

GEOG 560E Explorations in geographical political economy
Spring 2021

Jamie Peck
jamie.peck@ubc.ca
Office hours by request

Alternate Thursdays, 2-5, LASR-105
1.5 credits

January 14	Meeting 1	Orientations and outlooks
January 28	Meeting 2	Restructuring and transformation
February 11	Meeting 3	Feminist political economies
March 4	Meeting 4	Networks and relationality
March 18	Meeting 5	Uneven spatial development
April 1	Meeting 6	Constituting capitalism(s)

This is a pro-seminar course intended to offer an advanced introduction to the (unbounded, uncentered) field of economic geography, with a focus on the (post-1970s) project of geographical political economy. As a pro-seminar, the course will include a critical survey of foundational contributions and significant currents in the field (with the purpose of engaging with its incomplete history and constitutive diversity, rather than some comprehensive account), supplemented by a discussion of contemporary concerns, challenges, and approaches. The seminar is appropriate for students wishing to deepen their engagement with economic geography/geographical political economy, or for those seeking a high-level introduction to the field.

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, affinities, and dialogues. Both are characteristically restless, critical, emergent, heterodox, and pluralist—and never comfortably or complacently so.

We will read into and around the project of geographical political economy together during the course of the term, seeking to cultivate a culture of conversation and exploration that are open, respectful, and curious. Echoing the character of the project 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.

What follows is an outline of the topics that we will explore—all too briefly, as you will discover. There is much that we might profitably read, needless to say, and even with a fairly serious reading load of circa 120-150 pages per meeting, we only be able to achieve an initial grounding in each of the thematic “moments” that are to be addressed. These should not be seen as free-standing topics as such, but as interacting moments (or accumulating layers) in

what has been (and continues to be) a zigzagging, combinatorial, and evolving conversation. The story of geographical political economy is not, as will become clear, simply one of unidirectional “progress,” or increasing sophistication, but neither is it the case that there was once a heyday, following which there have been only diversions and dilutions. The series of themes that provide the focal points for the course represents just one take (or sampling) of moments or episodes in the story of geographical political economy. No two approaches to this, it is fair to say, would look the same, even as they might recognize some of the same currents, milestones, and debates.

The approach

Active, critical, and thoughtful engagement with both the readings and the in-class discussions will be necessary to make the seminar work. Each participant in the seminar will prepare a 2-page **reaction paper** in response to the readings for each meeting (containing your responses to the readings, along with issues that you wish to raise for discussion, exploration, or clarification). *No later than 9pm on the Tuesday before the meeting*, the reaction papers should be submitted to the shared Dropbox folder. At the beginning of each meeting, the nominated **discussion leaders** (who will have reviewed and synthesized all of the reaction papers) will provide (a) an introduction to the readings (including the further readings if the discussion lead involves groups of three) and (b) a summary of key talking points and issues for discussion.

During the course of the term, each student in the seminar will prepare and present a 3-page **“primer” paper** on an issue, concept or topic *specifically related to the field of geographical political economy*. The primers will serve as shared resources for students enrolled in the seminar. Students should choose from the following options (or propose something analogous), being prepared to rank their top 3 choices by the time of the first meeting:

deindustrialization	capitalocentrism	platform capitalism
global production networks/ global value chains	rentier capitalism	the community economies collective
the spatial division of labor	critical realism	dependency theory
financialization	the <i>Antipode</i> debate (2000-)	varieties of capitalism
industrial districts	positionality	embeddedness
Fordism	flexible specialization/ accumulation	the <i>régulation</i> approach
racial capitalism	agglomeration	the New Economic Geography
scale	evolutionary economic geography	socioeconomics
more-than-capitalist economies	the new international division of labor	the localities debate
development and “Development”	institutionalism	

The 3-page primers are to be deposited in the Dropbox folder no later than 24 hours before the day of the presentation. Each student will make a 10-minute presentation, based on their primer report, followed by Q&A.

Finally, for submission by April 15, each student will write a 10-page **profile paper** (including up to 2 pages of references), of a significant figure in the field of economic geography/geographical political economy, ideally to be developed out of the primer project (e.g. primer on the spatial division of labor, profile of Doreen Massey; primer on Fordism, profile of Alain Lipietz; primer on capitalocentrism or the community economies collective, profile of J-K Gibson-Graham). Profile papers will include: basic biographical information; an assessment of the subject's research program, approach, and principal contributions to the field/project; an evaluation of their position in relation to the field/project; a bibliography of key publications and other cited materials.

Assessment

Assessment is comprised of three marks: (a) class participation, reaction papers, and discussion leader role—30%; (b) primer paper and presentation—30%; (c) profile paper—40%.

Students interested in completing an *additional* 1.5 credits are invited to register for independent study credits under GEOG 547E (Directed Reading in Human Geography), to be completed in parallel with or following the GEOG 560E seminar. GEOG 547E will involve the design and drafting of an **academic writing project**, not a term paper or review, but focused on a planned submission to a journal like *Geoforum*, *Economic Geography*, *Area*, *Geography Compass*, or *EPA: Economy & Space*.

This introductory session will examine some brief histories of, and takes on, economic geography, its optics and problematics, and the position and contribution of geographical political economy. The modus operandi for the class and work assignments will also be discussed.

Required readings:

Scott, A. J. (2000) Economic geography: the great half-century. *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 24: 483-504

Peck, J. (2012) Economic geography: island life. *Dialogues in Human Geography* 2(2): 113-133

Mann, G. (2012) Release the hounds! The marvelous case of political economy. In Barnes, T. J., Peck, J. and Sheppard, E. (eds) *The Wiley-Blackwell companion to economic geography*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 61-73

Werner, M. (2012) Contesting power/knowledge in economic geography: learning from Latin America and the Caribbean. In Barnes, T. J., Peck, J. and Sheppard, E. (eds) *The Wiley-Blackwell companion to economic geography*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 132-145

Further readings:

Amin, A. and Thrift, N. (2000) What kind of economic theory for what kind of economic geography? *Antipode* 32(1): 4-9

Barnes, T. J. and Sheppard, E. (2010) "Nothing includes everything": towards engaged pluralism in Anglophone economic geography. *Progress in Human Geography* 34: 193-214

Schoenberger, E. (2007) Politics and practice: becoming an economic geographer. In Tickell, A., Sheppard, E., Peck, J. and Barnes, T. J. (eds) *Politics and practice in economic geography*. London: Sage, 27-37

Sheppard, E. (2017) Heterodoxy as orthodoxy: prolegomenon for a geographical political economy. In Clark, G. L., Feldman, M.P., Gertler, M. S. and Wójcik, D. (eds) *The new Oxford handbook of economic geography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

In the 1980s, 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 along with critical realist methods) established the foundations for what became known as the restructuring approach. Much of this remains baked into economic geography and to geographical political economy in particular, albeit often in latent ways. The readings for this meeting take us from the restructuring approach through postfordism debates and explorations of contemporary models of restructuring.

Required readings:

Sayer, R. A. (1985) Industry and space: a sympathetic critique of radical research. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 3(1): 3–29

Lovering, J. (1989) The restructuring debate. In Peet, R. and Thrift, N. J. (eds) *New models in geography*, volume 1. London: Unwin Hyman, 213–242

McDowell, L. (1991) Life without father and Ford: the new gender order of post-Fordism. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16(4): 400–419

Amin, A. (1994) Post-Fordism: models, fantasies and phantoms of transition. In Amin, A. (ed) *Post-Fordism: a reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1–39

Christophers, B. (2015) The limits to financialization. *Dialogues in Human Geography* 5(2): 183–200

Kenney, M. and Zysman, J. (2016) The rise of the platform economy. *Issues in Science and Technology*. <https://issues.org/the-rise-of-the-platform-economy/>

Further readings:

Gertler, M. S. (1988) The limits of flexibility: comments on the post-Fordist vision of production and its geography. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 13: 419–432

Jessop, B. (1992) Fordism and post-Fordism: a critical reformulation. In Storper, M. and Scott, A. J. (eds) *Pathways to industrialization and regional development*. London: Routledge, 46–69

Lipietz, A. (1986) New tendencies in the international division of labor: regimes of accumulation and modes of regulation. In Scott, A. J. and Storper, M. (eds) *Production, work, territory: the geographical anatomy of industrial capitalism*. New York: Allen & Unwin, 16–40

Massey, D. (1979) In what sense a regional problem? *Regional Studies* 13(2): 233–243

Feminist political-economic geography can be considered to be an expression economic geography's heterodoxy, but also a critique of its privileged optics and methods, not to say its limits. Feminist economic geographers have developed critical reconstructions prevailing 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:

Massey, D. (1995) Masculinity, dualisms and high technology. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 20(45): 487–499

Gibson-Graham, J-K. (2006) [1996] *The end of capitalism (as we knew it): A feminist critique of political economy*. Oxford: Blackwell, chapters 1 and 7, 1-23, 148-173

Massey, D. (1995) Reflections on debates over a decade. In Massey, D., *Spatial divisions of labour*, 2nd edition. London: Macmillan, 296-354

Nagar, R., Lawson, V., McDowell, L. and Hanson, S. (2002) Locating globalization: feminist (re)readings of the subjects and spaces of globalization. *Economic Geography* 78(3): 257–284

Werner, M., Strauss, K., Parker, B., Orzeck, R. Derickson, K. and Bonds, A. (2017) Feminist political economy in geography: why now, what is different, and what for? *Geoforum* 79: 1–4

Further readings:

Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2008) Diverse economies: performative practices for “other worlds.” *Progress in Human Geography* 32(5): 613–632

MacLeavy, J., Roberts, S. and Strauss, K. (2016) Feminist inclusions in economic geography: what difference does difference make? *Environment and Planning A* 48(10): 2067-2071

McDowell, L. (2007) Sexing the economy, theorising bodies. In Tickell, A., Sheppard, E., Peck, J. and Barnes, T. J. (eds) *Politics and practice in economic geography*. London: Sage, 60-70

Pratt, G. (1999) From registered nurse to registered nanny: discursive geographies of Filipina domestic workers in Vancouver, BC. *Economic Geography* 75(3): 215–236

Winders, J. (2016) Finding a way into (feminist) economic geography. *Environment and Planning A* 48(10): 2081–2084

Network approaches and optics have transformed the fields of geographical political economy and economic geography, first through the “nodes and networks” moment in the 1990s and then in the shape of the global production networks (GPN) project, but also as a motif for what has been portrayed as the “relational turn.” In contrast to atomistic, endogenous, and other “internalist” approaches, network epistemologies facilitate the exploration of (often long-distance) connectivities and relations, exceeding but perhaps also complementing more territorialized understandings of economic space. They also imply a certain way of seeing (and privileging).

Required readings:

Sheppard, E. (2002) The spaces and times of globalization: place, scale, networks, and positionality. *Economic Geography* 78: 307–330

Peck, J. (2005) Economic sociologies in space. *Economic Geography* 81(2): 129–175

Werner, M. and Bair, J. (2011) Losing our chains: rethinking commodities through disarticulations. *Environment and Planning A* 43(5): 998–1015

Kelly, P. F. (2013) Production networks, place and development: thinking through global production networks in Cavite, Philippines. *Geoforum* 44: 82–92

Coe, N. M. and Yeung, H. (2019) Global production networks: mapping recent conceptual developments. *Journal of Economic Geography* 19(4): 775–801

Further readings:

Amin, A. and Thrift, N. (1992) Neo-Marshallian nodes in global networks. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 16(4): 571–587

Bathelt, H. and Glückler, J. (2018) Relational research design in economic geography. In Clark, G. L., Feldman, M.P., Gertler, M. S. and Wójcik, D. (eds) *The new Oxford handbook of economic geography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 179–196

Dicken, P., Kelly, P. F., Olds, K. and Yeung, H. W-c. (2001) Chains and networks, territories and scales: towards a relational framework for analysing the global economy. *Global Networks* 1(2): 89–112

Henderson, J., Dicken, P., Hess, M., Coe, N. and Yeung, H. (2002) Global production networks and the analysis of economic development. *Review of International Political Economy* 9(3): 436–464

Sunley, P. (2008) Relational economic geography: a partial understanding or a new paradigm? *Economic Geography* 84(1): 1–26

Uneven spatial development is such a basic (and uncontested) concept-cum-position in geographical political economy that it often takes on a taken-for-granted character. It is a distinctive (and defining) feature of the project, taken more seriously on the “inside” than in any other field, but at the same time can be a mere truism or even an article of faith. How to recognize and problematize uneven development is consequently a recurring challenge, one that has been explicitly rejoined in the past decade, having previously been a matter of active concern in the 1980s but retreating to “atmospheric” or contextual status during the time in between.

Required readings:

Prudham, S. and Heynen, N. (2011) Uneven development 25 years on: space, nature and the geographies of capitalism. *New Political Economy* 16(2): 223-232

Das, R. J. (2017) David Harvey’s theory of uneven geographical development: a Marxist critique. *Capital and Class* 41(3): 511–536

Hadjimichalis, C. (2017) *Crisis spaces: structures, struggles and solidarity in Southern Europe*. London: Routledge, chapter 5

Kasmir, S. and Gill, L., and interlocutors (2018) No smooth surfaces. *Current Anthropology* 59(4): 355–377

Peck, J. (2019) Combination. In T. Jazeel et al (eds) *Keywords in radical geography: Antipode at 50*. Oxford: Wiley, 50-55

Further readings:

Dunford, M. and Liu, W. (2017) Uneven and combined development. *Regional Studies* 51(1): 69-85

Hudson, R. (2007). Regions and regional uneven development forever? some reflective comments upon theory and practice. *Regional Studies* 41(9): 1149-1160

Peck, J. (2017) Uneven regional development. In Richardson, D., Castree, N., Goodchild, M. F. Kobayashi, A., Liu, W. and Marston, R. A. (eds) *The Wiley-AAG international encyclopedia of geography*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 7270-7282

Rosenberg, J. and Boyle, C. (2019) Understanding 2016: China, Brexit and Trump in the history of uneven and combined development. *Journal of Historical Sociology* 32(1): e32-e58

Werner, M. (2016) Global production networks and uneven development: exploring geographies of devaluation, disinvestment and exclusion. *Geography Compass* 10(11): 457-469

Corollary to concepts like relationality and uneven development is the idea that capitalism is not, and cannot be, universal and undifferentiated. It cannot monopolize social space and it cannot be the same here as it is over there. But if capitalism is systematically differentiated, spatially, according to what principles and criteria? How are the “internal” dynamics of capitalism related to its “outsides,” or as Polanyi would have it, how are (different) capitalist economies embedded? Geographical political economists tend to reject both universalist models of capitalism *and* nationally based taxonomies such as the varieties of capitalism rubric, but what are their operational alternatives?

Required readings:

Gibson-Graham, J-K. (2006) Introduction to the new edition: ten years on. In J-K. Gibson-Graham *The end of capitalism (as we knew it): A feminist critique of political economy*. Oxford: Blackwell, vii-xxxvi

Peck, J. and Theodore, N. (2007) Variegated capitalism. *Progress in Human Geography* 31(6): 731-772

Kelley, R. D. G. (2017) What did Cedric Robinson mean by racial capitalism? *Boston Review* January 12

Fraser, N. (2018) From exploitation to expropriation: historic geographies of racialized capitalism. *Economic Geography* 94(1): 1–17

Alami, I. and Dixon, A. D. (2020) State capitalism(s) redux? Theories, tensions, controversies. *Competition and Change* 24(1): 70–94

Further readings:

Christophers, B. (2020) *Rentier capitalism*. London: Verso, chapter 1

Ebenau, M., Bruff, I. and May, C. (2015) Introduction: comparative capitalisms research and the emergence of critical, global perspectives. In Ebenau, M., Bruff, I. and May, C. (ed) *New directions in comparative capitalisms research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1–8

MacKinnon, D., Cumbers, A., Pike, A., Birch, K. and McMaster, R. (2009) Evolution in economic geography: institutions, political economy, and adaptation. *Economic Geography* 85(2): 129–150

Massey, D. (2013) Vocabularies of the economy. *Soundings* 54: 9–22

Peck, J. (2021) On capitalism’s cusp. *Area Development and Policy* in press

Storper, M. and Walker, R. (1989) *The capitalist imperative*. Oxford: Blackwell, chapter 1