and that culture amounts to more than just the individual interactions. Culture includes behaviors, institutions, and structures that existed prior to the current generation of individuals and will outlast those individuals. Later generations will, in turn, learn, share, and influence culture as well. Understanding the whole—the culture—gave meaning to individual interactions. The concept of holism remains the basis for cultural anthropology’s fieldwork-based methodology.

Anthropologists came to debate the concept of holism because some feel that referencing the whole devalues the individual, because if the individual has meaning only in relation to the whole, we have erased individual actions and agency from the equation. For this reason, the use of the concept holism has arguably diminished and been replaced, to an extent, by the similar idea of context. Context considers the interconnections

between individuals and between individuals and their wider communities—even the wider world, as encompassed by globalization and transnationalism. The context is the whole, and it can be greater than the sum of its individual parts—if perhaps more temporary and limited than the institutions and structures of holism. Every interaction can have more than one possible context. Some anthropologists replace holism and context with the ideas of scale of integration, to make the point that the emphasis is on the interactions that link the individual parts within the whole. Whichever the preferred term, the emphasis is on the big picture and understanding individual people, groups, events, and so forth within that bigger picture. Anthropologists seek to ensure that the parts are viewed within the appropriate whole.

Anthropology, like the other contributing disciplines, has more concepts, both in terms of number and specialization, than can be introduced here. Students utilizing research from anthropology must ensure they understand the necessary concepts, and may need to engage in further study of the discipline in order to do so. Additionally, when concepts such as society are broadly defined because their meanings are controversial and changing, it is even more important to understand them within each discipline and disciplinary perspective, as meanings can differ for a concept common to more than one discipline.

## Research Methods

Anthropologists of all four subdisciplines utilize a wide variety of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The hallmarks of cultural anthropology, however, are fieldwork and ethnography. Also called participant observation, the main data-gathering method of many anthropologists is to spend extended periods of time with the population under study. Traditionally, this has meant anthropologists reside in other countries with their subjects of study, living as they live, observing and interacting with them to learn about their daily lives and how they view the world. Pioneering ethnographer Bronislaw Malinowski undertook a study of the Triobriand people of New Guinea, publishing *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* in 1922. More recently, “fieldwork” can occur within one’s own society, such as corporations or other organizations, and has even moved online or across the boundaries between the physical and virtual worlds when anthropologists study digital communities.

Fieldwork requires considerable preparation; anthropologists will study the necessary language(s), history, and existing knowledge and literature of their subject people, groups, or community. Rather than attempting to study entire cultures, as in the past, today’s anthropologists undertake problem-based ethnography and develop a research proposal presenting their research methods, theoretical approaches, and, possibly, hypotheses and expected results. They use their proposals to apply for funding and academic, ethical, governmental, and other necessary permissions and permits to undertake their fieldwork.

Once in the field, anthropologists may use a variety of research methods, such as oral histories, surveys, focus groups, archival research, review of art or artifacts,

genealogical research, and so forth. For many anthropologists, however, a key method for gathering data is the in-depth interview—talking to the research subjects, usually called informants or participants. This can be in a formal, structured interview or very informally over a meal or drink. An effective anthropologist values the “serendipity” of “being there” to observe, interact, and learn when something significant or enlightening happens with the group, community, or organization under study (Eriksen, 2004, p. 45; Monaghan & Just, 2000, p. 22).

Ethnography is the written product that results from an anthropologist’s process of describing and analyzing the data gathered during fieldwork. These can include reports, academic journal articles, or books. The production of ethnography is an ongoing process that occurs both during fieldwork and after, when anthropologists reflect on and further analyze the data gathered. The anthropologists’ goal is to understand the information gathered as the informant would—to see life and the world the same way their informants would—so as to add insights and information to the global store of knowledge. The content and styles of ethnography have changed over time, between more positivist approaches that seek the “objective truth” about a culture or group under study and more humanistic approaches that consider the anthropologist’s experience.

This is why the concepts of comparison and context are so important to anthropology. Anthropologists will consider the similarities and differences between their own perceptions and those of their informants. They seek to adopt their informants’ self-understanding as best they can so as to analyze how those narratives compare to others and how those perceptions fit within the “bigger picture” created by the multiplicity of viewpoints in our world today. Cultural relativity and avoiding bias are also vital as anthropologists analyze their fieldwork data and experience.

A number of academic journals publish anthropological research. The American Anthropological Association has over 20 journals, including *Annals of Anthropological Practice*, *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, *Culture, Agriculture, Food & Environment*, and *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*, and *Cultural Anthropology*.

## Theoretical Approaches

If theoretical approaches are tools in the anthropology toolbox, today there is an extensive set available to guide anthropologists as they analyze data gathered through fieldwork or other research methods. Early, now discredited, anthropological theories of evolutionism and diffusionism assumed that societies and cultures evolved from “primitive” to “modern.” Such theories presumed European societies as advanced whereas others were backwards, justifying colonialism and European intervention in the “primitive” societies of Africa, Asia, and South America. Boas’ concept of cultural relativism was a response to and critique of evolutionist views of the “civilized” overseeing the “savages.”

Moving into the 20th century, anthropologists ceased ranking societies and cultures but continued to study them as a whole. Structural functionalism emphasized how people interacted within a society or culture and how those interactions created institutions such as marriage or norms such as taboos. All this together, to advocates of

structural functionalism, made up the social structure of a society and helped maintain that society.

Critics of this approach argued that the emphasis on society as a whole—studying the collective—left out an understanding of individuals, some of whom would or could not adhere to the societal institutions or norms accentuated by structural functionalism. The role of individuals in society became a focus of anthropological studies, even privileged over societies and cultures for some anthropologists. These may be termed psychological anthropology or cognitive anthropology. The resulting dispute over studying *either* individuals or the collective eventually subsided and scholars acknowledge the importance of *both* individuals and social structures to understanding how peoples lived their daily lives.

Marxism influenced all social sciences, including anthropology. Marxist anthropologists and others who built their approaches on Karl Marx's ideas (even if, especially in the United States, they don't call themselves Marxist) focus on how economic, material, and ideological factors impact and can prompt change in culture. This can include studies of production, consumption, and materialism. A related approach considers how technology and access to it affects culture. This was not a return to evolutionism or an assumption that low-technology societies are primitive. Instead, the emphasis is often on economic development and inequality. The impact of material factors also plays into environmental and ecological approaches to understanding how people live their daily lives and how the environment can put pressure on culture. For example, anthropologists can study pollution resulting from production or economically driven overuse of natural resources such as fisheries.

As, over time, scholars tested and debated existing theoretical approaches, a group of newer approaches developed that were critical of historical and existing theories. Clifford Geertz's emphasis on "thick description" arguably led into the development of critical theories such as postmodernism and feminism. Geertzian interpretivism suggested that detailed description and a single anthropologist's interpretation of a culture was enough to add to knowledge. Cultures were "texts to be read" and different anthropologists could develop different interpretations of them. Postmodernism believes that different scholars will see cultures differently, because they assume that knowledge is contested and political in nature. Postmodernists question the ideals of rationality and science, emphasizing that much in our world—including and perhaps especially culture—is socially constructed and thus subject to interpretation. Feminists also question what we know (or think we know), particularly about women and existing power relationships that result from traditional understandings of gender roles and their impact on societies and cultures.

While brief, this overview of theoretical approaches in anthropology makes it clear that the discipline accepts a multiplicity of approaches. Today, most anthropologists have given up on finding a single, grand theory and instead recognize that different approaches can illuminate different subjects of study.

Anthropology as a discipline has "humanity" as its all-encompassing subject of study and yet it makes its own distinct contributions to the social sciences in general

and Global Studies specifically. Eriksen (2000) argues “the task of anthropology is to create astonishment, to show that the world is both richer and more complex than it is usually assumed to be” (p. 7). He also concludes:

anthropology is so broad that it moves . . . in the frontier areas [near other disciplines], at the same time as it . . . retains its own identity. The shared identity that keeps the discipline together . . . can be summed up as an insistence on regarding social and cultural life from within, a field method largely based on interpretation, and a belief (albeit variable) in comparison as a source of theoretical understanding. (p. 80)

## Economics

The discipline of economics focuses on a variety of factors related to resources, be they natural, human, or material. Economics has, therefore, been of interest to thinkers and scholars for millennia—going back to ancient Greece, India, and China. An independent discipline today, economics emerged from the discipline of philosophy. Many fundamental questions and concepts of economics came from early Western philosophers such as John Locke and David Hume; Adam Smith, one of the most famous names in economics, was a moral philosopher. He is considered the father of modern economics and as his famous 1776 book *An Inquiry Into the Nature of Causes of the Wealth of Nations* suggests, early economic thinkers were especially interested in political economy, as in “economy of the polity.” Economics (initially called economic science) became an independent discipline in the late 18th to early 19th centuries.

Economics studies the distribution of scarce resources and the decision-making processes related to that distribution. The discipline considers three main questions: (1) what will be produced, which is related to allocation; (2) how it will be produced, which is related to resources; and (3) who is going to get it, which is distribution. There are many subdisciplines of economics; microeconomics, macroeconomics, international economics, and development economics are all important to Global Studies. Microeconomics examines single or specific factors of the economy and individual decision making while macroeconomics emphasizes how the individual factors interact and work together to create an economic entity—such as the economy of a nation-state. International economics concentrates on international differences in resource allocation and distribution as well as the international organizations that influence them. Development economics studies and seeks to improve the economies of low-income countries, where resources are often most scarce or poorly distributed due to a host of historical, political, cultural, and geographic factors.

## Subjects of Study

The subfields of economics relevant to Global Studies help introduce the discipline’s subjects of study. Resources of all kinds are considered, though the main

categories are often land or national resources, labor or human resources, and capital or productive resources such as equipment and technology. Economists study the allocation and distribution of resources through the economic market, or system of decisions related to the exchange of goods and services. There are two main theoretical types of economies: (1) the free market economy where decisions and prices are dictated by supply and demand and (2) a centrally planned or command economy where decisions and prices are determined by the government. In reality, most modern economies are a mixture of both types, though usually predominantly one or the other. A free market economy puts emphasis on the private sector, or the part of the economy not owned, controlled, or provided by the government though the government may institute regulations. Subjects of study related to the private sector include employment and profits. The public sector is that part of the economy owned, controlled, or provided by the government, including monetary policy, fiscal policy and taxation, deficit spending, and provision of social services. Poverty and how to reduce it is an important topic within and among countries, particularly low-income countries or low-income regions within high-income countries. Borrowing, saving, and investing as well as socio-cultural factors such as gender inequality, racial inequality, and access to and quality of education are subjects of inquiry for economists, both generally and in relation to poverty (Dasgupta, 2007). International trade and finance encompass the flows of goods, services, labor, capital, and currency across national borders. Economists also study international organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and United Nations Development Programme, which can influence what happens in both private and public sectors of the economy.

### Key Concepts

Just as there can be for other contributing social science disciplines, there is overlap between subjects of study and key concepts within economics. The concept of the free market system, based on supply and demand, is central to today's global economy. This system is not universally appreciated, however, because of the tension between efficiency and equity. Related to efficiency is the concept of opportunity cost, or the benefit lost from other alternatives when one choice is made. Theoretically in a market system, prices determine the efficient allocation of resources and goods; those who can make the most effective use of resources and goods, without waste, can obtain them. However, not everyone has the same resources to begin with, so this creates inequity in the system. Inequity and market failures, or "when markets fail to perform efficiently or fail to perform according to other widely held social values," can be reasons for government intervention in the economy. If market failures limit resources or goods related to basic human needs such as food or housing, societal values can impact the market through demands for government redistribution of resources and goods through social welfare policies such as housing subsidies, supplementary income for food, and the like (Orvis & Drogus, 2019, p. 317).

Societal values also interact with the idea of public goods. Private goods are “rivalrous and excludable”: if I can protect my food from you (excludable) and I eat it all, you cannot share in it (rivalrous). Public goods are “non-rivalrous and non-excludable.” If a government provides its people with national security, then everyone within the country shares in that security (non-excludable) and what security one receives does not prevent any others from also receiving security (non-rivalrous). However, because they are non-excludable and people can obtain them for free (free-rider problem), the private sector does not normally supply public goods. If a public good is important to a society, the government must provide it (Dasgupta, 2007, p. 52).

Another well-known economic thinker was David Ricardo, who proposed the concept of comparative advantage. This is the idea that “through free trade, all countries . . . would develop and could become wealthy by focusing on producing the products they themselves did better than they did other products.” Ricardo was also a member of Parliament and his ideas influenced British—and eventually global—economic and trade policy. International trade results from and increases interdependence, or “the mutual connections that tie states and other players to each other. No state is fully independent and able to provide for all its needs and manage all its problems” (Scott, Carter, & Drury, 2019, pp. 25, 236).

Common measures of how wealthy countries are (or are not) include Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP). GDP “is the total value of all goods and services produced in the nation in a year” and GNP adds to that the net income from foreign investments (Weaver, 2017, p. 78). While common, GDP is also a controversial measure of national wealth, as it arguably does not account for human well-being. Additional measures have been introduced; the GINI coefficient highlights inequality by measuring the distribution of wealth across a nation’s population. The Human Development Index, created by Indian economist Amartya Sen and Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq, and its variant the inequality-adjusted Human Development Index, incorporates per capita economic measures but also life expectancy and education levels.

The concept of development, which buttresses the subdiscipline of development economics, describes economic and social growth in countries, particularly the process that “allow(s) people to escape poverty and lead longer and healthier lives” (Goldin, 2018, p. 148). Considerable research—in economics and other disciplines—addresses the challenges and opportunities facing low-income countries and their peoples. Sustainable development is a related concept. The world recognizes that the processes that allowed high-income countries to develop negatively impacted the Earth’s environment. This was largely due to the concept of externality: “transactions that do not include the full costs or benefits of production in the price” (Orvis & Drogus, 2019, p. 317)—in this case, a cost in the sense of pollution or other damage to the environment. “Economic development is sustainable if, relative to its population, a society’s productive base doesn’t shrink.” Sustainable development efforts today seek to ensure that “society’s productive base” includes our natural environment and resources (Dasgupta, 2007, p. 129).

## Research Methods

Economics as a discipline relies heavily on quantitative research methods, employing mathematical and statistical models and methods for theoretical and applied research. Economics employs both normative and positive research, the former being theoretical- or opinion-based research on how the economy should work and the latter being evidence-based and applied research on how the economy does work. In reality economics, like the other social sciences, finds that the line between normative and positive is sometimes blurred. Value-based judgments about poor social outcomes like poverty and inequality often lead to positive economic analysis about how to provide better outcomes through economic policies. The discipline uses a blend of inductive and deductive reasoning to solve economic problems, with inductive reasoning being positivist and deductive reasoning allowing economists to analyze how to make economic outcomes better.

Qualitative methods are not generally associated with economics. However, Starr (2014) asserts that there has been growing interest in qualitative methods and mixed methods (combining quantitative and qualitative methods) in the discipline for the last 10 to 15 years. She reviews more than two dozen qualitative or mixed-methods studies of economic subjects ranging from price stickiness to innovation in industry to development and poverty to household saving, spending, and borrowing. Qualitative methods used alone or in combination with quantitative methods by economics scholars include interviews, focus groups, life histories, and case studies. These methods appear especially useful to economists seeking to understand the economic lives of women, refugees, the low-income, and those with health issues, including mental illness.

The American Economic Association (AEA) is a professional association for the discipline, as is the European Economic Association. AEA journals include *American Economic Review*, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, and *The American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*. Other important scholarly journals for the field are *Journal of the European Economic Association*, *Economy Theory*, and the *Journal of Development Economics*.

## Theoretical Approaches

Economic theories center on the main modern economic systems: capitalism, communism, socialism, and mixed economies. Each system is based on theory—the theory of capitalism, for example—and no currently operating economic system fully matches the theorized version. Thus, additional theories develop to explain why and how the economy operates under various conditions and to suggest solutions to economic challenges. In general, economic theory can be positive or normative.

Capitalism combines the free market system with private ownership of property. Though not the first, Karl Marx is one of the best-known critics of capitalism. Writing in the mid-1800s, Marx argued that all societal changes reflect economic changes and that societies develop through a series of stages: from the primitive communism of hunter-gatherer days to the feudal system seen in Europe in the middle ages to capitalism

and then on to socialism, where goods and services would be distributed according to need, and finally to communism. Theoretically, communism would happen when human nature had changed to allow for stateless and classless societies. Communist systems such as the Soviet Union were command economies that did not fit Marxist theory. Theories of socialism also grew out of Marxism and are particularly concerned with solving the societal problems of capitalism, such as poverty. Socialism encompasses a wide range of economic forms and has no single definition. What most socialist economies—as well as mixed economies, which combine features of socialism with features of capitalism—have in common is government intervention in the economy to create a substantial welfare state that meets basic human needs and promotes individual autonomy through provision of social services. While many capitalist countries offer at least some social services to low-income citizens, in a socialist country there is a wider range of benefits available universally.

Because today most countries are capitalist (or mixed) and the global system is as well, most economic theories serve as frameworks to understand, explain, and manage challenges to capitalism. Historically, as capitalism developed, free trade was not the global norm. Economic nationalism, also called protectionism or (in the past) mercantilism, involves utilizing trade policy to protect national interests. Economic nationalists believe it is appropriate to limit trade to protect national industries and employment. Tools of economic nationalists include tariffs and quotas. Tariffs are essentially taxes on imported goods, making them more expensive than domestically produced goods. Quotas are limits on the number goods, such as automobiles, that can be imported from abroad.

Two prominent economic theories in the 21st century are Keynesianism and neo-liberalism, both of which address economic downturns. In the 1930s, John Maynard Keynes suggested that “governments can manage the business cycles of capitalism via active fiscal policy and monetary policy, including deficit spending when necessary” (Orvis & Drogus, 2019, p. 322). This macroeconomic theory argued nation-states could run a short-term deficit to stimulate the economy and clear the deficit when the economy improved (Orvis & Drogus, 2019, p. 322). Keynesianism held sway until the 1970s–1980s, when neo-liberal, or free market, polices reemerged to compete with it. Associated with Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek, neo-liberalism is against deficit spending. This theory holds that the “government should balance its budget and minimize its role in the economy to allow the market to allocate resources to maximize efficiency and thereby economic growth” (Orvis & Drogus, 2019, p. 324). The Global Recession beginning in 2008 reflected the debate between these two theories; the United States relied primarily on the Keynesian model while some countries in Europe adopted neo-liberalism and austerity.

Also important in the 20th and 21st centuries are development theories, through which economists (and policy makers) have sought to decrease poverty and improve economic growth; there have been a number of approaches to understanding “why are some countries rich and others poor?” As former colonies gained independence, global efforts to promote economic growth in their economies assumed there was one way

for all countries to develop—the path that Europe and the United States took. Modernization theory reflected this view, emphasizing the need for developing countries to engage in international trade and acquire a “free market mindset” as well as for developed countries to reduce aid. These priorities failed, as did modernization theory as an approach to development, in part because the “one size fits all” approach did not take into account the impact of colonization on the recently independent countries. Building on this history, dependency theory gained traction by suggesting that developed countries continue to exploit the former colonies and “the only way that countries could escape the trap of . . . underdevelopment was to end their dependence on the advanced economies by stopping import of manufactured goods and export of primary goods” (natural resources). This resulted in import substitution industrialization and government intervention to protect growing sectors of the domestic economy. By the 1970s and 1980s, neo-liberalism also reemerged in development theory, and policies shifted toward privatization, reduction of government spending, removal of price subsidies, and deregulation. Despite some success stories, many countries remained underdeveloped at the close of the 20th century. Moving into the 2000s, development approaches have taken on a more holistic view, looking not only at the economy but also political stability and governance as well as aspects of human well-being such as education and health. Nonetheless, the challenge of development remains (Goldin, 2018).

This holistic approach to development reflects the complexity of that challenge, and the world faces many complex economic challenges. As Weaver (2017) points out, there is a difference between the academic discipline of economics and the economy itself: “[T]he discipline of economics provides one way to view the organization and operation of the economy, but researchers must think critically about the particular viewpoint proposed by the discipline of economics” (pp. xiv–xv). The discipline is, of course, made up of more than one viewpoint but they are all informed by the discipline’s perspective, based on subjects of study, key concepts, research methods, and theoretical approaches. Anthropology also does what Dasgupta (2007) credits to economics in that both “tr(y) to uncover the processes that influence how people’s lives come to be what they are” (p. 7). The difference is disciplinary perspective—and the economics perspective is necessary to Global Studies.

## Geography

Geography as a discipline studies the Earth’s surface and humans as they interact with that surface. As Bonnett (2008) suggests, “the world is geography’s logo” (p. 2). That imagery suggests the discipline’s broad arena of interests and activities. Like anthropology, geographers see their discipline as inherently interdisciplinary and, according to John Nietz (1961), the “mother of many other subjects” (as cited in Bonnett, 2008, p. 104). Others see geography as developing from the disciplines of history or anthropology.

The discipline includes two main subfields: physical geography and human geography. As the Association of American Geographers explains, human geography focuses on “the

spatial aspects of human existence” while “physical geographers study patterns of climates, landforms, vegetation, soils, and water” (American Association of Geographers, 2018). Some geographers consider the discipline a bridge between the natural sciences and social sciences, as physical geographers are often more comfortable with the natural sciences and human geographers engage with and are influenced by social sciences. Human geography is often more commonly seen in Global Studies, but both subfields can be relevant.

The study of geography has ancient origins, going back at least to Ancient Greece and Rome. “The oldest literatures we have are geographies,” such as *The Odyssey* and the tale of the Golden Fleece (Bonnett, 2008, p. 7). The ancient Chinese study of geography was highly developed, including the use of triangulation and coordinates. As Europe entered the Middle Ages and much knowledge from the Greeks and Romans was lost, Islamic countries continued to expand geographical knowledge and information. In the 10th century, Arab geographer Al Muqaddasi began what would become known as fieldwork. Where earlier geographers had relied on the information of others—explorers and travelers—he “would not present anything as fact to his readers unless he had seen it with his own eyes” (Holt-Jensen, 2018, p. 24).

Geography as an academic discipline was also preceded by popular geographical societies and associations such as the Société de Géographie de Paris and the British Royal Geographical Society in London. These organizations or clubs mixed members from the scientific community with the political, economic, and social elite. Given the inclusion of the elite, many associations also served to support imperialism and political interests. They funded expeditions and research, collecting data and insights from abroad (Holt-Jensen, 2018). Geographical societies were an “essential means of communication between the explorers and the general public, including their sponsors” (Matthews & Herbert, 2008, p. 2).

While geography was a subject offered in British universities as early as the 16th century, the academic discipline generally dates from the 1870s to 1880s, when European and American universities began to have professorships in and departments of geography (Holt-Jensen, 2018; Matthews & Herbert, 2008). There are a number of subdisciplines or specializations within geography, such as cartography, cultural geography, economic geography, geographic information systems, human-environment interaction, natural hazards, political geography, population geography, and regional geography (American Association of Geographers, 2018).

## Subjects of Study

There is logical overlap between these specializations and the subjects of study in geography. Common subjects of study include culture, language, and religion, particularly the geographic distribution or geographic patterns of each. Geographers look at the economy as it relates to such topics as agricultural regions and production or the locations of industry and manufacturing. The subjects of study related to human interactions with their geographical environment include population density and distribution, migration, resilience to natural or man-made disasters, and environmental

problems such as climate change. Politics or political geography is a common subject of study, ranging from public administration and urban planning at the local level to international relations at the global level, including the boundaries of states, regional cooperation such as the European Union, and war. Natural resources are also a topic of research for geographers, whether as a physical aspect of the Earth or as a factor in economics, environmental issues, or political decision making. Development would also be a subject of geographic study that links with other topics such as economics, environment, and politics.

## Key Concepts

Key concepts help geographers understand and approach their subjects of study. Many geography textbooks agree on two concepts key to understanding the discipline: space and place. Definitions of space have changed over time, in conjunction with shifts in theoretical approaches and disciplinary politics. Space generally refers to a location or position on Earth's surface; it can be absolute space measured through objective means such as geographical coordinates or distances or it can be relative space, which relies also on human perceptions of that position. Whether absolute or relative, space can also be defined as "the physical gap or interval between two objects" (Rubenstein, 2011, p. 489). Place is what we casually think of as location. It is "a meaningful portion of space" (Cresswell, 2006, p. 356)—space that has boundaries to make up recognizable territory or characteristics. Like space, place also involves human perceptions because place can be delimited by human understandings of a particular "portion" of space. Our "mental maps" of a neighborhood may differ from the lines on a government map or the tax or police districts that neighborhood falls into.

Other than space and place, there is less agreement on the key concepts of geography. For Global Studies, orientation, environment, distribution and related concepts, and scale are also important. As interdisciplinary researchers, if we need to understand additional key concepts we can consult geography textbooks or experts to learn more.

Mental maps are a form of orientation; as humans we assign meaning to places based on physical or human characteristics, such as the Cold War political views of "West" being Europe and the United States and "East" being areas controlled by the Soviet Union. Eastern Europe is made up of countries such as Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Romania but geographically doesn't exist (it is Central Europe). During the Cold War, however, eastern Europe was a political and geographic reality, given the controlled and patrolled boundaries between the East and West.

Environment can take on several related meanings in geography. Most generally, it can be our "surroundings" (Fellman, Getis, & Getis, 2007, p. 516). It is the physical and natural environment, but understanding the link between humans and their physical surroundings has been a long-term goal of geography so the term can also apply to the processes of human and natural interaction. Environmental damage or degradation can result from that relationship, so the term is also used in the popular sense of environmental issues, problems, and crises.

Distribution is “the arrangement of objects across surfaces.” Geographers may look at the distribution of natural resources, buildings, languages, or political systems across the earth’s surface. Diffusion is the process through which the objects come to be distributed. Languages and ideas can spread through space, as can policies or products. Density is a related concept that describes “the frequency with which something exists within a given” space. Population density is a common subject in geography. Pattern is also a related concept, which considers not just if there is an arrangement of objects in space but whether or not that arrangement is geometric—such as the grid pattern of streets common in U.S. cities (Rubenstein, 2011, pp. 32–33, 484).

In Global Studies and globalization, there is much discussion of the local and the global. Both are scales in the geographic sense, which refers the size or scope of the area under study. It can also refer to a comparison between the size of the area under study and the size of a larger area covered on a map—or the earth as a whole. In political geography, scales can include local, national, regional, and global, such as a local disease outbreak or a global epidemic.

## Research Methods

As a discipline, geography utilizes a wide variety of social science research methods, both qualitative and quantitative. Geography is a social science within which there has been debate over the value of qualitative and quantitative methods. As human geography developed, from the early- to the mid-20th century there was an emphasis on both regional geography and the interaction between humans and their environment, including culture. This human-oriented research was generally qualitative. Quantitative methods such as statistical analyses became more popular in the 1950s and 1960s, because geographers sought to avoid descriptions about what was unique about places (especially regions) and better follow scientific methods. Quantitative “spatial science” developed and dominated the discipline for a decade or two. By the 1970s, the interest in culture and interpretation had returned and many became critical of quantitative methods. Today, the discipline sees fewer dramatic shifts between methods and more use of both as appropriate to subdisciplines and subjects of study. Holt-Jensen (2018) calls this a “multi-paradigmatic” approach, reflecting many options ranging from “hard” quantitative methods to “soft” humanistic or qualitative approaches (p. 134).

Geographers consider their discipline to be closely identified with fieldwork. Early in the discipline’s history, they conducted fieldwork to undertake cartography—to create maps. Explorers traveled to discover and map new parts of the world—and to stake claims for their respective countries and identify resources available. Within known territories, surveys were conducted to identify natural and artificial features of an area as well as significant locations, distances, and directions. In the 20th century, geographic fieldwork took on more human and cultural as well as physical investigations, with geographers being influenced by anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski and Clifford Geertz. Today, fieldwork goes beyond mapping to include tools such as interviews, surveys, photography, and observation to gather geographic information

and data. The comparative method can be utilized in analyzing data, as can classification. Geographers will analyze and evaluate their fieldwork data and likely reflect on the experience (as anthropologists do) before communicating their findings in published research, including in journals such as *Geographic Review* and *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*.

By the 21st century, computer technology added new dimensions to mapping, both physical and human—as well as combining the two. Geographical Information Systems (GIS) use computer programs to combine data, statistical software packages, and computer graphics software to create maps. “Computer-assisted cartography” can combine data into layered maps, such as one where, for the purposes of city planning, the basic terrain is layered first with utility lines and grids, then property lots and lines, and then voting or school districts (Fellman et al., 2007, p. 26).

GIS is complemented by 21st-century technological advancements in Earth observation as well. Observation of Earth’s surface from a distance is not new; early geographers used first balloons and kites, then (and still) aircraft before technology made remote sensing possible by drones, spacecraft, and satellites. Together, GIS and remote sensing have drastically increased the flexibility, complexity, and accuracy of mapping, as well as the speed at which maps are produced (Fellman et al., 2007). Academic journals include *International Journal of Geographical Information Science* and *International Journal of Remote Sensing*.

## Theoretical Approaches

The discipline of geography is “multi-paradigmatic” in theory as well as in research methods. In fact, geography more so than other social sciences emphasizes the direct relationship between theory and research methods (Del Casino, 2006). Over time, the discipline has seen repeated shifts between more scientific and more humanistic theoretical approaches and research methods, until today variations of both make up the geography toolbox.

In the 1800s, understandings of human geography were firmly based in physical geography. Prominent German geographers Alexander von Humboldt and Carl Ritter encouraged the scientific study of geography, seeking to generalize patterns as they developed the theory of environmental determinism, which argued the physical environment governed human behavior. For example, “mountainous areas produce dispersed forms of settlement and the plains foster nucleation” (Matthews & Herbert, 2008, p. 53). As environmental determinism became discredited, possibilism emerged. This theory recognized that while the physical environment did impact human behavior, it did not solely determine it. Humans could also impact their environment through innovation and technology. As possibilism dominated, there was a concurrent shift toward human geography and qualitative methods. The emphasis, particularly in regional geography, was on what was unique about places. Today, possibilism remains in force and is a basis for cultural ecology or the study of human-environment interactions.

Del Casino (2006) presents four main categories of modern theory: (1) spatial science or quantitative geography, (2) humanism, (3) critical realism, and (4) post-structuralism. Spatial science was a reaction to the qualitative methodologies and interpretation common in regional geography. Especially during the 1950s and 1960s, spatial science as a combination of theory and quantitative methods sought to generalize, replicate, and find patterns. Walter Christaller's central place theory, though developed earlier, became popular and is an example of spatial science. He explained locations of settlements and market towns and consumer behavior in traveling the distances to them (Matthews & Herbert, 2008).

By the 1970s, humanistic and cultural approaches reasserted themselves, with many (not all) in human geography moving away from quantitative data to qualitative analysis focused on "meanings, values, and on diversity of human behavior." The critical realism phase began then, as "new cultural geography" concentrated on perceptions and people's mental maps (in addition to physical ones) as shaped by experiences and preferences. Structuralist theories are also included in the category of critical realism, as they explored "hidden structures of empowerment and control." An example of structuralism would be Marxist geographers' assertions that inequality resulted from "distributions of wealth and poverty . . . (in) the workings of a capitalist society" (Matthews & Herbert, 2008, pp. 56, 59). Socio-cultural features such as language, values, beliefs, and prevailing societal narratives served as a point of continuity between structuralism and the post-structuralism of the 1990s and beyond. Structuralism was more deterministic—hidden structures dictate human behavior—whereas post-structuralism underscores human decision making despite structural forces.

Overall, theoretical paradigm and methods shifts represent changes in geography between seeking to find similarities and generalize or to find differences that explain uniqueness in humans' interactions with the physical world. Both trends are now ongoing parts of a discipline that believes Earth and its environment are central to understanding human behavior and seeks to study their interaction in a holistic way. For geography, history, culture, economies, and politics are important—as they relate to human-environment interactions. As Alistair Bonnett (2008) insists, geography's "ambition is absurdly vast. But we know it would be more absurd to abandon it" (p. 28). Thus, the discipline of geography makes contributions to Global Studies necessary to understanding complex, spatially related aspects of how the world works—like territorial conflict, historical and current global trade, and cultural differences or similarities worldwide.

## History

History is the study of the past, including people, places, and global issues from different times and events that have already happened. Historians describe and explain these past people, places, issues, and events. Sources for historical narratives can be written documents, oral traditions, or, with more recent technology, digital recordings. Generally, history is told in chronological order and focuses on particular times. History is more than a simple chronicle of what happened; professional historians attempt to

tie the past to a larger context by interpreting or analyzing what happened, sometimes to help explain the present. History is, in the words of British professor E. H. Carr (1961), “an unending dialogue between the present and the past” (p. 35).

## Subjects of Study

The main subject of study in history is both simple and vast: the past. Subjects of study have changed over time as different topics became “important” to scholars. Early historians studied their leaders and countries—because, like Thomas Carlyle, they considered great men and great nations important. Given the global dominance of Europe and the United States, Western historians examined countries and communities considered powerful and important, overlooking people and countries they considered powerless and unimportant as subjects of history. Over time, however, the subjects broadened to include average people and how they lived; known as new social history, this movement focused on history from the bottom up rather than the top down and broadened the subjects under study, including an emphasis on the untold or, more accurately, ignored histories of minorities, women, former European colonies, and less-powerful countries. Different subfields of history exist, including environmental history, gender history, Indigenous and American studies, and African and Diasporic studies. They also include regions of the world, such as Latin American history or Asian history, and types of history, like religious history and the history of science and medicine. All these subjects of study, together, make up the discipline of history.

## Key Concepts

In history, key concepts emphasize the process of “doing history.” As they offer interpretations and search for larger patterns, historians are making arguments in favor of their interpretations and analysis. Thus, a key concept within the discipline is the development of an argument. Historians develop research questions in their search for larger patterns, and then seek historical facts to help them answer that question. “A historical fact is something that happened in history and can be verified as such through the traces history has left behind” (Evans, 2002, p. 4). Using historical facts as evidence, the answer to a research question becomes a historian’s argument or interpretation of what happened.

How historians use facts as evidence ties to the concepts of objectivity, credibility, and bias. An objective view of the past accepts the world as it was, whereas a subjective view is one that sees the world as we wish it had been. Debates exist within the discipline about whether any historian can be truly objective, but for many historians the goal is to be as objective as possible—to approach a subject of study with as few preconceived notions as possible. Historical facts must be accepted as they exist in valid sources, not manipulated or deliberately misused to support an argument. We cannot select only the evidence that supports our argument and ignore what does not. If historical facts exist that fail to support an argument, historians must acknowledge them

and either alter the argument or explain why the facts that support the argument are more persuasive or preponderant than those that do not. Doing so makes the results believable or credible. Bias is related to objectivity, and serves to acknowledge that, even when they strive to be, no historian can be truly objective. Choices of subjects of study, sources, theories, perspectives, and other decisions undertaken by historians will directly or indirectly affect the resulting arguments. Both historians and readers of history must compensate for bias. Historians must do their best to be objective and acknowledge their personal and professional limitations, while readers must evaluate the resulting historical arguments. Readers can grant credibility to historians who seek objectivity and are aware of their own biases.

As historians undertake their studies, they often search for larger patterns. Doing so is one way to analyze the past. Larger patterns can include relationships of cause and effect. Explaining the causes of past events or situations is one way history provides us with context about how the world works. What happened is still in the past, but understanding causes—and their consequences—can help us understand what is happening in the present and perhaps plan for the future.

When historians look for larger patterns, they can also look for continuity and change. Some historians study the past to see what continues or what happens repeatedly, and to try to determine why there is continuity from one time to another. Conversely, they can look for what is different—for change. Or a historian may look for both continuity and change at the same time.

## Research Methods

The simplest explanation of historians' research method is data collection, because it is the historian's goal to gather and analyze as much data as possible related to a research topic. While many historians undertake qualitative history, both qualitative and quantitative methods are used. Economic historians, for example, engage in statistical analyses.

Historians collect two main types of sources as data for their research: primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are original historical records. Primary sources include many different types of records from the past: business records (such as bills, invoices, and inventory records); government records (such as tax registers, census records, and council meeting minutes); legal records (such as statutes, wills, and trial documents); school records (such as lists of pupils or exams for teaching certification); personal journals, diaries, and correspondence; newspaper articles or news broadcasts; interviews and oral histories; and church records (such as birth, marriage, or death records). Even paintings, photographs, poetry, and plays can be historical records. Once they are determined to be authentic, these are all examples of original documents, records, or objects that contain historical information, but not always explanations or interpretations of that historical information.

Bias is an important concept when reviewing primary sources, because the sources themselves can reflect biases of the writer, government policies, or societies at the

time they were produced. For example, until the 1860s, Native Americans were not included at all in the U.S. Census. The 1980 census was the first time there was an attempt to count the homeless and the first time the form allowed women to indicate their status as military veterans. As valuable as census data and other primary sources can be, they are incomplete and include misclassifications because of political climate or societal norms.

When historians study original records, analyze or interpret them, and write up their conclusions, the resulting books or academic journal articles becomes secondary sources—because they include the explanation, analysis, and/or interpretation of primary sources. Today's secondary sources, however, could be carefully used as the future's primary sources (Arnold, 2000). In 1990, physician and historian Mirko Grmek wrote *History of AIDS: Emergence and Origin of a Modern Pandemic*, the first major international history of the global HIV epidemic. He acknowledged that less than 10 years into the pandemic was early to write a history—and that secondary sources can become primary sources, stating that “I hope not only to shed light on this problem for the contemporary reader, but to provide a testimony for the future historian” (Grmek, 1990, p. ix).

Historical research is published as scholarly books and in a variety of academic journals, including *American Historical Review*, *The Journal of African History*, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, *Contemporary European History*, and *Perspectives on History*.

## Theoretical Approaches

For historical research, there are generally two approaches to analyzing the relationships among historical facts gathered from primary and secondary sources: those who examine facts for relationships based on preexisting frameworks and those who do not. Those who argue there is no theory in history are those who argue they approach each research project without preexisting frameworks; instead they seek only to determine the relationships existing within and between the sources gathered. Relationships would vary from project to project. Historians who utilize theory, on the other hand, approach projects with preexisting frameworks. A Marxist historian is most interested in the role of economics in history and thus would examine sources based on a preexisting economic framework, looking within the sources gathered for relationships among economic classes, types of economies, types of production, and so forth. Historians who utilize theory generally remain flexible; if a particular theoretical framework isn't helpful, they may combine it with elements of other theoretical frameworks.

We can often group historians based on the theories or types of theories they utilize—and it is often theory that divides them, especially for those who deny history utilizes theory. Main historical theories include those from the *Annales* School, modernization, postmodernism, and Marxism. In telling the history of history, scholars group historians into different theoretical categories. Some break it down by philosophers and thinkers, such as Karl Marx, whose theory of Marxism (as noted above)

emphasized the role of economic forces on history, above all else. The *Annales* School in France, named for their main academic journal, disagreed with Marxism's emphasis on economics and sought to consider a "total history" that would include tools from all the social sciences. The group known as American modernization theorists emphasized history as the process of modernization: how countries, economies, and societies modernize. They recognized that economic forces were an important, but not sole factor, in historical change; to them the key factor was modernization (Appleby et al., 1994). More recently, in the United States, we see historians who utilize postmodernism as a theory, where the emphasis is on the construction of language, culture, identity, and meaning—and who has the power to construct those structures and narratives. Sometimes, the theories chosen by a historian may reflect an ideological approach or the subfield or subject under study. Each of these theoretical groups—and more—can exist at the same time and in competition with one another, though they can also drop out of use, as has been the case with American modernization theory. There can be deep divisions within the theoretical groups; postmodernism as a label encompasses a wide range of approaches, some of which contradict one another.

History's perspective—the way in which we can differentiate it from other disciplines—relies most heavily on its main subject of study and its research methods. History is the only discipline whose main goal is to study the past; that past may include political events or cultural traditions, but those things become subjects of study for the historian primarily because they *happened in the past*—and the past explains the present. The opposite is true for a political scientist or an anthropologist, for whom political events or cultural traditions are the focus and the history surrounding them is context. As the only discipline to focus exclusively on the past, history's methods also differentiate it. Historians rely on and engage with primary sources far more than any other Global Studies discipline.

## Political Science

Though most of us have a general sense of what "politics" encompasses, there is no single, accepted definition of politics. One definition that is both to the point and broad enough to encompass the variety of interactions is American political scientist Harold D. Lasswell's (1958) "who gets what, when, and how." Implied in Lasswell's definition is politics as a process—a series of actions and interactions proceeding toward a specific endpoint or goal. Politics, then, can be further defined as "the process through which power and influence are used in the promotion of certain values and interests" (Danziger, 2009, p. 4). That is a decision-making process, one that can result in public policies. According to the American Political Science Association, the field's main professional organization, political science as a discipline is "the study of governments, public policies, and political behavior. Political science is a social science which uses both humanistic perspectives and scientific skills to examine the United States and all countries and regions of the world" (American Political Science Association, 2017). In the United States, political science has a

number of subfields: American politics, comparative politics, international relations, political theory, public administration, and public law.<sup>2</sup>

All these subfields contribute to our understanding of how the world works, but comparative politics and international relations are most relevant to Global Studies. Comparative politics studies governments, policy issues, and political behavior in countries and regions other than one's own. International relations (IR) refers, quite literally, to the relations between and among nations. The relations between nation-states can be of many types: political, economic, cultural, social, and so forth—and political scientists study them all. The subfield of IR today, however, studies not only interactions among countries (known in IR as nation-states) but also a variety of other actors, including international organizations, multinational corporations, transnational social movements, ethnic groups, indigenous groups, media, terrorist and criminal organizations, and even globally relevant individuals. Because these interactions are fundamental to globalization, global issues, and differing points of view, the focus here is on the disciplinary perspective of IR as a subfield of political science. To have an understanding of political science as a discipline, however, you may need to research comparative politics or other subfields for Global Studies research, depending on your topic.

## Subjects of Study

Definitions of political science inform us of a number of subjects of study: governments, policy issues and policies, political behavior, political processes, political values, and power, among others. Two main subjects of study in international relations are conflict and cooperation. Conflict is a historically ever-present fact of the international system and is a subject that IR scholars and practitioners alike seek to understand, whether it be world war, terrorism, trade disputes, or diplomacy to resolve tensions between global actors. One particularly prominent focus for international relations is the study of the causes of war.

Conflict may be a key feature of international relations, but so is cooperation. The international system includes efforts to avoid conflict and promote peace and security. These efforts are often promoted by international organizations, governmental and nongovernmental, both of which IR scholars study. International political economy focuses on the intersection between politics, markets, and policies, including trade and finance as well as questions of economic growth and stability. In understanding how the world works, we must understand not only conflict but also the extent to which countries work together and rely on one another. Globalization and global issues can reflect both conflict and cooperation, and are also subjects of study for political scientists as well as Global Studies. Domestic politics of nation-states can be relevant to Global Studies, as they can influence how a state behaves internationally. For example, in democracies a country's legislative can determine foreign policy, so domestic tensions between political parties or factions may be a subject of study.

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<sup>2</sup>In countries other than the United States, American politics would fall within the subfield of comparative politics and countries' own domestic politics might be considered a subfield (for example: British politics, German politics).

## Key Concepts

Many political science concepts are important to Global Studies, both from the field generally and from the subfield of International Relations specifically. As noted above, there can be overlap between subjects of study and key concepts; power is a key concept because political scientists frequently study it and thus those in the field must understand it. Power is a term with many definitions. Political scientist Joseph S. Nye Jr. (2011) defines it as “the capacity to do things and in social situations to affect others to get the outcomes we want” (p. 6). Globalization, as defined in Chapter 1, is also both a larger subject of study and key concept.

Other concepts flow from subjects of study. To research conflict and cooperation in our world today, we have to understand that the process of international politics depends on two important IR concepts: anarchy and sovereignty. Some scholars assume politics at the international level is very different from politics at the domestic level because of anarchy or the lack of any higher, governmental authority to enforce rules or dictate the behavior of nation-states. In other words, there is no world government to determine who gets what, how, and when in the international system. Sovereignty refers to the right of a nation-state to control what goes on within its own borders, without outside interference. A nation-state can determine for itself its government, laws, policies, and actions. Under sovereignty, because no higher authority exists to force political interests or values on a nation-state, each nation-state is legally equal to all other nation-states (if not always in practice).

Nation-states compete to achieve their goals, or national interests, including protecting themselves from military attack by other nation-states (national security), opportunities for trade and economic expansion, the well-being of its population, and control over the wide variety of people, goods, and information crossing their borders. In the process of seeking to achieve national interests, nation-states come into conflict with one another, which can be resolved through diplomacy or the use of military force. Nationalism can complicate international as well as domestic conflict. This concept refers to identifying with and having loyalty to a nation, which itself refers to a group of people in a particular territory. Instead of loyalties attaching to a single individual as king, as in the past, loyalties today may attach to the people living in a certain geographic area.

Nation-states also cooperate to achieve their national interests. Cooperation can occur in international governmental organizations (IGOs) or through the vast numbers of treaties and agreements forged by and among nation-states, known collectively as international law. Cooperation can bring the concept of sovereignty into question, because when nation-states work together, especially within the rules of international organizations and international law, they are allowing themselves to be subject to outside interference. Interdependence is the concept that all nation-states are interconnected and no single nation-state can truly act independently of others. Interdependence, some IR scholars argue, promotes cooperation because countries that are interconnected will hurt their own interests if they choose to engage in violent conflict. Interdependence contributes to globalization—and vice versa. These and other

disciplinary concepts help us understand governments and their decision-making processes as well as political institutions, interests, values, and behavior.

## Research Methods

Within political science, as noted above for the social sciences generally, we find two types of research: quantitative and qualitative. Political science is one of the disciplines that argues over which type of method is best. Ultimately, the discipline uses both, as does the subfield of international relations. For example, scholars can gather voters' opinions and attitudes toward foreign policy through qualitative focus groups—providing depth and detail about a few persons. On the other hand, quantitative “opinion polls, whether related to political elections or not, are pervasive in modern society . . . The ability to measure attitudes or opinions of a population through a relatively small representative sample is a powerful tool” (Ruel, Wagner, & Gillespie, 2016, p. 7). As another example, IR scholars studying conflict might consider qualitative case studies of particular wars at the same time other scholars undertake statistical analyses of datasets such as the Correlates of War project, which provides quantitative data on wars from 1816 to 2000s. As Shively (2013) concludes, “It is probably best that studies with varying degrees of quantification be carried on simultaneously in any given field of political research, for the different levels of quantification complement each other” (p. 22).

Political science and international relations research is published in a number of journals, including those of the American Political Science Association and International Studies Association: *American Political Science Review*, *Perspectives on Politics*, *Journal of Political Science Education*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *International Studies Perspectives*, and the *Journal of Global Security Studies*.

## Theoretical Approaches

Within IR, some theorists seek to find a single theory that explains everything they want to study when they ask how the world works. Others believe that it is not possible to find a single, explanatory theory. This is because, whether political scientists study nation-states, organizations, or governments, they are ultimately studying people—and human behavior, individually and collectively, can be unpredictable. Both groups find theoretical approaches useful, they just disagree on whether theorists should work toward defining a single “grand theory” that explains all (or as much as possible) or accept that we may need different theories for different purposes. Either way, we seek theory as our conceptual frameworks in political science because we want to be able to describe and explain what has already happened and use that information to try to predict what might happen next, based on established patterns and trends. The ability to predict what might happen next allows governments, organizations, and leaders to make policy—either to promote or prevent a particular prediction about what may happen next.

Within international relations, a number of theoretical approaches exist and compete with one another. There are a variety of IR theories: realism, liberalism, constructivism,

structuralism, feminism, and postmodernism, among others. The first three are more popular, and in IR realism and liberalism vied for position as *the theory* throughout the 20th century. Constructivism became popular in the 1990s. Within each IR theory there are divisions: Realism can be divided into classical realism, neo-realism, structural realism, and so forth. Again, for our purposes, we need only be aware of the theoretical approaches and how our sources use them. Detailed knowledge of each theory can come from additional courses or research on theoretical approaches.

Under the international relations theory of realism, political scientists assume that sovereignty and anarchy together create an international system in which nation-states compete to achieve their primary goal of national security and other national interests. Nation-states are the most important actors; realists may discount other global actors such as IGOs and NGOs. Realists see the system as one of self-help; without a higher authority to guide the behavior of nation-states, each is out for itself and can only trust itself. Going back to writings of Thucydides in the 5th century BCE, power is the most important tool, often military power. Realists see conflict as inevitable. They recognize that times of peace exist, but continually anticipate conflict, violent or otherwise. War has always been, for more than 2,000 years, and realists assume it always will be; the international system is one of continuity. Simply put, realists explain the world as it currently is (or as they currently see it). The ideas of classical realism are associated with Hans Morgenthau, those of neorealism with Kenneth Waltz, and those of offensive realism with John Mearsheimer.

An alternative theoretical approach to international relations is known as liberalism. The liberal theory of IR accepts that power and security are important to nation-states, but lengthens the list of national interests to include economic objectives, human rights, international development, international law, and the environment. Going back to ideas of Immanuel Kant published in the late 18th century, liberals acknowledge anarchy and conflict but believe both are managed through international cooperation. Countries work together and rely on one another more permanently—they are interdependent. They thus recognize more actors than nation-states; this is especially true of international institutions like the UN, through which liberals believe nation-states cooperate. Ultimately, liberals believe that cooperation and interdependence will lead to more peaceful international relations; the international system can change. Simply put, liberals accept the world as it is but see it as less conflictual than realists and also explain how the world could be. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye are current liberal scholars credited with the development of neoliberalism, neoliberal institutionalism, and complex interdependence.

As a third major theoretical approach to IR, constructivism emphasizes identities and interpretation. The theory is associated with Alexander Wendt (1992) and his journal article “Anarchy Is What States Make of It.” Constructivists question what realists and liberals take as given. They accept that nation-states and other actors are motivated by material interests, as realists and liberals do, but insist that global actors are also motivated by identity, interpretation, expectations, and interactions. While realists and liberals take national interests as given, for example, constructivists ask how

those interests came about and how they change; to constructivists, interests change over time because, like identities and interpretations, they are socially constructed. Constructivists argue that “many structures we take to be immutable in IR are actually embedded social relationships that are contingent to a large extent on how nation-states think about and interact with one another” (Sterling-Folker, 2013, p. 130).

For example, constructivists “argue that anarchy in international affairs is not a fixed, material condition. Rather *anarchy is what states make of it*” (Nau, 2017, p. 61; emphasis in original). If nation-states operate under the realist conditions of self-help and fail to trust others, then the system is one of anarchy. For constructivists, “relative identities, not relative power or institutional roles, determine whether countries behave as friends, rivals, or enemies toward one another” (Nau, 2017, p. 62). Although constructivism is a newer theoretical approach to IR, most scholars—whether critics or supporters—acknowledge its interpretive approach has had a significant impact on the field.

Theory in the subfield of IR demonstrates that while we can speak of a “political science perspective,” we must also recognize variations within that perspective. If we utilize the lens metaphor, IR scholars may “see” many of the same things in the same ways, regardless of theory. At the same time, however, a realist lens would make power and nation-states more visible while a liberal lens would better see global institutions and rules and a constructivist lens would highlight identities, norms, cultures, and rhetoric.

The perspective of political science as a discipline—and especially IR as a subfield—contributes to Global Studies because it emphasizes power and decision-making based on interests and values by governments and among other global and transnational actors today. Anthropology also considers power, but often more so at the levels of kinship or cultural groups. History also considers decision-making by governments or other political actors, but in the past. The perspective of political science enables us to add information and insights regarding subjects of study and concepts such as power, governments, interests, values, and global political actors as we engage in Global Studies research about the present.

While brief, these descriptions of anthropology, economics, geography, history, and political science help demonstrate both the distinctive disciplinary perspectives and the overlap among them. All contribute to Global Studies because of the overlap, but also their distinct disciplinary perspectives. One way to envision the difference is which subjects of study are in the foreground and which are in the background for each discipline. Both anthropologists and human geographers study culture through fieldwork, and culture includes religious rituals and interpersonal relations such as marriage. For anthropologists, marriage and marriage traditions are the foreground, while the geographical environment within which they developed and the spatial distribution of common marriage traditions are likely background. For geographers, the reverse can be true. Marriage traditions also would be secondary, or background, for other contributing disciplines. Political scientists do not generally study marriage traditions first and foremost but do study policy—and many countries have public policies related to marriage, such as banning child marriages or defining tax policies as they

relate to marriage. Economists also do not study marriage traditions or culture in and of themselves, but do study the economic impact of dowry, bride price, and arranged marriage—as well as tax policy. Each of the five contributing disciplines, then, can help us understand a single topic within Global Studies, whether their study of that topic is foreground or background.

## Adequate Understanding of Contributing Disciplines

As noted in Chapter 1, common criticisms of interdisciplinary studies, including Global Studies, concern the breadth and depth of disciplinary knowledge required. How can a single student learn enough about each discipline? And how can each student, at the same time, learn enough about interdisciplinarity? What interdisciplinary researchers require is an “overall sense” of a discipline and its perspective (Repko et al., 2014). More specifically, for interdisciplinary researchers, “how much depth (i.e., command) depends, *just as it does for disciplinarians*, on the characteristics of the problem, the goal of the activity, and the availability of collaborators and the nature of their collaboration” (Newell, 2007, p. 253; emphasis added).

For Global Studies research, then, researchers are responsible for ensuring that they have an adequate understanding of the relevant disciplines to carry out their defined research project. (Determining which disciplines are relevant is in Chapter 3.) Global Studies researchers must be able to identify and “try on” a discipline’s perspective—they must be able to see through its lens. If researchers cannot sufficiently understand books and journal articles published within a discipline to do so, they need to further develop their command of the subjects of study, concepts, theoretical approaches, and/or research methods in the discipline. So how does one evaluate and further develop their understanding of a discipline?

In *Becoming Interdisciplinary*, Tanya Augsberg (2006) develops “guidelines for researching disciplines” (p. 123). See Box 2.1 for a list of questions based on her guidelines. If you cannot thoroughly answer these questions for each discipline included in your interdisciplinary major or that you wish to utilize in Global Studies research, you need to further develop your understanding of the discipline. Doing so requires dedication to understanding as well as simply listing answers. Rely on disciplinary-specific sources when researching each discipline: “textbooks, professors, departmental websites at renowned universities, website of professional academics associations, and leading academic journals” (Augsberg, 2006, p. 122). Introductory textbooks for each discipline are extremely useful starting points, and then Global Studies researchers can move on to more advanced disciplinary textbooks on concepts, theoretical approaches, and research methods as needed. As you develop a sense of a discipline’s perspective, check your understanding of the “lens” against recent publications for accuracy. Experts—professors—in each discipline are excellent resources, especially for ensuring you do indeed understand a discipline’s perspective after researching that discipline. They can also help you understand the debates and disagreements within a field, which may lead to challenges or changes in disciplinary perspective over time.

For Global Studies, International Studies, and International Affairs majors, universities generally design required coursework to give you a basic understanding of several social science disciplines (even if not the same contributing disciplines included in this chapter). That understanding helps you develop command of disciplinary perspectives—and an understanding of one social science can help with developing command of others.

Research into many global events or issues, however, may also benefit from information and insights from disciplines outside the social sciences. As noted in Chapter 1, environmental problems are commonly global issues and research into them may require knowledge of the physical sciences such as biology or chemistry. In our upcoming case study on the global HIV epidemic, medical disciplines may be necessary to the study, depending on research question. In an academic setting, however, it isn't always easy to

## BOX 2.1

### LEARN MORE

#### Disciplinary Basics

To help you judge if you have an adequate understanding of relevant disciplines, research and answer the following questions thoroughly:

- What is an academic definition of the discipline?
- What are the subfields of the discipline? What are their purposes and goals?
- What is the discipline's subject matter?
- What are some of the key concepts associated with the discipline? How are they defined by this discipline? How would you describe them to someone unfamiliar with the concepts?
- What are the leading theories of the discipline? How would you describe each one to someone unfamiliar with it?
- What methods do researchers in the discipline use to answer their research questions? How would you explain them to someone unfamiliar with such research methods?
- Who are key thinkers, theorists, and/or practitioners in the discipline? How would you describe their contributions to the discipline?
- What are key books or seminal texts in the discipline? What is each about and why is it important to the discipline?
- What are the academic or professional journals in the discipline? Do they vary by subfield?
- What is/are the professional association(s) for the discipline? Review their websites to determine their purpose and goals.

Source: Guidelines for Researching Disciplines Worksheet *Becoming Interdisciplinary* (Augsburg, 2006, p. 123)

learn what we need to know across the social and physical sciences. While some students may major in Global Studies and minor in biology, due to an interest in countering bioterrorism, for example, the practicalities of prerequisite courses and other requirements can make it difficult to study both types of sciences.

This does not necessarily prevent social science students from using information and insights from the physical sciences, however. Books and articles written by scientists for general audiences may provide the basics needed when a physical science is relevant to a Global Studies research project. Asking questions of experts—professors, research scientists, and practitioners in the physical sciences—is also an option for social sciences faculty and students alike. Team research is another solution to crossing very different disciplines and can make for interesting undergraduate research experiences for students of both the social and physical sciences. There are, therefore, a number of ways for those within a social-sciences-based field such as Global Studies to successfully access information and insights from physical science disciplines and develop an understanding of their perspectives when necessary for a research question and research project.

### Other Disciplines and “Interdisciplines”

Anthropology, economics, geography, history, and political science are five disciplines common to many universities’ programs in Global Studies, International Affairs, or International Studies. No one should take this list of disciplines, however, as all-inclusive. For example, some Global Studies majors include the discipline of sociology, either in addition to or instead of anthropology. Other programs may incorporate additional disciplines such as communication/journalism, languages and linguistics, philosophy, or psychology.

Additionally, other “interdisciplines”—interdisciplinary fields of study like Global Studies—are also useful to understanding how the world works. These can include development studies, environmental studies, gender studies, religious studies, and area studies such as Latin American Studies or Asian Studies. There is little agreement among academic scholars as to whether interdisciplines can have their own perspectives; for now, it is prudent to consider the information and insights found in already-interdisciplinary sources as exactly that—interdisciplinary. Chapter 3 discusses the difference and how to utilize them in Global Studies research.

Thus, the contributing disciplines described here only give us a starting point for understanding Global Studies and the Global Studies research process. Ultimately, it is the research topic or question that determines the disciplines relevant to any research project—and Global Studies students and researchers must be able to adequately understand the disciplines relevant to their research. As Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger (2014) point out, “In our quest for more comprehensive understandings of and, ultimately, solutions to the many complex problems confronting the worlds of nature and human society, *the disciplines are the place where we begin, but not where we end*” (p. 29; emphasis in original). Chapter 3 on the Global Studies research process explains how to build on the disciplines to get to an integrative, interdisciplinary end.