

GEOG 510

Economic Geography: Growing up in a Global Economy

Instructor: Dr. Stephen Young, 426 Science Hall

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Office Hours: Office hours by appointment on Friday 2.30-3.30 in SH234

Meeting Times: Thursdays 2.20-5.25 in SH350

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 even argue 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 spatiality. We'll then read a series of critical ethnographies that will take us from southern 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 four 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:

- Willis, Paul 1981 *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* New York: Columbia University Press
- Davidson, Elsa 2011. *The Burdens of Aspiration: school, youth and success in the divided social worlds of silicon valley* New York: NYU Press
- Hochschild, Arlie 2012. *The Outsourced Self: Intimate Life in Market Times*. Metropolitan Books
- Gibson-Graham J.K., Cameron, Jenny & Healy, Stephen 2013. *Take Back the Economy: An ethical guide for transforming our communities*. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press

There are also a number of [articles](#) available on-line through the course Learn@UW site. Please note that I have provided electronic copies of the articles in order to contain course costs but you should feel free to print hard copies.

Assessments

Think Pieces and Class Participation 20%

Everyone will be required to submit weekly “think pieces” to the course Learn@UW dropbox. The think piece should be a 2-page [approx. 600 words] 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, and 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. This will involve first contextualizing the readings through a short presentation. Feel free to use ppt slides or youtube clips as part of your presentation. You should also think of additional materials – e.g. newspapers articles – and activities – e.g. small group discussions – to use in class to stimulate thinking. You must email or meet with me prior to class to think of key questions that will frame the conversation that week, preferably on the Tuesday or Wednesday.

Midterm

25%

There will be a take-home midterm exam comprising two essay questions in Week 8. You will have 1 week to answer the questions. The word limit is 1,500 per question.

Final Paper

40%

Everyone must submit a final paper of approx. 3, 500 words (double-spaced, size 12 font) due on the last day of class (May 8). The paper must develop an argument that relates to a topic raised in the course: e.g. neoliberal restructuring, un/underemployment, educational regimes, youth politics, work and masculinities, illicit economies, welfare reform, 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 23)

Week 2. Markets, Policies and Technologies (Jan 30)

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

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

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

Week 3. Sites, Spaces and Subjects (Feb 6)

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, 257-284.

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

Wright, Melissa W. 2004. "From Protests to Politics: Sex Work, Women's Worth, and Ciudad Juarez Modernity," *Annals of American Geography* 94, 2, 369-386

Week 4. Youth, Culture and Class (Feb 13)

Willis, Paul 1981. *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* New York: Columbia University Press

Week 5. Education, Cosmopolitanism and Morality (Feb 20)

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, 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, 86-113

Week 6. Inequalities, Aspirations and Obligations (Feb 27)

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

Week 7 Boredom, Inertia and Dislocation (March 6)

Mains, Daniel 2007. "Neoliberal Times: Progress, boredom and shame among young men in urban Ethiopia," *American Ethnologist* 34, 4, 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, 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, 351-379

Week 8. Middlebury Conference (March 13)

No class. Work on the exam.

Week 9. Spring Break (March 20)

Week 10 Love, Sex and Money I (March 27)

Hochschild, Arlie 2012. *The Outsourced Self: Intimate Life in Market Times*. Metropolitan Books

Week 11. Love, Sex and Money II (April 3)

Brennan, Denise 2004. "Women Work, Men Sponge, and Everyone Gossips: Macho Men and Stigmatized/ing Women in a Sex Tourist Town" *Anthropological Quarterly* 77, 4, 705-733

Newell, Sasha 2009. "Godrap Girls, Draou Boys, and the Sexual Economy of the Bluff in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire" *Ethnos* 74, 3, 379-402

Hunter, Mark 2007. "The Changing Political Economy of Sex in South Africa: the significance of unemployment and inequalities to the scale of the AIDS pandemic" *Social Science & Medicine* 64, 689-700

Week 12. AAG (April 10)

No class. Work on your final papers.

Week 13. Enterprise, Informality and Improvisation (April 17)

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

Jeffrey, Craig & Young, Stephen. 2014. "Jugād: Youth and Enterprise in India", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104, 1, 182-195

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

Week 14. Wages, Work and Wellbeing (April 24)

Gibson-Graham J.K., Cameron, Jenny & Healy, Stephen 2013. *Take Back the Economy: An ethical guide for transforming our communities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Chapters 1-3

Wills, Jane 2009. "The Living Wage", *Soundings: A journal of politics and culture* 42, 33-46

Week 15. New possibilities (May 1)

Gibson-Graham J.K., Cameron, Jenny & Healy, Stephen 2013. *Take Back the Economy: An ethical guide for transforming our communities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Chapters 4-6

Week 16. (May 8) Last class!