Economic Sociology Meets Economic Geography G4042

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Course meets in 628 Kent Hall, Tuesdays 2:10 until 4

Course description

This class is a graduate level seminar on the intersection of sociological and spatial approaches to understanding the productive economy. It is aimed at students interested in economic and organizational sociology, in the interplay of local and global forces, in political economy, and in the intersection of business and policy studies.

Economic sociologists taking the "relational turn" and geographers' emphasis on the spatial location of those relationships mean that the two disciplines generally find much to like when they "read across." Indeed, they have engaged in a lively back-and-forth, particularly in the debates around such noted books as Piore and Sabel's *The Second Industrial Divide* and AnnaLee Saxenian's *Regional Advantage*, coming roundly to agree that understanding the economy means recognizing that place matters, that social relationships matter, and that social relationships happen in real places.

Recently, however, though the friendship remains, the conversation has been shaken up by new encroachments of the global on the local: advances in information technology and changes in the developing world have put new pressures not only on the very "resurgent" manufacturing economies that historically animated the conversation, but mean also that once-protected service and technology sector workers feel themselves to be in more direct competition with their counterparts in the developing world. In this class, we will look critically at this shakeup, trying to understand the future not only what is going on in this conversation, but also what is going on in the interplay between space and relations in the productive economy.

The readings for the seminar begin with the "pop" vision that globalization and information technology have "flattened" the world. The rest of the semester will then be about the case that has been made by sociologists and geographers that globalization has not, in fact, flattened so much as it has rescaled things in unpredictable ways. Beginning with classic work from the 1980s and 1990s that rediscovered and, to no small degree, renewed ideas borrowed from Alfred Marshall on agglomeration economies, we will spend the first part of the class looking at the foundations and implications of continued regional differences even in a globalized economy. The second part of the class will focus more concretely on globalization per se, the ways in which it is actively constructed by states and multinationals, and on what this means for local and regional actors. We will close with a return to the question of whether things might still flatten in the near future, focusing on current and ongoing debates over the offshoring of engineering and service jobs from the developed to the developing world.
Course Requirements:

1) **DO THE READING** and take an active part in class discussions

   It's a graduate seminar. We read a lot and we talk about it together to help each other understand what it all means; my job is to guide that. Thinking out loud is not only fine, it is (within reason) encouraged. I have for the most part kept the reading around 150 pages/wk (more for stuff that reads quickly - like Tom Friedman which is written I think to be read on a plane; that is where I read a lot of it, in fact). Whatever is beyond that I have listed as [recommended]. I do remember going to grad school and I do know that you have other classes and responsibilities and will probably not have time for anything that is only “recommended.” That said, if you can get through some of it, it is useful stuff.

   Most readings will be available on courseworks, but not all, unfortunately (that whole intellectual property thing. The following books have been ordered by Columbia University Bookstore. You should get a copy somehow, as we are reading substantial chunks of each:
   

2) Prepare (at least) nine short memos on the week’s required readings (1-2 pages each)

   These are to prepare the ground for good discussions by requiring participants to think through some initial responses to the readings. These memos are to be posted in the discussion section on courseworks prior to the course meeting, by noon on Tuesday at the absolute latest – we meet at 2:10, and I want people to be able to at least glance over what others thought. In grading I will only make sure that nine are done seriously (so you can take 3 weeks off), but these memos are a real requirement; if you don’t do them, it will absolutely affect your grade. Discussion is just so much better when people have done some active engagement with the texts prior to the course meeting.

3) Lead one or more seminar discussions

   Each week, one (or more – depending on class size) students will serve as discussion leaders. The task is less to summarize the readings than it is to provide a critical evaluation that highlighting interesting and important issues and questions in the reading. Presenters are expected to propose an agenda for discussion. I will be happy to meet with presenters to go over questions the week before they are to lead the seminar (preferably during my office hours, which are Monday 12-2 - but it can also be by appointment

4) Write an 18-25 page paper (typed, double-spaced), due one week after the final course meeting.

   The subject matter of the paper must be agreed on in advance with me by means of a short paper proposal to be turned in by spring break. I would also advise, though not

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1 Longer is okay…, but if it is a lot longer, the extra words had better be worth it. Remember Blaise Pascal: "I am sorry for the length of my letter, but I had not the time to write a short one" *(Je n’ai fait celle-ci plus longue que parce que je n’ai pas eu le loisir de la faire plus courte).* Take, within reason, the time to make it short. Maximums rather than minimums are intended encourage this.
require, students to arrange to meet with me prior to writing their proposals. Although the paper obviously has to relate to the themes of the seminar, I will be very flexible in helping students make the paper relevant to their own specific research interests; you shouldn't have to write papers "just" to write papers. You should be taking advantage of term papers to attack the one or two subjects that most interest you from multiple perspectives, and be thinking about how the ideas we are talking about in the seminar relate to your own ideas, and about how the kinds of comments I can give (that is, comments from a sociological-geographical perspective) can help you advance your own work.

Grading:
The final grade will be given on the basis of a formal evaluation of the final paper, discounted by a half a letter grade for each weekly memo not turned in (remember that you are allowed three weeks “grace” from weekly-memo-writing; I know that people do have lives). It's grad school, and if you are serious and engaged, you'll do fine. Frankly, if I do my job right, you'll care more about the comments on your paper than you will about the grade. That said, if you are clearly slacking I'm not afraid to slam you with the grade too (this is hardly a required class, after all; if you don't want to come, ... don't).

I. Introduction
1. (1/17) Introduction to the course

2. (1/24) The "pop" take: Does globalization mean the end of geography?
   a. Friedman, Thomas (2004): The World is Flat. Ch. 1-4 (pp. 3-224) required, Ch. 5 (pp. 225-236) and Ch. 9 (309-338) strongly recommended (yeah, it's lot of pages, but it reads extremely fast)
   b. Four very short (1-4 page) commentaries on Friedman [posted on Courseworks]
      i. Krugman (1999) "GLOBAL VISION DU JOUR"
      iv. John Hagel (2005) "The World is spiky" Weblog comment on Friedman and Florida

3. (1/31) Regions in the global: The conversation I
4. (2/7) What economic sociology brings to the conversation
      i. [Strongly recommended; if you haven't read it, read it]: Granovetter, Mark. 1985. 'Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness', *American Journal of Sociology* 91(3): 481-510.

5. (2/14) What geography brings to the conversation
6. (2/21) Regions in the global: The conversation II


i. [recommended] Rinaldi, Alberto (2005). "The Emilian Model Revisited: Twenty Years After" *Business History*. 47.2 pp. 244-266


7. (2/28) Space, Organization and American manufacturing
   b. Engardio, Pete, Dexter Roberts and Brian Bremner 2004 "'The China Price' ', *Business Week* (December 6).
      i. [http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/04_49/b3911401.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/04_49/b3911401.htm)

8. (3/7) Globalization I.

Spring break, no class 3/14 - but have your paper proposals to me by this time

9. (3/21) Globalization II

² I have not asked the bookstore to order copies of my book. I will discuss in class cheaper ways for students to get the text; if you do wish to order it from Oxford ($55), let me know and I will give you back my (small) royalty share.
10. (3/28) Globalization and the transnational corporation
   a. Kristensen, Peer Hull and Jonathan Zeitlin: Local Players in Global Games. Oxford. Pages to be decided.³

11. (4/4) The state as agent in globalization
   a. Amsden, Alice. 2001. The rise of 'the rest': Challenges to the West from Late-Industrializing countries. Oxford 2001. Ch. 1, 9, 10 (pp. 1-30, 251-294).

12. (4/11) Global value chains
   c. Everybody should pick a couple of pieces from a particular industry sector, drawing on the materials produced by the Global Value Chain Initiative (I'll explain this in class) [http://www.globalvaluechains.org/publications/#theory]

³ I will also discuss in class what to do about this reading, as it is once again quite expensive ($50); it is worth it - it is a good book. - but it is also a lot, so we'll talk about it.
13. (4/18) Flatteners(?): modularization, standardization, and projects
      iii. [recommended] "Spaces of Knowing" - Ch. 5 in Amin, A. and Patrick Cohendet (2004). *Architectures of Knowledge: firms, capabilities and communities*

14. (4/25) The confusing present, or, what next? Is everything becoming tradable? Even if the world isn't flat now, and wasn't before, will it become so tomorrow?
   i. The readings for this week will be updated late in the semester. The idea is to get stuff off the "bleeding edge" of what is being written in the here and now. I will pick things that seem particularly relevant in light of discussions in the class as it develops and announce them late in the semester. What is listed here now is just to give you an idea.
   c. Ronil Hira, “Global Outsourcing of Engineering Jobs,” and other position pieces and research by IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers”).
   e. Excerpts from Sloan Foundation Industry Centers Globalization newsletter and listserv
   f. Dossani, Raffiq and Martin Kenney: "The Next Wave of Globalization: Exploring the Relocation of Service Provision to India"