2 What does this course assume about living in a globalised world?

The course develops from what the course team thinks are three basic points about globalisation. In a nutshell, they are that:
- globalisation is everyday
- globalisation is debated
- globalisation is complicated.

This section explores each of those points in turn.

2.1 Globalisation is everyday

It is very often acknowledged these days that the world is more interconnected now than it ever has been before. Many places that once had nothing to do with each other are now linked, and these

In 2000, 175 million people were living outside their country of birth.
connections are happening in all sorts of different ways (see Figure 1 for some examples). When you hear the world described as ‘globalised’, this is usually what’s being referred to. Politicians attend summit meetings convened by international organisations such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund or the G8 group of wealthy nations, to discuss political and economic relationships that span the globe. Consumers in those wealthy nations (and indeed many outside them too) are offered an endless, year-round supply of globally-sourced commodities in shops and supermarkets. Food is flown or shipped across thousands of kilometres, and cooked with recipes from around the world. Clothes, electrical goods, cars, computers, toys ... you name it, very few commodities are made where they are sold these days. In the world of paid work, jobs are lost and gained according to shifts in the global economy. Pollution in water or air is no respecter of borders, and nor is climate change. Television sets act as 'windows on the world', potentially transmitting pictures from anywhere, to anywhere. Migrants of all kinds, from brain surgeons to asylum seekers, travel huge distances. With all this going on, it’s no surprise that there is a growing understanding that what happens in one place is more and more caught up with what is happening in other places far away.

This understanding certainly isn’t just confined to people whose job it is to think about the wider world: journalists, politicians, think-tank pundits or academics, for instance. The world, once so slow to travel around and so difficult to learn all about, now seems to be on everyone’s doorstep.

Activity 1

One day this week, choose a couple of hours when you’ll be doing something fairly ordinary for you, and make a list of all the things you encounter that come from a different country.

For example, you might go to a supermarket and look at where all the food you’ve bought has come from; or cook a meal and do the same thing with the food you’ve cooked. You might help a young person with their school homework: are they learning about something far away? Getting dressed or doing the ironing gives you a chance to check where the clothes you wear come from. Going to work might mean meeting colleagues whose families are abroad, and could mean contacting people in workplaces far distant from yours.
Figure 1 Some newspaper headlines suggesting different aspects of globalisation: trade transactions, legal and political institutions, charitable work, military interventions, and migration. What others can you think of?
It is this existence of connections that span the globe in the everyday lives of many people that is the main motivation behind making this course. It’s one of the implications of the course title, *Living in a Globalised World*. We want to think about globalisation, not as some big process happening out there while we ordinary folk get on with our ordinary lives, but as something that’s part of ordinary lives and ordinary living (Figure 2). Everyday stuff such as shopping, turning on the TV, getting dressed even, now pulls many more of us than ever before into relations – such as the trading of commodities and the making of TV news – that stretch around the world.

So DD205 *Living in a Globalised World* starts off with this sense that, more so than ever before, we are entangled in global processes every day. The everyday things we do, things that happen every day, are caught up in globalisation. These constant, ongoing actions that are part of making the world global is where this course starts.

### 2.2 Globalisation is debated

The claim that many more people now than ever before are caught up in globalising processes might not be news to you. You may already be aware that many commodities are traded globally, that jobs are lost in one place because of what has happened on another continent, that carbon emissions from some countries are most likely responsible for producing a change in climate patterns that will affect the whole world. One reason you may be aware of these things is that the causes and consequences of such global processes are vociferously debated. There are campaigns and demonstrations, learned discussions and world conferences, sit-ins and boycotts, petitions and fund-raising events, long-established organisations and ephemeral pressure groups, all trying to make their views about globalisation heard. We are increasingly often presented with information, news, political debate and polemic about our involvement in globalisation.

However, all that discussion and debate is just that – debate. It seems impossible to turn to some kind of neutral and objective ‘expert opinion’ to make sense of living in a globalised world, since expert opinions disagree profoundly about the implications of globalisation.

Some argue the way the world is organised now is beneficial. Some claim that the global marketplace is inevitable, for example, and a necessary part of poorer nations’ development. It’s also been argued that the current phase of global warming is mostly just a natural fluctuation in global temperatures. On the other hand, many campaigning organisations are unhappy about the way the world is
The idea that we are all caught up in globalisation in lots of ways has inspired a number of guides to changing the world through everyday actions. Here are just a few examples.
Defining terms

Throughout the DD205 course book chapters you’ll find boxes inserted into the written text and headed ‘Defining ...’. The first chapter of the first course book, for example, has boxes which include ‘Defining non-governmental organisations’ and ‘Defining developed and developing countries’. These boxes are used because the debate over globalisation also extends to the meaning of many of the terms associated with it. What most of these boxes do is explain why the term is used, in what context, and what its implications are. Sometimes the boxes also suggest alternative terms that might be more appropriate in different contexts.

Depending on your familiarity with the particular term in any one box, you may not feel you need to halt your reading of the chapter in order to read its box. But if you feel less confident about what a term means, then the defining boxes are a way to clarify your understanding.

You’ll find that all the terms discussed in defining boxes are emboldened in the index of each of the course’s two main teaching texts. Currently globalised. Even then, though, disagreement abounds. Does charity help or hinder the development of poorer nations? Should the UN intervene in the affairs of nations? Would cheap, non-branded drugs improve the health of the world’s population (see Figure 3)? So even in those cases where experts agree on what is happening to the planet, agreement on what should be done remains hard to achieve.

You might feel that all this debate actually contributes to making living in a globalised world feel pretty baffling!

Debates about globalisation are often perplexing. But they are also a fundamental part of globalisation today, and so they provide the second starting point for this course. Part of what living in a globalised world is about are our everyday involvements in globalising processes. But another part of living in a globalised world is all the debate about what that world is and could be. DD205 looks at a range of arguments, campaigns and demands about just what kind of a globalised world is needed.