

Department of Geography, University of Zurich, Economic Geography

Spring Semester 2011

GEO 433 Global Economic Geographies

- Course Syllabus -



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Course organization

Classes

Wednesdays 1.00 - 3.45
Room Y13 M-12

Course instructors

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Office Hours: - still to be announced -

Administration via OLAT

The course will be managed via our E-learning platform OLAT. Please register for the course at the following URL: <https://www.olat.uzh.ch/olat/url/RepositoryEntry/3243376656>

On OLAT you will find administrative information, presentations and handouts, and readings as long as they are not easily available online. You will also need to hand in the protocols written every week by a group member via OLAT and you will receive our comments and grades for the protocols via OLAT, too.

Scope and aims

Scope

This course is offered as a *Vertiefungsmodul* in the MSc program in Geography and is additionally available as an option for students from other Master programs. Being a 6-credit course, it is expected to require a total of approximately 180 hours work by students.

Aims

This course will explore some of the central issues and topics concerning the geographies of the market, geographies of the firm and labour geographies in the context of a globalizing economy. Particularly issues related to labour relations, labour markets and commodification in the globalizing economy will be addressed. Thereby, participants will develop a theoretically as well as practically informed understanding of recent issues and debates in contemporary economic geography.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this course, successful participants will...

...have developed a comprehensive, considered and critical understanding of scholarly literature and concepts in heterodox economic geography, particularly on issues around the market and labour.

...be able to relate the above mentioned literature and concepts to „real-world“ observations.

...have enhanced their critical, evaluative and communicative skills through participation in class discussion, engagement with reading assignments and delivery of a weekly protocol.

This course aims at stimulating critical thinking in the analysis of economic globalization processes through reflective practice and, in doing so, to make students aware of their own assumptions and values and the consequences of these. Indeed, every day we are exposed to a sea of information, ideas, and opinions about the world's globalizing economy. Critical thinking provides us with the ability to analyze and evaluate the validity of this information.

Expectations and assessments

This course will be run in a seminar format. As readings and discussions form the basis of the learning experience at MA level, students are expected to complete the indicated readings prior to each seminar and be prepared to explain and discuss them in class.

Attendance and participation

Students are expected to be present regularly at the seminar, in other words at least 12 out of the 14 seminar sessions. If students are prevented from attending a seminar, they should contact and inform the lecturer responsible for the respective session. The seminar is organized in a way that strong or weak participation throughout the seminar has a strong impact on the overall mark (i.e. oral exam, see below).

Weekly reading of key texts (mostly in English, some in German)

Each student is expected to thoroughly prepare herself/himself for the individual seminar sessions by reading the indicated texts for the corresponding week. As the readings provide the material that will be used as the basis for seminar discussion, students are required to read these before each seminar and be prepared to explain and discuss them in class. You should expect a weekly assignment of three texts of approximately 20 pages each. Active preparation is essential, so please consider carefully, if this workload is manageable for you.

Assessment 1: Protocol

For the whole duration of the seminar you will be working in small groups which will be put together in the second session (see program overview). During the weekly course, these groups will discuss key issues of the readings, prepare answers to questions formulated by the lecturers and attempt to solve uncertainties that may have emerged while reading the texts. Each week one member of the group is responsible to write a protocol, summarizing the discussion in the group as well as in class, and answer the questions provided by the lecturers. This means that each student will need to write approximately two protocols during the course. The protocol should be no shorter than 500 and no longer than 1,000 words. Each protocol will be marked – those texts receiving insufficient marks (i.e. below 4.00) will need to be revised. The average grade for the best two protocols written by a student accounts for 25 % of the overall mark.

Assessment 2: Oral Exam

After the end of the semester, students are required to present themselves to an oral examination accounting for 75% of the overall mark. The oral exam will last for 30 minutes with 10 minutes spent on the theme of a session chosen by the student and the other 20 minutes spent on the rest of the seminar. Students are expected to be able to engage with and discuss the texts read for the whole course seminar and to reflect upon discussions in class.

Program summary

23.02.11	Introduction: Course Overview, Organization, Syllabus (CB/JH)
Overview: basic concepts & theory	
02.03.11	Overview: Geographies of markets (CB)
09.03.11	Overview: Labour geographies and Geographies of transnational firms (JH)
Labour relations and labour markets in the global economy	
16.03.11	Offshoring, production sharing and labour (CB)
23.03.11	Organized labour, unions and global production networks (CB) Lecture: "What happens when workers intervene? Reflections on labour power and agency in the global economy" (Andy Cumbers)
30.03.11	Global care work (CB)
06.04.11	High tech labour and outsourcing (LJ)
13.04.11	„Behind the label“: work in the global textile industry (JH)
Commodification: Extending the reach of the market	
20.04.11	Strange markets: The waste of the world (LJ) Lecture: „Performativity, corporeality and the politics of ship disposal“ (Nicky Gregson)
04.05.11	Commodification of Nature (LJ)
11.05.11	Making, including and excluding places and subjects for global production (JH) Lecture: "Rethinking Commodities through Disarticulations" (working title) (Jennifer Bair)
18.05.11	The body as a commodity (LJ)
25.05.11	Travelling concepts: Neoliberalism on the move (CB, LJ & JH) Evaluation of the course
31.05.11 (16.15 – 18.30 Uhr)	Lecture "Fast policy: globalizing policy models in late-neoliberal times" (Jamie Peck)
06.06. - 07.06.	Oral exams

CB = Christian Berndt - JH = Johanna Herrigel - LJ = Leigh Johnson

Sessions (learning aims and readings)

Session 2: Geographies of Markets

„The market“ is a core concept in economics and therefore also highly relevant for the discipline of economic geography. Indeed, the logic of the market has probably never been more powerful than today. It is no exaggeration to claim that markets are the very stuff our contemporary global age is made of. After the session you should

- be able to distinguish the market from other forms of economic coordination. What is so special about market exchange? And what are the implications for us as human beings and society more generally?
- know what a “heterodox” understanding of markets is and be able to distinguish three heterodox perspectives: political economy, socioeconomics and cultural economy (i.e. poststructuralism)
- be able to apply these three perspectives to the question of labour markets.

Reading Assignment

General overview

- Berndt, C. und Boeckler, M. (2009). Geographies of circulation and exchange: Constructions of markets. *Progress in Human Geography* 33 (4): 535-551.

Classical ideas on the market

- Smith, A. (1986 [1776]). *The wealth of the nations*. London, Penguin. → Chapter 2: “On the principle which gives occasion to the division of labour” p. 12-14.
- Weber, M. (1980 [1922]). *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*. Tübingen, Mohr. → Chapter 6: “Die Marktvergesellschaftung”, p. 382-385.
- Polanyi, K. (1978 [1944]). *The Great Transformation*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp. → Chapter 5: “Evolution of the market pattern” p. 59-60.

Socioeconomics

- Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic action and social structure - the problem of embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology* 91 (3): 481-510. → Pages 481-487; 498-499; 504-508

Political Economy

- Coe, N. M., Kelly, P. F. und Yeung, H. W.-C. (2007). *Economic Geography: A Contemporary Introduction*. Oxford, Blackwell. → Chapter 3.3.: “Marxian Approaches: Conceptualizing Value and Structure” p. 63-72.

Cultural Economy

- Mitchell, T. (2007). The Properties of Markets. In: MacKenzie, Donald, Muniesa, Fabian und Siu, Lucia eds., *Do Economists Make Markets? On the Performativity of Economics*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, p. 244-275. → p. 244-248

Session 3: Labour geographies and Geographies of transnational firms

A particular transformation in the geographies of labour and in the geographies of transnational firms are core aspects of a globalizing economy. Indeed, (a) a new international division of labour (NIDL), (b) firms „going global“ in the form of multi- or transnational corporations, and (c) global production in the form of global commodity chains, global value chains or global production networks are commonly invoked features of (economic) globalization and are core concepts in economic geography. After the session, you should be able to

- explain what one means by saying that since the 1970s / 1980s, firms have „gone global“ – how global are transnational corporations really?
- (a) present the main features of the concepts „global commodity chain“, „global value chain“ and „global production network“ and (b) discuss the main similarities and differences of these concepts.
- critically argue (a) if and how the globalization of production is linked to and based upon a „new international division of labour“ and (b) if and why a conceptual shift from „geographies of labour“ to „labour geographies“ is important.

Reading assignment:

- Coe, N., Kelly, P. and Yeung, H. (2007). *Economic Geography. A Contemporary Introduction*. Blackwell Publishing: Oxford. → Chapter 8: „The Transnational Corporation: How Does the Global Firm Keep It All Together?“ and Chapter 9: „Labour Power: Can Workers Shape Economic Geographies?“, p. 223 - 283.
- Bair, J. (2009). Global Commodity Chains: Genealogy and Review. In: Bair, J. (ed.), *Frontiers of Commodity Chain Research*. Stanford University Press: Stanford. p. 1 – 34.
- MacKinnon, D. und Cumbers, A. (2007). *An Introduction to Economic Geography: Globalization, Uneven Development and Place*. Harlow, Pearson/Prentice Hall. → Chapter 7: „The changing geographies of the multinational corporation“, p. 143 – 166

Session 4: Offshoring, production sharing and labour

Since the beginning of what has been termed „new international division of labour“ in the 1960s and 1970s and the subsequent rise of truly global production systems there have been discussions in the academic literature about the implications for workers and regions in the global south. What does it mean for those actors to be integrated into ever more complex production and consumption networks? How have working and living conditions been affected? Using the Mexican maquiladora industry as an example, after this session you should...

- have deepened your knowledge about the historical evolution of the international division of labour and the role of southern actors therein.
- be able to give a differentiated account of the implications of industrial offshoring in host regions.
- be able to define the concept of „supply chain capitalism“ and to take account of various forms of diversity (e.g. gender) and their role in structuring global production.

Reading Assignment

- Carrillo, J. und Lara, A. (2005). Mexican maquiladoras: New capabilities of coordination and the emergence of a new generation of companies. *Innovation: Management, Policy & Practice* 7 (2-3): 256–273.
- Sklair, L. (1989). *Assembling for Development: The Maquila Industry in Mexico and the United States*. Boston, Unwin Hyman. → Chapter 1: „The maquilas in global perspective“ p. 1-23.
- Tsing, A. (2009). Supply Chains and the Human Condition. *Rethinking Marxism* 21 (2): 148-176.

Session 5: Organized Labour, unions and global production networks

Discourses on economic globalization often emphasize that transnational corporations (or transnational capital) has increased its geographic mobility while labour is locked in space. TNCs are said to „pick and choose“ from a palette of „favorable“ (profitable) suppliers, putting them under a constant threat to effortlessly „cut and run“ (relocate) their production. This way, TNCs conduct „regime-shopping“, circling the globe for cheap and disciplined labour, pitting workers, suppliers and

governments against each other in a bet for the most favorable production site. Contrasting this view of labour as a passive victim of globalization, research in Labour Geography has highlighted the role of labour and its organizations as actors in and constituents of economic space, shaping economic geographies through their agency. This session aims at engaging our understanding of global production with insights gained in Labour Geography. Afterwards, you should be able to...

- explain what one means by saying that labour agency is (a) relational and (b) spatially and temporally variegated.
- give a differentiated account of how global production respectively capital's scale-bending activities have changed the positionality and hence agency potential of labour (simultaneously constraining and enhancing it, closing off old and opening up new possibilities to organize for labour).
- discuss concrete examples of labour's scalar strategies in the context of global production (for instance unions bending customary spatial practices, "jumping scale", etc.).

Guest Lecture

„What happens when workers intervene? Reflections on labour power and agency in the global economy" (Andy Cumbers, University of Glasgow)

Reading Assignments

- Anderson, J. (2009). Labour's lines of flight: Rethinking the vulnerabilities of transnational capital. *Geoforum* 40: 959-68.
- Cumbers, A. Nativel, C. and Routledge, P. (2008). Labour agency and union positionalities in global production networks. *Journal of Economic Geography* 8: 369-387.
- Coe, N.M. and Jordhus-Lier, D. (2010). Constrained agency? Re-evaluating the geographies of labour. *Progress in Human Geography* ...?...

Seminar 6: Global care work

In our global age "more and more persons and groups deal with the realities of having to move or the fantasies of wanting to move" (Appadurai 1996: 34). It is the quest for a better life which often attracts labour migrants from the global south to seek employment in the north. A sizeable part of this movement occurs at the "lower" end of the labour market, involving low-paid service jobs. Here, observers have identified a "feminization" process in recent years, female migrants performing all sorts of reproductive activities in private households. What are the working conditions of these workers? How do they manage their own family life at a distance? What does it mean to work as a southern women in northern households? This session should enable you...

- to acquire an overview about the phenomenon of female, low-wage service work in a migratory context.
- to be able to discuss global care work in a differentiated way, allowing for agency on the part of female migrants.
- to develop a multi-dimensional understanding about the inequalities and differences structuring labour migration in the private household context.

Reading Assignments

- Hochschild, A.R. (2003). Love and Gold. In Ehrenreich, B. and Hochschild, A.R., (eds.), *Global Women. Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, London: Granta Publications. 15-30.
- Lutz, H. (2008). Transnationalität im Haushalt. In Gather, C.; Geissler, B. und Rerrich, M.S., (Hrsg.), *Weltmarkt Privathaushalt. Bezahlte Haushaltsarbeit im globalen Wandel*, Forum Frauenforschung Band 15, 2.Auflage. 86-101.

- Morokvasic, M. (2009). Migration, Gender, Empowerment. In: Lutz, Helma (Hg.). Gender Mobil? Geschlecht und Migration in transnationalen Räumen. Münster, Westfälisches Dampfboot. 28-51.

Seminar 7: High tech labour and outsourcing

Thus far we have largely considered international divisions of labour and globalized production networks as they apply to manufacturing. In this session we use the example of California's Silicon Valley to consider the rise of the "information economy" in the developed world and two particular forms of labour on which it depends: (a) flexible, "at will" employment of highly skilled workers in the Global North, and (b) outsourcing of tasks to highly-skilled workers in the Global South. After this session, you should be able to...

- provide a differentiated account of the types of labour and material processes involved in reproducing the high tech economy and explain their respective geographies and gender dimensions.
- articulate the relationship of legal structures and "at will" contracts to the entrepreneurial model of high tech development.
- consider the sustainability of the high-tech services model of development.

Reading Assignments

- Benner, C. (2002). *Work in the new economy: Flexible labour markets in Silicon Valley*. City?: Blackwell → selections still to be announced.
- Aneesh, A. (2006). *Virtual Migration: The Programming of Globalisation*. City?: Duke University Press: →Chapter 4, p. 67-99.

Seminar 8: „Behind the label“: work in the global textile industry

The textile industry, also called garment or apparel industry, is one of the most global, geographically dispersed industries and therefore exemplifies the co-emergence of transnational production and a new international division of labour since the 1970s. Then as now, integration into the global textile industry was chosen by developing countries as a development strategy because of low barriers to entrepreneurial entry into the industry. In the 1990s, this industry has started to be targeted and criticized by social movements, particularly the anti-sweatshop movement, for a „race to the bottom“ in working conditions therein. As a result, labour became increasingly privately regulated on a transnational scale (in contrast to public regulation on a national scale) by international labour standards, private and voluntary codes of conduct, etc. However, the impact of these ethical interventions on working conditions and of economic upgrading upon social aspects of development are issues of debate. Using the global textile industry as an example, after this session, you should be able to...

- give reasons for and against the „race to the bottom“- and „high road to development“-arguments which are often advanced in order to highlight the risks and opportunities „inherent“ to the integration of countries, regions and workers into a „global“ production;
- explain (a) the structure and power dynamics of the global apparel industry and based on this (b) the emergence and functioning of nongovernmental labour regulation (Codes of Conduct, firm intern or extern compliance monitoring and certification, independent verification);
- discuss strengths and weaknesses of ethical interventions through the example of private Codes of Conduct based on international labour standards in the global textile industry.

Reading Assignments

- O’Rourke, D. (2003). Outsourcing Regulation: Analyzing Nongovernmental Systems of Labour Standards and Monitoring. *The Policy Studies Journal*, 31 (1): 1 – 29.
- Barrientos, S. & Smith, S. (2007). Do Workers Benefit from Ethical Trade? Assessing codes of labour practice in global production systems. *Third World Quarterly*, 28 (49): 713 – 729.
- Mosley, L., Uno, S. (2007). Racing to the Bottom or Climbing to the Top? Economic Globalization and Collective Labour Rights. *Comparative Political Studies*, 40 (8): 923 – 948.

Seminar 9: Strange markets: The waste of the world

From a traditional economic point of view waste is regarded as something useless, the end-point of production and consumption, and something which should be avoided at all costs. Approaching the question of waste from a different angle, this session conceptualizes it as something that offers potential and as an intrinsic part of all economic activity. In this way it is possible to rethink economies in terms of materials transformations and flows of materials. Rather than focusing on the production (and consumption) of pre-determined commodities, emphasis is placed on the ongoing transformation of commodities, that is, the processes of their coming together and dissolution in materials. The session should

- introduce you to the way “waste” is thought about in the social sciences;
- sensitize you to the fact that “waste” is increasingly becoming a precious commodity in its own right;
- help you to understand flows and trades in wastes and their emerging spatial divisions of labour.

Guest Lecture

„Performativity, corporeality and the politics of ship disposal“ (Nicky Gregson, University of Sheffield)

Reading Assignments

- still to be announced -

Seminar 10: Commodification of Nature

Here we consider the phenomena of commodification and marketization in relation to the environment. Neoclassical economic theory conceptualizes the environment as a set of scarce resources for which market actors compete. Alternately, scholars drawing from broadly Marxian and Polanyian political economy have theorized the ways in which social and economic relations „produce“ and mediate nature. This week we use this approach to consider the ways that parts of the environment come to circulate as tradable commodities in the global economy. Examples include raw materials such as oil, minerals, timber, or plant genetic material; as well as intangible commodities such as ecosystem services, conservation credits, and carbon offsets. These intangibles are becoming increasingly important within environmental regulatory regimes as well as international financial markets. In what ways, if any, are these intangible commodities new? What sorts of concerns do they raise with regards to ownership, regulation, and North/South relations?

After this session, you will be able to:

- Explain the differences between the neoclassical economic conceptualization of the environment and a Marxian approach towards the „production“ and commodification of nature
- explain how global production network or commodity chain approaches might be used/adapted to evaluate the commodification nature. What are the relevant „nodes“ or „links“?
- compare systems of environmental governance/regulation with labor regulation, and evaluate the relationship between these two systems in the global economy

Reading Assignment:

- Coe, N., Kelly, P. and Yeung, H. (2007). *Economic Geography. A Contemporary Introduction*. Blackwell Publishing: Oxford. → Chapter 6.1 – 6.3, p. 153-170.
- Bridge, G. (2008). Global production networks and the extractive sector: Governing resource-based development, *Journal of Economic Geography* 8: 389–419.
- Bumpus, A. and Liverman, D. (2008). Accumulation by decarbonization and the governance of carbon offsets, *Economic Geography* 84(2): 127-155.

Seminar 11: Making, including and excluding places and subjects for global production

Research (and discourses) on global production generally tends to take the categories of analysis or description on which it draws for granted. This leads to an understanding of global production based on reified categories such as “(cheap and docile) labour”, “borders”, “export production zones”, and the like. However, recent research on global production has highlighted that processes of global production are not simply about integrating pre-existing regions, workers and commodities into world trade, but are actually a complex, constantly on-going work of creating, integrating and expelling product, subjects and goods or services. After this session, you should be able to...

- explain the concepts of „primitive accumulation“, „accumulation by dispossession“, „accumulation by extra-economic means“, and to apply these concepts to global production processes.
- argue why socially constructed hierarchies such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, nationality, age and citizenship play a role in rendering available and disposable labour in particular contexts for global production.
- outline typical gender discourses that allow to construct women as docile, cheap and know-how wise best equipped workers for global production.

Guest Lecture

“Rethinking Commodities through Disarticulations” (working title) (Jennifer Bair, University of Colorado Boulder)

Reading Assignments

- Glassman, J. (2006). Primitive accumulation, accumulation by dispossession, accumulation by „extra-economic“ means. *Progress in Human Geography*, 30 (5): 608 – 625.
- Wright, M. (2006). *Disposable Women and Other Myths of Global Capitalism*. Routledge, New York. → Chapter 1, p. ?-?
- Bair, J. and Werner, M. (2011). – exact paper still to be announced

Seminar 12: The body as a commodity

In the last two decades, globalization and biomedical technology have allowed the human body itself to function as a commodity as never before imagined. The sequencing of the human genome, advances in assisted reproductive technology and stem cell research, and the consolidation of power by corporate pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms have all generated new ways in which the body or its parts can be measured, monitored, and reproduced in the private market. Meanwhile, at the other extreme, the selling of one’s own body parts to global organ traffickers is an increasingly common strategy of the extremely poor. How can we make sense of these two contemporaneous extremes? By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Discuss recent global patterns revealing both the intensification and extension of economic markets in/to the human body

- Apply an economic geographical perspective to explain the underlying forces driving the global circulation of human organs, genomic information, and gene therapies
- Relate this trend to its historical antecedents – i.e., the commodification of labor; what are the similarities and differences? Explain the changing relationship between the global economy and reproduction.

Reading assignment

- Nancy Scheper-Hughes, „The Ends of the Body: Commodity Fetishism and the Global Traffic in Organs”, SAIS Review (2002) 22: 61-80
- Margaret Lock, „Alienation of Body Parts and the Biopolitics of Immortalized Cell Lines” in Beyond the Body Proper: Reading the Anthropology of Material Life, Lock and Farquhar (eds), 2007. Duke University Press. Pp 567-586
- Kaushik Sunder Rajan, „Genomic Capital: Public Cultures and Market Logics of Corporate Biotechnology”, Science as Culture (2003) 12: 87-121

Seminar 13: Travelling concepts: Neoliberalism on the move

Although markets have existed for a long time, market society appears to have come into full existence only at the end of the 20th century in an era of neoliberal market orientation. Under neoliberalism the market logic has been applied to almost all facets of social life. This crucially includes the global south, where practitioners of development have intensified attempts to improve the life of the poorest by enabling them to participate in the market economy. Upon completion of this session you should...

- have acquired a general understanding of marketization processes in a development policy context.
- be able to deal with the concept of performativity and apply it to development issues.
- be able to discuss the pros and cons of market-based attempts to improve the lives of the poor in the global south.

Reading Assignments

- Mitchell, T. (2007). The Properties of Markets. In: MacKenzie, Donald, Muniesa, Fabian und Siu, Lucia eds., Do Economists Make Markets? On the Performativity of Economics. Princeton, Princeton University Press. 244-275.
- Li, T. M. (2007). Practices of assemblage and community forest management. Economy and Society 36 (2): 263-293.
- Ong, A. (2006). Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty. Durham [N.C.] London, Duke University Press. → Chapter 1

Guest Lecture

„Fast policy: globalizing policy models in late-neoliberal times“ (Jamie Peck, University of British Columbia)

Attention: this guest lecture will be held outside the normal seminar hours on Tuesday, 31. Mai 2011, 4.15 – 6.30pm (place to be announced).