

GEO 9106: Graduate Seminar in Development Geography Winter 2012

Instructors: Tony Weis & Rachel Bezner Kerr
Course Time: Mondays 9-12 am (starts Jan. 9)
Course Location: Pleva conference room, SSC 2333 E
Contact Information: aweis@uwo.ca and rbeznerkerr@uwo.ca

Course Description

In this course we will wrestle with the historical context, key political economic processes and institutions, and conflicting theories that fall under the rubric of development and its modern sister, globalization. In addition, we will see that 'thinking geographically' about development involves understanding how the meaning of places and regions are socially constructed, and how theoretical and conceptual frameworks about development have been debated. We aim to be sensitive to regional differences based on historical experiences and geographical particularities, but give attention to overarching themes and dominant political economic processes. Major topics include:

- the colonial 'inheritance' and widespread commodity dependence;
- idea of 'development' and the 'Third World' as contested concepts and competing political projects;
- debt, structural adjustment, and the rise of neoliberal policy prescriptions;
- gender inequality, class, and geographical differences under neoliberalism;
- the development challenges posed by climate change;
- the new 'scramble' for resources and 'land grabbing';
- contemporary social movements and struggles for alternatives.

Course Objectives

The most important goals of the course are to:

- help establish a theoretical foundation for evaluating competing claims about development problems;
- help situate your thesis or dissertation research in a broader historical and political economic context;
- encourage you to think deeply about theory and praxis;
- engage in group discussions;
- lead a presentation based on the key contours/arguments of your research paper;
- write a paper that immerses you in a key background literature for your future research.

Texts

McMichael, P. (2008) *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective*. 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Harvey, D. (2006). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

You can either find the books on reserve at Weldon Library or purchase them on-line (you can usually find reasonably cheap versions via abebooks.com or amazon.com). The other readings will be provided to you as hard copies or as PDFs.

Tentative Weekly Schedule:

Date	Topic	Reading
Jan. 9	Introduction: Global Inequality today	
Jan. 16	The Economic Legacies of Colonialism (?)	McMichael + TBA
Jan. 23	The 'Development Project' & the making of the 'Third World' - Part 1	McMichael + TBA
Jan. 30	The 'Development Project' & the making of the 'Third World' - Part 2	McMichael + TBA
Feb. 6	Debt, SAPs, & Neoliberal Prescriptions - Part 1	McMichael + Harvey
Feb. 13	Debt, SAPs, & Neoliberal Prescriptions - Part 2	Harvey
Feb. 20	Reading week – no class this week (work on your proposal and paper!)	
Feb. 27	Gender & Development	Wright + McMichael
Mar. 5	Climate Change & Development	UNDP <i>HDR 2008</i>
Mar. 12	The New Scramble for Africa	Carmody
Mar. 19	Land Grabbing	JPS special issue
Mar. 26	Social Movements & Contemporary Struggles for Alternatives - Part 1	Selected papers
Apr. 2	Social Movements & Contemporary Struggles for Alternatives - Part 2	Selected papers
Apr. 9	PAPER PRESENTATIONS	

Assignments & Evaluation

Seminars – *weekly preparation, participation* _____ **20%**

You are expected to come to class prepared to actively engage in discussions about the readings.

Research Paper

Proposal (due Feb 27) _____ **10%**

Final Paper (due April 2) _____ **50%**

Presentation (on April 9) _____ **20%**

The intent of this paper is to connect a subject(s) that we cover in class to a detailed review of the literature that is most relevant to your research (consulting at least 15 significant journal articles or book chapters). For instance:

- how have debt and neoliberal policies influenced health care or education?;
- how are the new land grabs affecting prospects for agricultural development?;
- how are new social movements challenging gender relations?;
- how do colonial economic legacies and the problems posed by narrow commodity dependence relate to the aggressive promotion of a particular sector (e.g. mining, tourism)?

Another helpful guide to a topic is to think about how some of the problems and issues covered in the course can help to inform your research questions (and might ultimately contribute to your literature review). From this starting point, the aim is to assess the overriding themes and key debates in the area you have chosen.

The proposal will indicate preliminary research outline, lines of exploration, and a working bibliography, and should be 2-3 double-spaced pages plus 8-10 sources. You are also encouraged to discuss with Tony and/or Rachel your proposed topic as you work on the proposal. The paper should be a maximum of 15 double-spaced pages, not including references.