

University of Nevada, Reno  
Department of Geography

Spring 2011  
Dr. Victoria Randlett

Geography 300

## **Geography of the World's Economies**

Th 2:30-5:15 pm, MS 227

### **Contact Dr R**

Email: randlett@unr.edu or thru WebCT; Office: MS 316 327-5078; Ofc hrs by appt

This is not a course about how many tons of bananas or bauxite are produced each year by the nations of the world. Nor is it a study the intellectual history of the discipline of Economic Geography. Instead, this is a course about how to understand the world better - in particular, the processes and activities that comprise and underlie the world's economies. Economic relationships, at every geographical scale from the individual to the global, dominate our lives in unprecedented ways. While in the last couple of years these relationships have undergone near-seismic disruptions, the ground beneath all the world's economies has been shifting and unstable for much longer. Since the early 1970s, as the economies of the nations of the world have become increasingly interconnected, so have their societies, cultures, and politics. This interconnectedness - globalization - is built upon the basic geographical fact of uneven distribution: of resources, population, and political systems; of climate, arable land, rivers, and mountains; of roads, ports, and fiber-optic cables; of economic and social development. Understanding the unevenness - essentially, the geography - of the world's economies is therefore critical to understanding the world and our shifting places within it.

### **Course Goals:**

- To challenge the phrase The Economy and the assumptions behind it
- To understand the world's economies as dynamic processes, not static phenomena
- To ask better, geographically informed questions about economic processes - i.e., to bring concepts of Space, Place, and Scale to bear on economic analysis
- To understand economic activity as existing within, not apart from, a complex web of social, cultural, and political activity
- To make better sense of the confusing and often frightening recent changes in our economic lives

### **Required Text:**

Neil Coe, Philip E Kelly, & Henry WC Yeung, *Economic Geography: A Contemporary Introduction.*, Blackwell 2007

### **Recommended Text:**

Danny MacKinnon & Andrew Cumbers, *An Introduction to Economic Geography: Globalization, Uneven Development, and Place*, Pearson/Prentice Hall 2007

NB: this book is available on reserve at the Knowledge Center

**Additional readings** as assigned, available on WebCampus

**Evaluation:**

Article Journal	96 pts total (30%)
3 Section Quizzes	96 pts total (30%)
Final Exam	80 pts total (25%)
Attendance and Class Participation	48 pts total (15%)

*(Points will be deducted for more than 2 absences)*

**Evaluation Descriptions**

## A. Article journal (96 pts)

Each week you will locate two articles or news items, from an approved news source (see below), about some aspect of economic activity operating at any geographical scale (individual to global). Entry for each article should consist of:

- a. The articles themselves, neatly displayed (for radio articles, please include transcript if possible, link and brief description if not).
- b. A brief (1-3 paragraph) discussion of *each* article's relevance to course content. How do you think it relates to what we're studying? Why did you find it interesting? What do you learn from it? And so on.

The purpose of this assignment is to get you to pay informed and critical attention to the ways economic processes are discussed and perceived,

Grading:

Each article is worth **4 pts** (1 for selection, 3 for discussion) - **8 pts ttl**

Total of **12 wks** of articles are required

Journals will be collected **Apr 29**, the week BEFORE the Final Exam

Acceptable sources: In general, try to stick with mainstream media:

newspapers, news magazines, news websites, NPR. Opinion columns are fine (e.g., Krugman or Friedman in the New York Times), as are Op-Ed pieces.

- Major metro dailies (New York or LA *Times*, Washington *Post*, etc).
- Financial Times (London), Wall Street Journal
- News weeklies - e.g., The Economist, Business Week. Doesn't have to be a business or economics publication - Time or Newsweek will usually have at least one relevant article.
- Local and regional papers - local articles OK *if* your discussion of them puts them in a larger context
- Foreign news publications (in English or in translation). Unlike many US publications, these tend to analyze causes and implications of economic issues at scales beyond the national.

*For sources outside the mainstream media, please check with me first!*

There are 3 reasons you should keep these journals up to date:

1. Doing this exercise will very quickly make you smarter, or at least a better reader and interpreter of information about this critical aspect of your life.
2. I will ask at least one person each week to talk to the class about his or her article(s).
3. Beginning in **Week 4 (Feb 11)**, I will be collecting these at random throughout the semester, and your grade will suffer if you've fallen behind.  
*Please bring your journal to class each week!!*

B. Section Quizzes (96 pts total)

Instead of a Mid-term, we will have a Quiz after each of the first 3 main sections of the course. Quizzes will *not* include essay questions and should take an hour or less of class time.

C. Final Exam (80 pts)

The Final (May 5) will consist of a structured discussion for which you will write the questions. It is comprehensive - i.e., your questions can draw from the full range of readings and course materials.

You will write a short paper in which you will pose - and attempt to answer - at least 4 questions on what you consider the most important ideas of the course. Your questions and answers should reflect your thoughts on what you have read and talked about up to that point (including any confusion or difficulties). You may also incorporate references to your Article Journal.

Please tailor your questions to fostering discussion of ideas, rather than for short, factual answers.

Your answer essays should include:

- a brief discussion of what you think are the most important points to raise in addressing the question
- clear and specific references to class readings - what prompts your question, where the answers might lie, etc
- issues you think your questions raise that can be discussed by the class.

In the week before the exam (no later than noon Prep Day, May 4), you will email me your list of questions (no answers). I will then compile and consolidate these into questions suitable for our Discussion Final.

The paper - questions and answers - is due at the Final

Grading:

Discussion question paper (6-8 pp)	60 pts (75%)
Discussion participation	20 pts (25%)

D. Attendance and Participation

Even though there's a lot of material to cover, we will try to balance lecture with exercises and discussion each week. You are expected to show up and to be prepared to discuss the week's topic, present a news item, and generally be an active part of the class.

#### E. Extra Credit Opportunities

You can add points to your grade by reading and reviewing any of the readings suggested at the end of the Coe chapters (in the "Further Readings" or "References," or by writing up an answer to any of the Sample Essay Questions.

#### Disability Accommodations

The Geography Department is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented physical or learning disabilities. University policy states that it is the responsibility of students with documented disabilities to contact instructors during the first week of each semester to discuss appropriate accommodations to ensure equity in grading, classroom experiences, and outside assignments.

#### Academic dishonesty

Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty are unethical and against University rules, and will not be tolerated. A single incidence of cheating on assignments, quizzes or exams will result in failure for that assignment. A second incident will result in a failing grade for the course. Serious cases may result in further disciplinary action.

*This includes any lifting, copying, pasting, or unacknowledged or excessive paraphrasing of web-based material. ALL sources must be duly acknowledged and cited in ALL submitted work.*

#### Course Schedule

##### SEGMENT I KEY CONCEPTS IN ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY, AND SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Wk 1 1/20 Course Introduction; Key Concepts discussion: Geography

Wk 2 1/27 Key Concepts discussion: economics, capitalism

Wk 3 2/4 Historical background of 21<sup>st</sup> c global capitalism

##### Quiz 1

##### SEGMENT II DYNAMIC ELEMENTS OF ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

Wk 4 2/11 Uneven Development: core idea of Econ Geography, & of capitalism

Wk 5 2/18 The Commodity Chain: where does your iPhone come from?

Wk 6 2/25 Geographical impacts of technology and technological change  
"Reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated." -*Distance*

##### Quiz 2

##### SEGMENT III WHO IS "THE ECONOMY"

Wk 7 3/4 The State

Wk 8 3/11 The Corporation

Wk 9 3/18 SPRING BREAK

Wk 10 3/25 Labor - People as "Factors of Production"

Wk 11 4/1 Consumption, Consumers, and Keynesian theory

Quiz 3

SEGMENT IV DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBALIZATION

Wk 12 4/8 "Natural" Resources, Environment, and Development

Wk 13 4/15 "Post-Industrial Economies: Services, IT, and beyond

Wk 14 4/22 Globalization and its discontents

Wk 15 4/29 Future Economic Geographies?

Article Journals due

Wk 16 5/4 FINAL EXAM

### Assignments

*Assignments in brackets [ ] are recommended, not required. Usually these are a chapter in MacKinnon and Cumbers that complements the rest of the readings. ALL assignments not in brackets are REQUIRED.*

*MacKinnon and Cumbers is on paper reserve at the Knowledge Center. All required readings other than Coe and MacKinnon will be available as PDFs on the course website.*

SEGMENT I KEY CONCEPTS IN ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY, AND SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Wk 1 1/20 Course Intro; key concepts: geography

*Read for next week:*

Coe Chs 1 & 2

Bowles Capitalism Ch 1

[MacKinnon pp 1-18]

*Homework;*

Watch or listen to the President's State of the Union Address on Tues, Jan 25. This speech is likely to focus heavily on "The Economy." Try to notice the metaphors he uses and assumptions he makes when discussing economic issues. *Politics aside*, use the principles discussed in Ch 2 of Coe to write a short analysis of the President's presentation on and representation of economic issues facing the nation.

Wk 2 1/27 Key concepts: economy, capitalism

*Read for next week:*

Bowles Ch 4

MacKinnon pp 42-48 & ch 4

Excerpt, Brook, *Vermeer's Hat* (pages TBA)

Prepare for Quiz 1

Wk 3 2/4 Some history; Quiz 1

*Read for next week:*

Coe Ch 3

Bowles, *Capitalism*, Ch 6

SEGMENT II DYNAMIC ELEMENTS OF ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

Wk 4 2/11 Uneven Development

*Read for next week:*

Coe Ch 4

*Homework* - Commodity Chain assignment:

After being assigned to a group in class, you will research the commodity chains involved in some aspect of your daily life (food, clothing, transportation mode, or electronic device). Bring your results to class, and groups will work together to create plausible chains.

Wk 5 2/18 Commodity Chains

*Read for next week:*

Coe Ch 5

MacKinnon pp 48-52

Carr, *The Big Switch*, Ch 2

Prepare for Quiz 2

Wk 6 2/25 Technological change; Quiz 2

*Read for next week:*

Coe Ch 7

Bowles Ch 5

MacKinnon pp 62-64, [Ch 6]

SEGMENT III WHO IS "THE ECONOMY"

Wk 7 3/4 The State

*Read for next week:*

Coe Chs 8 and 11

[MacKinnon Ch 7]

Wk 8 3/11 The Corporation

*Read for Week 10:*

Coe Ch 9

MacKinnon Ch 3, Section 3.3; Ch 9

Herrod, *Geographies of Globalization*, Ch 8

Leonhardt "In Wreckage of Lost Jobs, Lost Power," and Economix blog, *New York Times*, 1/19/11

Wk 9 3/18 SPRING BREAK

Wk 10 3/25 Labor

*Read for next week:*

Coe Ch 10

Krugman, *The Return of Depression Economics*, Ch 10; column TBA

Prepare for Quiz 3

Wk 11 4/1 Consumers & Consumption; Quiz 3

*Read for next week:*

Coe Ch 6

MacKinnon Ch 11

SEGMENT IV DEVELOPMENT & GLOBALIZATION

Wk 12 4/8 Resources, Environment, and Development

*Read for next week:*

MacKinnon Chs 8 and 10

Wk 13 4/15 "Post-Industrial" Economies: Services and IT

*Read for next week:*

Bowles Ch 7

MacKinnon Chs 5 & 13

Wk 14 4/22 Globalization and its Discontents

*Read for next week:*

Herrod, *Geographies of Globalization*, Introduction & Conclusion

Finish Article Journals

Wk 15 4/29 Future Economic Geographies

*For next week:*

Prepare for Final Exam

Wk 16 5/4 FINAL EXAM

**Note:** Please check WebCampus frequently for any changes to the syllabus, course structure, and reading assignments