Geog 364  Globalization, cities & regions
Fall 2017

Instructor: Jamie Peck
Teaching assistant: Douglas Robb

Class: Monday and Wednesday, 9.30-11.00, room 200
Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 11.00-12.30, or by appointment

Contact info: Jamie Peck, jamie.peck@ubc.ca, tel (604) 822-0894
Geography, room 134
Douglas Robb, wdouglasrobb@gmail.com

Course outline

Sept 6  Introduction to the course: economic worlds in motion
Sept 11  The rise (and fall?) of globalization: from triumphalism to Trumpism
Sept 13  Pluralizing capitalism: global shifts, regional fortunes
Sept 18  Redividing labor: jobs on the move
Sept 20  Boom, bubble, and bust: financialized economies (always) in transition
Sept 25  Neoliberalism in retreat? Reassessing the market paradigm
Sept 27  On the hustle: the rise of entrepreneurial urbanism
Oct 2  Austerity urbanism: governing by extreme economy
Oct 4  Long odds: Atlantic City runs out of luck
Oct 9  Thanksgiving
Oct 11  Unreal estate: unpacking Vancouver
Oct 16  Differences that make a difference: the US-Mexico Border
Oct 18  Midterm exam
Oct 23  Detroit—ruins of a city: farewell to Fordism
Oct 25  Roger and me: pets or meat?
Oct 30  After Fordism: Silicon dreams
Nov 1  Platform capitalism: tracking Amazon
Nov 6  Moving pictures: a view from the back lot
Nov 8  Creativity cults: entrepreneurialism 2.0
Nov 13  Remembrance Day
Nov 15  The right to work: deunionization at work
Nov 20  Workfare states: a hand up, not a hand out
Nov 22  Fighting poverty on a global scale: fast-policy programming for the poor
Nov 27  Washington consensus: the World Bank does economic geography
Nov 29  Trumponomics? New (and old) economic discourses

Contents

Rationale and readings  2
Assessment  3
Thematic readings  4
Classes and readings  5
Rationale

*Globalization, cities & regions* is concerned with the critical interrogation of issues relating to economic globalization, urban restructuring, and regional development. Its approach is to bring “global” processes and pressures down to earth, to ask where they come from, and to explore their (variable) causes and consequences in cities and regions. The course also provides an opportunity to apply, and evaluate, a range of theoretical claims and frameworks derived from recent work in economic geography and urban & regional political economy. The approach of the course, like that of these fields, is to learn *with and through* case studies of real places. Case studies are selected not simply to acquire “coverage,” or to provide straightforwardly generalizable lessons, but as a means of understanding how *processes work* (in particular situations), and to work through substantive claims and theoretical positions in the burgeoning literature on globalization, cities, and regions.

The dual objectives of *Globalization, cities & regions* are (a) to establish a sound understanding of substantive issues, key trends, and emergent developments in the globalizing economy, and the changing roles/positions of selected cities and regions in the context of globalization; and (b) to provide an appreciation of some of the most influential theoretical frameworks, concepts, and approaches in contemporary economic geography and urban & regional political economy. The latter, it will be emphasized is more a way of *seeing and understanding the world* just as much as it is a toolkit of theories or methods. The principal underlying goal of the course is to introduce students to this way of seeing; it is an invitation to economic geography.

Classroom etiquette

While this course uses a lecture format, students are encouraged to ask questions during or at the end of class. The use of laptops during class is discouraged, except for the express purpose of note taking. As a general rule, note-taking by hand is recommended. A handout of key slides will be provided at each class.

Readings

Ongoing and critical reading is an essential component of this class. The lectures will assume some familiarity with the assigned readings, and the exams will evaluate your knowledge and understanding of the readings. Specifically, the required readings—usually one article-length item per class, or two shorter pieces—must be completed in advance of each class. The lectures will not summarize the readings, but instead are intended to complement or parallel them. Required (REQ) readings are available online at the Geography 364 page on UBC Connect (under the Library Course Reserves tab). They are marked on the syllabus and on UBC Connect with a UBC tag number. A selection of recommended (REC) readings is provided for those seeking a deeper understanding of the themes, issues, and concepts examined during the course. (These are not provided on UBC Connect, but are accessible via the library.) Be sure to explore the recommended readings for your take-home essay.

In addition to the required and recommended readings for each class, a further list of thematic readings is provided which address basic and recurring issues for the *course as a whole*. These themes will play a prominent role in the assessment of the course (the mid-term
and final exams, and the take-home essay). All of the thematic readings are available online at the Geography 364 page on UBC Connect (under the Library Course Reserves tab; with UBC tags 26-39).

Assessment

There are three components in the assessment for this course:

- **Midterm exam**: 25% of total marks (1.25 hours; 2 essay answers) October 18, 2017
- **Take-home essay**: 35% of total marks (1 essay answer, issued November 1, 2017), due 9.30am, November 29, 2017
- **Final exam**: 40% of total marks (2.5 hours; 3 essay answers), during December exam period

The same basic philosophy holds across all three elements of the assessment: a premium is placed on (a) the ability to link together key theories and concepts introduced during the course (e.g. the spatial division of labor, neoliberal urbanism, post-Fordism) and the various illustrations, examples, and case studies covered in both the lectures and in the readings; and (b) the ability to develop coherent and compelling arguments in response to the questions, drawing on evidence, relevant concepts, and appropriate references to the literature.

The midterm exam will comprise broadly framed essay questions. Students will be required to answer two questions from ten.

The take-home essay takes the form of an extended essay written in response to a single question concerning one of the integrative themes of the course. The essay should be typed, comprising not more than 7 pages of 1.5 spaced text (12 point font with standard margins), or approximately 2,500 words. This must be followed by a bibliography (additional to the 7 page limit for the main text), listing all academic sources referred to in the text presented (strictly) in the citation style used in this syllabus. (Web references should be kept to an absolute minimum; please focus on academic articles and books.) The marking rubric for the take-home essay is as follows: facility in summarizing, applying, and critically evaluating key concepts (50%); range and depth of examples and illustrations used (30%); overall presentation, including structure of argument, quality of writing, and bibliographic referencing (20%). The deadline for submission of case-study projects will be strictly enforced. Late submissions will receive a 3 percentage-point per day penalty (exceptions only with medical or other documentation).

The final exam will follow a similar format to the midterm, comprising broadly framed essay questions. Students will be required to answer three questions from ten, the content of which will cover the course as a whole.
Thematic readings

Questioning globalization


Comparing capitalism(s)


Spatial divisions of labor


Flexible accumulation


Neoliberal urbanism

Classes and readings

**September 6**  Introduction to the course: economic worlds in motion

This session will provide an introduction to the course, its approach, and key themes. The lecture will outline the distinctive position and perspective of economic geographers, not just as a subdisciplinary approach but as a distinctive way of seeing (and understanding) the economy, economic change, and economic difference. **Key themes and concepts:** economic geography; spatial division of labor; questioning globalization; comparing capitalism(s); neoliberal urbanism; flexible accumulation


**September 11**  The rise (and fall?) of globalization: from triumphalism to Trumpism

The lecture asks where “globalization” came from and where it might be going. In the course of the past 25 years or so, we have gone from a period in which (economic) globalization was thought to be an inevitable, unstoppable, integrating, and modernizing force, according to some the beginning of worldwide convergence and even “the end of geography,” to a time of profound uncertainty, extending to premonitions of the “death” of globalization. Assessing these debates, the lecture will trace the rise (and possible fall) of globalization, focusing on the period between early 1990s triumphalism and present-day pessimism. **Key themes and concepts:** new international division of labor; deindustrialization; corporate hierarchies.

**REC**  Beattie A (2017) The end of globalisation? Don’t be so sure. *Financial Times* May 18  

**September 13**  Pluralizing capitalism: global shifts, regional fortunes

Taking seriously the idea that capitalism is a geographically differentiated system, the lecture examines the bipolar viewpoint of the varieties of capitalism school, the challenge of the BRICS, and the issue of mutual interdependence. Globalization is not producing a new form of singular capitalism, or universalizing the market; it is generating new geographies of growth, decline, and inequality, as well as new contradictions. The variegation of capitalism is therefore an ongoing process. **Key themes and concepts:** uneven development; varieties of capitalism; variegated capitalism; BRICS.


**September 18**  Redividing labor: jobs on the move

Economic geographers have been tracking the movement of jobs (and the geography of employment regimes) for decades now, from the emergence of the new international division of labor in the 1970s,
through the acceleration of deindustrialization since the 1980s, to the emergent geographies of the “offshore” economy. The lecture will explore the historical geography of recent employment change, explaining the fundamental conceptual framework that is the spatial division of labor. Key themes and concepts: new international division of labor; spatial division of labor; deindustrialization; labor arbitrage; offshoring; automation.


September 20 Boom, bubble, and bust: financialized economies (always) in transition

The lecture explores explanations of the origins, form, and consequences of the global financial crisis that began in late 2008. The crisis displayed a distinctive economic geography and spawned different regulatory and political responses, many of these with long-run consequences, often with roots in the project of neoliberal globalization. Key themes and concepts: financialization; financial geography; social studies of finance; regulation theory; neoliberalism; shareholder value.


September 25 Neoliberalism in retreat? Reassessing the market paradigm

This lecture will examine the implications of the rise of “neoliberalism” as a governing ideology since the 1970s, drawing out some of the implications for cities and regions, and for economic and social policy. If the beachheads of neoliberalism as a governing project were established Chile in the 1970s and the UK and US in the 1980s, since the 1990s neoliberal approaches had become dominant within the multilateral agencies—the so-called Washington consensus—while centrist politicians also adopted a softer version of neoliberalism known as the “Third Way.” The Wall Street crash of 2008 has been read by some as the beginning of the end for neoliberalism, even as a successor has yet to emerge. Key themes and concepts: Washington consensus; free market economics; roll-back and roll-out neoliberalism; neoliberalization; Wall Street crash; creative destruction.


September 27  On the hustle: the rise of entrepreneurial urbanism

It has been argued that economic globalization and neoliberalizing political conditions leave cities and regions with little practical alternative but to become more externally oriented and entrepreneurial. For European and American city leaders and urban policymakers, entrepreneurial strategies based on place promotion, the attraction/retention of mobile capital, the development of “hallmark” events and “urban spectacles,” and the cultivation of a “good business climate” seem increasingly to represent the one-best-way in urban economic policy. Alternatively, critics maintain that just because this is the only game in town, it does not mean that it is sustainable, let alone desirable. Key themes and concepts: entrepreneurial urbanism; neoliberalism; Keynesianism; urban growth machines; zero-sum competition.


October 2  Austerity urbanism: governing by extreme economy

Austerity budgeting in state and local government, selectively targeting the social state, is a long-established trait of neoliberal governance, but it has been enforced with renewed vigor in the wake of the Wall Street crash of 2008. The lecture develops the argument that conditions of long-run austerity are defining a new operational matrix for urban politics. Examining some of the leading and bleeding edges of austerity’s “extreme economy” in the United States (including the recent rash of municipal bankruptcies), the lecture locates these developments in the context of mutating processes of neoliberal urbanism, commenting on some of its social and spatial consequences. Key themes and concepts: neoliberal urbanism; austerity urbanism; financialization; municipal bankruptcies; devolution.


October 4  Long odds: Atlantic City runs out of luck

Focusing on the financially challenged casino capital of Atlantic City, New Jersey, the lecture traces a long (and often notorious) history of entrepreneurial urban strategies, from Republican machine control to the experiment with legalized gambling that was launched in the mid-1970s. Although the casino pact initially generated economic growth, in the long run Atlantic City’s wager did not pay off. Having been to the brink of bankruptcy prior to the imposition of state-imposed “emergency management,” Atlantic City is now being structurally adjusted. The unraveling of this much-emulated model of entrepreneurial urbanism dramatizes a distinctly “late-entrepreneurial” moment of fiscally mandated governance and political crisis. Key themes and concepts: entrepreneurial cities; emergency management; fiscal crisis; austerity urbanism; neoliberalization.
Vancouver, according to most accounts, is a city that works. Indeed, its development model—which often travels under the name of Vancouverism—has become an object of emulation (not to say envy) for many cities around the world. Vancouver seems to have ridden most of the recent “waves” of urban development—such as those associated with the new economy, the creative city, new urbanism, globalization, and sustainability—with quite conspicuous success. But this is also Canada’s most unequal metro area; the celebrated stories of the world’s most “liveable” city jar with localized experiences of poverty and an endemic affordability crisis; a manifestly “successful” urban transition, from staples capital to cosmopolitan hub, has been accomplished in the context of relatively anemic economic performance. So what are we to make of Vancouver? 

Key themes and concepts: urban liberalism; neoliberal urbanism; real-estate complex; growth coalitions; Vancouverism.

Guest lecture by Nina Ebner. As the Trump administration begins NAFTA renegotiations, taken-for-granted realities of cross-border economic integration linking both nations are destabilizing. As a result, there is increased urgency to investigate shifting border politics, new stresses on NAFTA relations and their impacts on the US-Mexico border region’s political economy. In light of these recent developments, this lecture discusses the intersections of restrictive immigration policy, processes of economic restructuring, and the historical and ongoing devaluation of labor, as they manifest on the US-Mexico border. Paying special attention to what the border helps us to understand about the ever-evolving, uneven nature of global capitalism, and using a feminist political economic perspective to do so, it asks: why do certain places and people continue to benefit from development processes and economic change, while others are left out? How is inequality (re)produced in place? 

Key themes and concepts: uneven development, global production networks, economic restructuring, gender, labor, feminicidio.


**October 18**  Midterm exam

**October 23**  *Detroit—ruin of a city: farewell to Fordism*

We will watch the celebrated and controversial documentary film *Detroit: ruin of a city*, by Michael Chanan and George Steinmetz. Detroit is the birthplace of the Ford Motor Company but can also be seen as an epicenter of the socioeconomic system known as *Fordism*. Key themes and concepts: Fordism; deindustrialization; racial inequality; suburbanization; automobile economies; modernity.


**October 25**  *Roger and me: pets or meat?*

We will watch Michael Moore’s landmark documentary *Roger and me*, which Natter and Jones (1993: 140) have described as an “incisive commentary on the dismantling of the fordist social contract in the contemporary United States, and arguably, the most important popular account of these events.” The question that Natter and Jones pose in the title of their paper, drawing a distinction between pets and meat, serves as the film’s central metaphor—a metaphor for labor, its socialization, its commodification, and its containment. Key themes and concepts: post-Fordism; deindustrialization; rustbelt; contingent work.


**October 30**  *After Fordism: silicon dreams*

For decades now, Silicon Valley has been seen as the epitome of the new, flexible economy. This lecture will look at the origins and dynamics of Silicon Valley’s spectacular pattern of industrialization, calling attention to its distinctive capacities as well as its deep contradictions. This case also illustrates the locational dynamics and geographical tendencies of the “post-Fordist” economy, following Allen Scott’s influential argument that “new industrial spaces” are characterized by renewed tendencies for regional agglomeration and localized clustering. Key themes and concepts: post-Fordism; flexible accumulation; industrial networks; vertical disintegration; agglomeration; clusters.

Technology entrepreneurs are conventionally represented as the heroes of the new economy, visionary leaders who have seen the future. In recent years, much of the hype has been focused on the rise of the “sharing economy” or what is also known, more critically, as platform capitalism. Enabled by the web and massive amounts of speculative capital, companies like Uber, Airbnb, and Amazon have come to epitomize a mode of networked, digital capitalism, often posing a significant challenge to existing business models and systems of regulation. The lecture will explore the rise of platform capitalism including a case study of Amazon. Are platform and sharing economy business models harbingers of a new mode of capitalism? Or are they just a fad, or a bubble? Could they be all of these things? **Key themes and concepts:** digital economies; financialization; monopolization

**November 6 Moving pictures: the view from the back lot**

“Hollywood” was for more than half a century the epitome of a localized industry, but since the 1970s has displayed an increasingly global reach. Alternative centers of production now flourish in various locations around the world (for example, Bollywood, Hong Kong), while Hollywood’s own subcontracting networks extend deep into Canada, Europe, and Australasia (including “Hollywood North” in Vancouver). This lecture examines the changing form and geography of the global movie industry, which has not only internationalized in a dramatic fashion since the 1970s, but which has also made its own kind of transition from Fordist mass production to flexible specialization. Locally, the movie industry can be a perplexing partner: it can be a promotional asset, but it is also subsidy sensitive; its economy combines centralized (financial) control with dispersed risk; it generates highly unequal, gig-style employment relations. **Key themes and concepts:** flexible specialization; vertical disintegration, market fragmentation, market control.

**November 1 Platform capitalism: tracking Amazon**


**REC** Frenken K and Schor J (2017) Putting the sharing economy into perspective. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions* 23: 3-10


November 8  Creativity cults: entrepreneurialism 2.0

Cities are increasingly entering into competition for “talent.” An influential argument, associated with Richard Florida, has it that cities and regions will only be successful in attracting the new elite of “creative” workers if they combine leading-edge technological capabilities with an open and tolerant “social climate.” The lecture will examine the Florida thesis and comment on its impact. A critique of the creative cities thesis will be presented, focused on the case of Amsterdam, one of many cities to adopt this cultural (re)development model. It is argued that the creativity “script” operates in the context of neoliberal urbanism, extending competitive logics to the spheres of the arts and street-level culture, while enrolling new actors in the project of individualistic and competitive urbanism. **Key themes and concepts:** creative class; creative urbanism; city branding, cultural gentrification.


November 15  The right to work and rights at work

The focus of this lecture is the changing nature of work in North American labor markets, with particular reference to the rise of contingent work and “at-will” employment relations. One of the markers of the ascendancy of flexible accumulation has been the concomitant rise of contingent or “non-standard” forms of work, especially since the 1980s. Deindustrialization and shift away from the Fordist social contract has also be associated with deunionization of the workforce, both at the enterprise level and in terms of prevailing regulatory norms. A case study of the “right to work” movement in the United States will be presented. **Key themes and concepts:** deunionization; contingent work; labor-market insecurity; gig economy.


November 20  Workfare states: a hand up, not a hand out

It is now widely held that the nation state is being “hollowed out” in the sense that its powers are moving upwards (to supranational institutions like the IMF and the World Bank) and downwards (to local and regional institutions). Indeed, some writers have been claiming that the era of sovereign national governments is coming to an end, while others insist that accounts of the death of the nation state have been exaggerated. The lecture will focus on the implications of nation-state restructuring for regions, asking whether hollowing out is likely to lead to a resurgence in the power and political-economic capacity of regions, or another round of buck-passing, “downloading,” and scapegoating. It will explore the example of welfare reform and the associated ascendancy of “workfare” policies in this context.
Workfare, which mandates work participation for welfare recipients, can be seen as a complex case of “hollowing out,” for the dominant critique of welfare states is intricately connected to the move away from “big government” and federal interventionism, while workfare strategies are nearly always delivered through locally-based, market-oriented systems. The lecture will also consider alternatives to workfare and neoliberal labor regulation. Key themes and concepts: hollowing out; rescaling; workfare; welfare dependency; ethic of care.


**November 22** Fighting poverty on a global scale: fast-policy programming for the poor

Conditional cash transfer programs (which “condition” modest cash-welfare payments on family circumstances and appropriate behaviors) first emerged in Latin America in the second half of the 1990s; they have since spread to scores of countries and have also been the focus of experimentation in parts of the Global North. Some see CCTs as the basis for a 21st Century alternative to the welfare state, others as the internationalization of the neoliberal workfare model; others still as a pathway to the establishment of citizens’ or basic income approaches. The lecture will examine the rise, spread, and meaning of the CCT wave, drawing on examples from Latin America and elsewhere. Key themes and concepts: conditional welfare; basic income; workfare; neoliberalization; fast policy.


**November 27** Washington consensus: the World Bank does economic geography

The World Bank’s annual *World Development Report* is the organization’s signature document, and the principal indicator of its shifting strategic priorities. Previous WDR’s have focused on themes like good governance (1997), attacking poverty (2001), sustainable development (2003), and equity and development (2006). The 2009 report focused on “reshaping economic geography,” proposing the controversial embrace of spatially unequal growth as a necessary feature of dynamic economic development: “economic growth will be unbalanced,” the report stated, “To try to spread it out is to discourage it—to fight prosperity, not poverty.” The lecture will provide a critical reading of the WDR and its presuppositions, exploring its consequences for economic discourse and public policy. Key themes and concepts: global governance; unbalanced growth; regulatory imaginaries; structural adjustment; social capital; post-Washington consensus.

November 29  

**Trumponomics? New (and old) economic discourses**

The election of Donald J Trump to the presidency of the United States has been widely interpreted as a threshold moment, or game-changing event, by supporters and opponents alike. Campaigning as a populist, he appealed to those “left behind” by the growth model of neoliberal globalization, as well as to those “left out” of bicoastal, elite, and “globalist” forms of (cultural) politics. The question of whether Trump voters did, or did not, vote against their own economic interests, or whether the Democratic Party would have served those interests better, remains a deeply controversial and still somewhat open one, as the material and ideological course of “Trumponomics” begins to take shape. The lecture will offer a preliminary assessment of Trumponomics, placing in this in the context of realignments in conservative and mainstream policy paradigms since the 1980s. **Key themes and concepts:** economic discourse; neoliberalization; free trade: small state ideology; deregulation; third way; fourth way.

**References**