

GEOG 510

Economic Geography: Youth, Education and Work

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Stephen Young, 426 Science Hall

EMAIL: sjyoung3@wisc.edu

OFFICE HOURS: Office hours by appointment.

COURSE OVERVIEW

A number of geographers argue that youth have been more adversely affected than most by recent economic restructuring (Katz 2004; Jeffrey 2008). A scarcity of secure work, lack of public sector support and growing indebtedness are just some of the problems that millions of young people confront today. Yet, they are not passive in the face of such changes. Indeed, youth have been at the forefront of a number of recent protests from NYC, to London, to Cairo. Some scholars have even argued that because young people experience a “fresh contact” with entrenched social problems, they are particularly adept at developing innovative ways to tackle them (Mannheim 1923; Cole 2004).

The focus of this course will be on how youth in different parts of the world are responding to a shifting social-economic landscape. We will begin by examining some important conceptual debates in economic geography regarding neoliberalism, economy, youth and space. We will then read a series of ethnographic case studies that will take us from South Africa to Silicon Valley and many places in between. We will be centrally concerned with the question of how young people find a way to “make ends meet”, often under conditions of considerable constraint. In the process, we will also be trying to “make ends meet” in an academic sense by considering how these case studies relate to one another, what similarities and differences are revealed, and how they might inform larger theoretical debates in economic geography.

READINGS

There are three required texts for this course. The books are available for purchase and copies will also be placed on reserve at the College Library. The books are:

- Davidson, Elsa 2011. *The Burdens of Aspiration: school, youth and success in the divided social worlds of silicon valley* New York: NYU Press
- Hunter, Mark 2010. *Love in the Time of AIDS: Inequality, Gender and Rights in South Africa* Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Willis, Paul 1981. *Learning to Labor: how working class kids get working class jobs* New York: Columbia University Press

Besides these books, there are a number of [articles available on-line through Learn@UW](#). To access the readings, go to the course page and click on the link to “Articles”. Click on the relevant link and you should be able to download a pdf. of the reading.

ASSESSMENTS

Think Pieces and Class Participation 35%

Everyone will be required to submit weekly “think pieces” to the course Learn@UW dropbox. The think piece should be a 1-2 page reflection on the most interesting themes that emerged in the readings that week. You can also raise points of confusion or disagreement, identify links with other course readings, or propose questions for discussion. You must

submit your think piece by 5pm on the Tuesday before class. You are also expected to participate in class discussions and activities each week.

Leading Discussion

15%

Everyone will lead discussion once in the semester, usually as part of a group of 2 or 3. I would like you to email or meet with your fellow discussion leaders prior to class to think of key questions that will frame the conversation that week. You can also think of additional materials – e.g. newspapers articles – or exercises – e.g. small group activities – that you would like to use in class to stimulate thinking.

Final Paper

50%

Everyone must submit a final paper of approx. 3, 500 words (double-spaced, size 12 font) due on the last day of class (May 10). The paper must engage with a topic raised in the course: e.g. neoliberal restructuring, un/underemployment, educational regimes, youth politics, work and masculinities, illicit economies, welfare reform and social reproduction. I expect you to draw on course materials but also to find additional books and articles that will help with your analysis. I will be available for office hours to talk about your papers, so please feel free to ask for an appointment.

GRADING SCALE

The grading scale used in the class is the standard scale used in most courses on campus:

A: 93-100

AB: 88-92

B: 83-87

BC: 78-82

C: 70-77

D: 60-69

F: 59 or lower

COURSE COMMUNICATION

During class, everyone will be given an opportunity to ask questions and discuss course content. If you have additional questions you can either:

- (a) Write me an email
- (b) Make an appointment to meet with me

DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS

Any student with special needs or a disability should notify me as early in the semester as possible in order to coordinate any necessary arrangements.

WEEKLY SUMMARY OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Week 1. Introduction to the Course (Jan 26th)

I. Key Ideas in Economic Geography

Week 2. Debating Neoliberalism (Feb 2nd)

Harvey, David 2007. "Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 610, 1, pp. 21-44

Ong, Aiwa 2007. "Neoliberalism as Mobile Technology," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 32, 1, pp. 3-8

Brenner, Neil, Jamie Peck & Nik Theodore 2010. "Variegated Neoliberalism: geographies, modalities and pathways," *Global Networks* 10, 2, pp. 182-222

Week 3. Sites and Scales of Economic Analysis (Feb 9th)

Nagar, Richa, Victoria Lawson, Linda McDowell, and Susan Hanson, 2002. "Locating Globalization: Feminist (re)readings of the subjects and spaces of globalization," *Economic Geography* 78, 3, pp. 257-284.

Katz, Cindi 2002. "Vagabond Capitalism and the Necessity of Social Reproduction," *Antipode* 33, 4, pp.709-728

G. Pratt & B. Yeoh 2003. "Transnational (Counter) Topographies" *Gender, Place and Culture* 10, 2, pp.159-166

Week 4. Youth Cultures (Feb 16th)

Willis, Paul 1981. *Learning to Labor: how working class kids get working class jobs* New York: Columbia University Press

Week 5. No Class (Feb 23rd)

I'm at the AAG conference.

II. Education, Aspiration and Respect

Week 6. (March 1st)

Mitchell, Katharyne 2003. "Educating the national citizen in neoliberal times: from the multicultural self to the strategic cosmopolitan," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28, 4, pp. 387-403

Demerath, Peter 2001. "The social cost of acting "extra:" Students' moral judgments of self, social relations, and academic success in Papua New Guinea," *American Journal of Education* 108, 3.

Fong, Jenifer 2007. "Morality, Cosmopolitanism, or Academic Attainment? Discourses on "Quality" and Urban Chinese-Only-Children's Claims to Ideal Personhood," *City & Society* 19, 1, pp. 86-113

Week 7. (March 8th)

Davidson, Elsa 2011. *The Burdens of Aspiration: school, youth and success in the divided social worlds of Silicon Valley* New York: NYU Press

III. Unemployment, Inertia and Dislocation

Week 8. (March 15th)

Mains, Daniel 2007. "Neoliberal Times: Progress, Boredom and Shame among young men in urban Ethiopia," *American Ethnologist* 34, 4, pp.659-673

Cohen, Shana 2003. "Alienation and Globalization in Morocco: Addressing the Social and Political Impact of Market Integration," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, 1, pp. 168-189

Cross, Jamie 2009. "From Dreams to Discontent: Educated young men and the politics of work at a special economic zone," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 43, 3, pp.351-379

V. Gender, Money and Intimacy

Week 9. (March 22nd)

Jenifer Cole 2004. "Fresh Contact in Tamatave, Madagascar: Sex, Money and Intergenerational Transformation," *American Ethnologist*. 31, 4, pp. 571-586.

Mark Hunter *Love in the Time of AIDS: Inequality, Gender and Rights in South Africa* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press pp.1-102

Week 10. (March 29th)

Mark Hunter *Love in the Time of AIDS: Inequality, Gender and Rights in South Africa* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press pp. 105-225

Week 11. No Class (April 5th)

V. Enterprise, Ethics and Improvisation

Week 12. (April 12th)

Vigh, Henrik 2010. "Youth Mobilization as Social Navigation Reflections on the Concept of *dubriagem*," *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos* 18/19, pp.140-164

Thomas Blom Hansen 2005. "Sovereigns Beyond the State: on legality and authority in urban India," *Sovereign Bodies: citizens, migrants and state in the postcolonial world* edited by T.B. Hansen and F. Stepputat Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (pp. 169-190)

Swanson, Kate 2007. "Bad Mothers" and "Delinquent Children": unraveling anti-begging rhetoric in the Ecuadorian Andes', *Gender, Place & Culture*, 14, 6, pp. 703 - 720

Week 13. (April 19th)

Jeffrey, Craig & Young, Stephen "Improvising India: Micro-Geographies of Youth *jugād*", forthcoming in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*

Rodgers, Dennis 2009. "Bismarkian Transformations in Contemporary Nicaragua? From Gang Member to Drug Dealer to Legal Entrepreneur", *BWPI Working Paper* 82

Janet Roitman, 2006. "The Ethics of Illegality in the Chad Basin," in Comaroff and Comaroff, eds. *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Week 14. (April 26th)

Individual appointments to discuss final papers

VI. New Possibilities?

Week 15. (May 3rd)

Thieme, Tatiana 2010. "Youth, waste and work in Mathare: Whose business and whose politics?" *Environment and Urbanization* 22, 2, pp.

Standing, Guy 2011. "Workfare and the Precariat," *Soundings* 47, 8, pp. 35-43

Week 16. (May 10th)

Last class!