This course seeks to initiate an exploration of the (unbounded, uncentered) field of geographical political economy in the form of a “pro-seminar” (that is, a critical survey of some of the significant currents in the field, with the purpose of engaging with its incomplete history and constitutive diversity, as opposed to a comprehensive account). Geographical political economy is not coterminous with “economic geography,” although there are close and complex relations between them. Both could be said to be more expansive than the other, while each is also a subset of the other. Economic geography has been the principal venue for debates and developments in geographical political economy, the latter being a postdisciplinary project, strongly shaped by an array of “external” influences and affinities. Both are characteristically restless, critical, emergent, heterodox, and pluralist—and never comfortably or complacently so.

We will read into and around the field of geographical political economy together during the course of this semester, seeking to cultivate cultures of conversation and exploration that are open, respectful, and curious. Echoing the character of the heterodox, pluralist field itself, this means that we will want to recognize, explore, and respect differences (different perspectives, different points of view, different understandings, different readings …), not to override, marginalize, or minimize them. We’ll need to check ourselves on this as we go along, to see how we are doing.

Here is an outline of the topics that we will explore—all too briefly, as you will discover. There is a lot to read, needless to say, and even with a moderately heavy load (of 120-175 pages per week), we will barely do justice to the diversity of approaches and positions within each of these areas of inquiry, which should not be seen as separate topics or historical moments as such, but as lines and layers within a combinatorial and evolving conversation. This of course is just one take (or sampling) of the field of geographical political economy, no two approaches to which would be the same, probably, although no doubt they would recognize some of the same currents and debates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Discussion leads</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 6</td>
<td>Orientations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 13</td>
<td>Neomarxisms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 20</td>
<td>No class today: develop term paper proposal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 27</td>
<td>Restructuring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 4</td>
<td>Postfordism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 11</td>
<td>Feminisms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 18</td>
<td>Regulationism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 25</td>
<td>Poststructuralism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 1</td>
<td>Labor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 8</td>
<td>Embeddedness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 15</td>
<td>Networks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 22</td>
<td>Neoliberalism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 29</td>
<td>Polanyi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Active, critical, and thoughtful engagement with both the readings and the in-class discussions will be necessary to make the course work. Each participant in the seminar will prepare a one-page reaction paper in response to the readings each week (containing your responses to the readings, along with issues that you wish to raise for discussion, exploration, or clarification). No later than 9pm each Sunday, the reaction papers should be emailed to the instructor and the two discussion leaders for that week’s class. The role of the discussion leaders will be (a) to synthesize the issues arising from the reaction papers, identifying topics and questions for further discussion in class and (b) to prepare some introductory comments concerning the assigned readings/authors for the next class.

Each student will prepare a term paper during the course of the semester, focused on a debate, project, theme, approach, or critical silence within the field of geographical political economy. Term paper proposals (of up to 1 page, including a brief rationale and some indicative readings) should be prepared by September 26. In-class (preliminary) presentations-cum-discussions of term papers will begin on October 25. (Presentations will be for 10 minutes, followed by Q&A.) Term papers (not exceeding 20 pages of 1.5 spaced text; references additional) should be submitted by December 14. (Except by prior arrangement, late submissions receive only marks.)

Each week there will be a brief scene-setting introduction to the upcoming readings. (Note that the ordering of the required readings is deliberate, not accidental.) Further readings are provided for the curious and the time rich, but (more realistically) as a resource for term papers.

**Assessment:** class participation (including discussion leads and presentations)—33%; term paper—67%.

### September 6: Orientations

This will be an introductory session in which the character, origins, and evolution of geographical political economy will be discussed, in relation to the subdiscipline of economic geography in both an intellectual and a sociological sense. The modus operandi for the class and work assignments will also be discussed.

**Required readings:**


**Further readings:**

September 13

Neomarxisms

If geographical political economy really began to take shape during the 1980s, with proliferating lines of work on uneven development, spatial divisions of labor, and restructuring, the immediate prehistory to this was shaped by a series of formative interventions in the late 1970s. These neomarxisms may not have been exactly foundational, but they were beginnings.

Required readings:

Further readings:
September 20
No class today

Prepare 1-page term paper proposals for September 27

September 27
Restructuring

The combination of urgent political questions (around deindustrialization, capital flight, and regionalized decline) and newly forged frameworks for analysis (especially the spatial division of labor and related debates concerning critical realist methods) established the foundations for what became known as the restructuring approach.

Required readings:


Further readings:


October 4
Postfordism

If the restructuring framework was disproportionately concerned with “old” economies encountering transformative change, the debates around postfordism that peaked between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s were much more about emergent (flexible) futures, along with their geographies, sociologies, and politics. There were macro (regulationist) approaches to these questions and meso (institutionalist) ones, as well as radical and reformist currents; the growth models that were analyzed and advocated for also displayed distinctive geographies, as did the critiques.
Required readings:


Further readings:


October 11

Feminisms

Feminist economic geography can be considered to be an expression of economic geography’s heterodoxy, but also a critique of its limits. Feminist economic geographers have developed alternative interpretations of “mainstreamed” critical concepts such as (post)Fordism and globalization, while also calling attention to the silences and exclusions implicit in approaches that privilege production and wage-labor relations in (particular) workplaces. In turn, they have developed distinctive approaches to the study of labor, social reproduction, gender orders, high tech, and more.

Required readings:


Further readings:


---

**October 18 Regulationism**

Regulation theory (particularly its French variant) was a significant influence on economic geography from the late 1980s, dissipating thereafter, but leaving a series of traces and echoes behind. Itself a critique of economistic Marxism (as well as orthodox economics), the regulation approach sought to integrate analyses of the economic and the “extra-economic,” mostly at the scale of the nation state.

*Required readings:*


Further readings:


---

**October 25  Poststructuralism**

Poststructural influences in geographical political economy are diverse and far-ranging, often explicit but sometimes implicit too. Founding texts of the mid-1990s included Trevor Barnes’ *Logics of dislocation* and Gibson-Graham’s *The end of capitalism (as we knew it)*, with some of the first manifestations of what would be characterized as a “cultural turn” appearing in Lee and Wills’ collection, *Geographies of economies*. Close, ambivalent, and complex relations between poststructuralism and political economy approaches have become a defining feature of the theory culture in economic geography.

Required readings:


Further readings:


**November 1  Labor**

Attention to what in the early 1980s was called the “labor factor” has been a key concern in geographical political economy since the emergence of the restructuring approach, an initial focus on the labor process (at the point of production) later being complemented with a concern with labor markets (including social reproduction, the state, and more). A distinctive “labor geography” would emerge in the late 1980s, as a critique of some of its capital-centric predecessors and as a distinctive approach in its own right, privileging the collective agency of workers and exploring new modes of labor organizing.

**Required readings:**


**Further readings:**


### November 8  
**Embeddedness**

The Polanyian notion of embeddedness—signalling the mutual constitution of the economic and the “non-economic” spheres and the dangers of the economistic fallacy—has long played a role in various strands of geographical political economy and economic geography, as a synonym for (local) context, both social and institutional, and as a foil against market-centricity. Its role, however, is often little more than a metaphorical or heuristic one, raising the question of what embeddedness might mean as an analytical concept.

**Required readings:**


**Further readings:**


### November 15  
**Networks**

Often the traveling companion of embeddedness, network approaches have transformed the fields of geographical political economy and economic geography, most explicitly perhaps in the shape of the global production networks (GPN) project but also as a key motif for what as been portrayed as the “relational turn.” Network approaches enable the exploration of (often long-distance) connectivities and relations, exceeding but perhaps also complementing more territorialized understandings of economic space.
**November 22**

**Neoliberalism**

Concerns with neoliberalism—as a market-oriented mode of governance and as a hegemonic condition—have deep and varied roots in geographical political economy, including critiques of Thatcherism and Reaganomics, the regulationist concern with post-Keynesian modes of regulation, Polanyian approaches to the second “great transformation,” and critiques of orthodox treatments of globalization. For two decades now, the field has been engaged in an extended exploration and debate of the role, form, and (explanatory, political) significance of neoliberalism, which in many respects was reanimated by the Wall Street crash of 2008 and its aftermath. For some, neoliberalism defines “the matrix.” For others, it does not.

**Required readings:**


---

**Required readings:**


**Further readings:**


Further readings:


### November 29

Polanyi

Karl Polanyi has been lost and found many times in the field of heterodox political economy, for his critique of neoliberal capitalism *avant la lettre*, for his suggestive notions of embeddedness and the “double movement,” and for his distinctive take on economic variegation. In the past decade, however, the various movements to recover and re-evaluate Polanyi’s work have taken on a distinctly cross-disciplinary character, including in economic geography.

**Required readings:**


Further readings:


