

Web Site Directory On Economic Globalization

by Kenneth W. Leman

Students need to understand that the inexpensive consumer products which they enjoy are the result of an expanding international system of production and trade. Globalization is a complex issue, with many interrelated factors, all of which affect students' lives in some way. It has created or contributed to new technologies, the growth of huge and powerful multinational corporations, an unequal distribution of capital, and wide disparities in democratic and human rights. In the evolution of today's world economy, there are big winners and numerous losers. Not every winner is in a developed country and not every loser is in an underdeveloped country.

In general, there are two polar views of the global economy. One is that globalization is ultimately beneficial for everyone, but that we are still working out the bugs. The other is that the current systems involved are inherently flawed and favor international big business over the needs and rights of workers and cultures. The only area of agreement is that globalization in some form is inevitable. But what form it should take remains hotly debated. Possible areas of inquiry on globalization include:

- How do international capital systems work and how do they affect local, national, regional and international economies?
- How do the economics of globalization affect wages and prices?
- Why does globalization promote the removal of production and jobs from developed to underdeveloped countries and what are the social costs in those countries?
- How does globalization promote child labor, environmental degradation, and poor health in underdeveloped countries?
- Why have the power of multinational corporations and trade agreements affected the balances of national, international and regional power around the world?
- Why doesn't globalization lead to expansion of democracy and improved human rights?
- Why should you as a citizen and consumer care about globalization?
- How can globalization occur without disrupting culture, religion and traditional economies?
- What changes can and should be made to the current global systems to more uniformly benefit all people, or at least avoid detriment to more people?
- What can businesses, labor, government leaders and citizens do to make globalization better?
- If globalization can not be made more fair, can and should the world undo or modify the current global business systems? Can the clock be turned back?

The Internet is an excellent way to involve students in exploring information about globalization and political debate over its consequences. Many of these sites require strong reading skills, and some contain extremely complex narratives and advanced vocabulary. Notwithstanding this challenge, I encourage teachers to have students use as many of the sites as possible. They present a number of thought provoking points about human rights, child labor, poverty, inequality and the environment.

1. **Center for Economic Policy and Research (www.cepr.net)**. This private think tank site offers a balanced and critical view of economic globalization, discussing many of the relative advantages and disadvantages to countries around the world. More importantly, the enclosed "*Globalization: A Primer*" is an excellent overview of the interrelated factors affecting the world economy. This is one of a number of sites which publish such primers allowing teachers and students to gain a basic understanding of what globalization means. The site includes graphs and uses examples, but some vocabulary may challenge students with lower reading abilities.

2. **International Monetary Fund (www.imf.org)**. Posted by one of the two supranational organizations which controls international capital, this site offers its own primer on economic globalization, albeit with a market-model bias. While it makes good use of graphs and its reading level is not over the top, it does require student understanding of economic terms like GDP. The bias of this site is clearly towards globalization as an evolving process of expanding the market economy to all countries. And while it freely acknowledges bad consequences of globalization, it generally takes the approach that such consequences are the by-product of change rather than systemic inequality. For the IMF, falling real income or increasing third world debt are risks that go with the rewards.
3. **The World Bank Group (www.worldbank.org)**. Some would call this the evil twin of the IMF's site, and in that sense it has many similarities in view and technical jargon. It is somewhat less accessible for the average student, but is an excellent site for the better reader (maybe even a teacher) and contains a wealth of information on World Bank policy and practice. The IMF and World Bank sites together, while clearly biased towards the haves of the world, have a wealth of information which students can use to see how money moves around the world and why.
4. **Clearing House Interbank Payments System (www.chips.org) and Asian Development Bank (www.adb.org)**. These two sites are not really related, but they are very accessible for both teachers and students of all reading abilities. The CHIPS site explains how international banking transactions are cleared in a fashion similar to the U.S. Federal Reserve system so that students can grasp some of the technical aspects of international monetary exchange. The ADB site shows how the ADB functions regionally to provide funding for local economic and infrastructure development in Asia.
5. **International Relations Program of University of California at Davis (ps.ucdavis.edu)**. This is another broad but extremely useful primer site on globalization. It offers succinct but dry information on a variety of topics with links to articles providing more analytical views of those topics. Good for teachers and students of all abilities.
6. **JusticeNet (www.justicenet.org)**. This site provides articles and links to other sites which take a more critical view of the downside to globalization. Articles discuss the social and economic disruption that IMF and World Bank practices cause. This is an excellent example of how the world economy causes disruption in all countries in one way or another.
7. **Resource Center of the Americas (www.americas.org)**. This activist think tank site offers an easy to use alternate view of the global economy being driven by the needs of multinational corporations. Its three part analysis of globalization "from the bottom up" gives students a basic understanding of the new economic inequalities which affect peoples in underdeveloped countries. Reading level is moderate, vocabulary defined, and critical comparisons are provoking (e.g. General Motors 1998 sales exceeded the Gross Domestic Product of 108 countries). This is a great site to get students thinking about how globalization may not be all that the IMF or World Bank make it out to be.
8. **Youth for International Socialism (www.newyouth.com)**. A key site in the anti-globalization movement, it offers a fairly balanced but critical view of the inequalities which globalization has brought to workers in both developed and underdeveloped countries, as well as offering students a view of the socialist beliefs behind the recent organized protests at meeting sites of the WTO, G-8 and IMF. The vocabulary may not be familiar to students in the post-Communist era (*bourgeoisie*, *anti-capitalists*), however, this presents an opportunity for teachers to compare how globalization was accelerated by the fall of the USSR and Warsaw bloc. A good site for comparing capitalism and free-market economies with socialism and planned economies.
9. **Worldwatch Institute (www.worldwatch.org)**. This site provides a wide variety of alternative analyses of globalization's downside. Although this site is easy to use, reading level is somewhat high. The focus on environmental degradation is a good one for students.

10. **Global Challenge Initiative (www.challengeglobalization.org)**. This organization's sole purpose is challenging the current global system. The site offers access to a wealth of information, training programs and advocacy support to oppose the status quo. This is a great site for both students and teachers to become engaged in understanding and challenging the state of the world economy, and it is the only site that provides political cartoons.
11. **Mother Jones (www.motherjones.com) and AFL-CIO (www.aflcio.org)**. Mother Jones is an excellent site which offers an incredible amount of easy to use information on globalization's ill effects. For example, an easy to read article entitled "*Globalization and the Maquiladoras*", discusses how the Maquiladoras built in Mexico have created a labor system in which local workers toil in unhealthy Western owned factories for low wages. The description of the working conditions and mistreatment of workers in these factories is succinct and provoking. The AFL-CIO site provides organized labors view of issues, shown here on "Fast Track," and allows students to use an e-mail petition opposing Fast Track.
12. **The Fair Trade Federation (www.fairtradefederation.com)**. This is an interesting site which focuses on the FTF's small but acknowledged activities to promote fair wages for overseas workers engaged in global production. The FTF's eight Practices and Principles could be used to challenge students to think about fair wages, employment practices, etc. and whether these can be promoted within the global economy.
13. **The Center for Strategic and International Studies (www.csis.org)**. One of the biggies of Washington's traditional think tanks, the CSIS site offers some interesting, but somewhat dense, material on two points which no one else focused on: (i) how developed countries have continued to engage in trade conflict and protectionism, and (ii) how there has been an ebb and flow in democratic versus authoritarian governments in some of the U.S.'s American trading partners.
14. **Dollars and Sense Magazine (www.dollarsandsense.org)**. This magazine site provides analysis and discussion of a variety of economic and social issues, with a moderately challenging discussion of current monetary, labor and legal issues in the global economy. It focuses on the World Bank, IMF, problems with intellectual property, the ILO, the WTO, and asks the reader, "*Why Should You Care?*"
15. **Public Broadcasting System (www.pbs.org)**. This is the companion site to a recent PBS special on Globalization and Human Rights. Easy to use and easy to read, this site explores the human side of globalization and allows teachers and students to access transcripts from the series' episodes.
16. **The Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development (www.nautilus.org)**. This site focuses on both environmental and human issues relating to the international economy, including childrens' environmental health problems in developing countries. A little to technical for the moderate reader.
17. **World Internet News Distributary Source (www.thewinds.org)**. This web news service carries articles about a wide variety of topics with especially good coverage of issues related to globalization.
18. **Flashpoint! Electronic Magazine (www.webcom.com)**. This site offers a number of articles on various world topics including "*Child Servitude in the Global Economy*," which describes the inhuman conditions of child workers in a carpet factory in India.
19. **Human Rights for Workers (www.senser.com)**. A more globalization-focused site than Flashpoint!, this site addresses globalization and human rights. An article on child labor, "*Meet Ali of Bangladesh - And Others Just Like Him*," could be used in a similar class discussion, or perhaps in a cooperative teaching exercise in which students could be asked to adopt and defend pro and con positions on child labor.
20. **United Nations University (www.unu.edu)**. This site focuses on a number of U.N. activities. Material on Africa and the global economy compares current African problems with Asia's

prior experience, and suggests a number of initiatives at the local, national and international levels which may mitigate some disadvantages.