

# Economic Geography

G&ES 331 (3 credits)

Fall 2011

**When and Where** TR 2:00-3:15, 153 ATS

**Instructor** Jim Hathaway, member of Association of PA State College & University Faculties (APSCUF). APSCUF is the faculty and coaches union and is committed to promoting excellence in all that we do to ensure that our students receive the highest quality education.

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**Office Hours** MWF: 2:00-2:50, TTh, 3:15-4:30; feel free to see me at other times

**Text (required)** Neil M. Coe, Philip F. Kelly, Henry W. C. Yeung, *Economic Geography: A Contemporary Introduction* (Blackwell, 2007). Also, readings will be available on reserve (electronic and hard copy).

## Grading and Attendance Policy

The components of your grade and important dates are shown below. The course withdrawal deadline (grade of “W”) is Wednesday, November 9.

Reading quizzes	200 points	
Midterm essay exam	125	October 18
Auto project	100	October 25
Demographic project	100	November 15
Income project	100	December 1
Final essay exam	250	10:30-12:30, December 15
Class participation	125	
Total	1000 points (900-1000 = A, 800-899 = B, 700-799 = C, 600-699 = D, below 600 = F)	

For the reading quizzes, you have about eight minutes to write a five- or six-sentence paragraph on some general topic from the reading assignment. The quizzes are open notes but not open book. In grading the quizzes I look to see if the paragraph; i.e., a sequence of lucid sentences that are all related to a single topic; has

- a topic sentence that states the main or controlling idea,
- three or four supporting sentences—they develop the controlling idea, using facts, arguments, analysis, examples, and other information and
- a concluding sentence—it establishes the connections between the information discussed in the body of the paragraph and the paragraph’s controlling idea.

Here’s another way to think about the three conditions above: the topic sentence makes a claim; the supporting sentences provide data to support the claim; and the concluding sentence is where you show your creativity, because here you link the data to the claim. Thus the concluding statement should not be a restatement of the topic sentence. If these three conditions are met, you would receive an A for five or six quality sentences, a B for three or four quality sentences, and a C for one or two.

The midterm exam and comprehensive final exam will consist solely of essay questions that come from a list of sample questions. You may bring one page (both sides) of handwritten notes to the midterm exam and two pages to the final exam. The minimum length for a satisfactory essay is six paragraphs. Longer essays usually get higher grades.

I calculate your oral participation for most classes. The criteria for your oral participation grade are quality and consistency. An 'A' participant is consistently engaged in class discussion, always demonstrating that she or he has engaged the reading thoroughly and thoughtfully. The 'A' student has questions, ideas, or observations about the assignment and does not substitute quantity of participation for quality. A 'B' participant is less consistent than an 'A' but actively responds to questions posed by the teacher and other students. To get a 'B' in participation, you will need to talk regularly--more, certainly, than once during a class session in which an assignment has been given. A 'C' means that your contributions have been infrequent and that your involvement did not work consistently to make the class a productive learning experience. A 'D' means that you rarely talked during the semester.

Detailed instructions will be provided for the three projects.

Attendance affects your grade. A student with excellent attendance will receive 10 bonus points. Each unexcused absence in excess of 2, however, will result in a 15-point loss (e.g., a student with 4 unexcused absences will have 30 points deducted from his or her course total). An excused absence requires written documentation and it requires that you submit a typed copy of what transpired in the class (see below "A Note on Notetaking"). If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting the homework assignment from me or someone else and for completing it by the due date. Students who are late to class should see me afterwards to ensure that they were not marked absent.

### **A Note on Notetaking**

Most of the essay questions in your exams will be based on lectures and class discussions. Effective note taking is therefore important (see Wikipedia's article on notetaking). Classroom notes are often fragmentary, so it is essential that you rewrite those notes in a more detailed, narrative fashion soon after class. In rewriting you have made an effort of thought; this serves to make the material more meaningful and to imprint it in your mind. Your revised notes are also a big step toward the first draft of a practice exam essay.

### **Academic Integrity**

The work (e.g., project, exam notes) that you submit must be your own, for both moral and legal reasons. Plagiarism is representing the work of others as your own (e.g., a paper that has two sentences that are similar to those in another person's paper). The sanctions for academic dishonesty under listed under SRU's Academic Policies and Procedures at <http://catalog.sru.edu/content.php?catoid=20&navoid=409>.

## Course Description

Examines human use and economic organization of the earth.

## Defining Economic Geography

The goal of many geography courses is to enable the student to become a geographically informed person who

1. sees meaning in the arrangements of things on the earth's surface (e.g., effects of location, connections with other locations, effects of scale);
2. sees relations between people, places, and environments (e.g., how human actions modify the physical environment, how physical systems affect human systems);
3. uses geographical skills (e.g., use computer mapping and spreadsheet software to analyze geographic problems);
4. and applies spatial (#1 above) and ecological (#2 above) perspectives to life situations.

Four key geographic concepts that pervade these goals are location, place, link, and region. As we shall see from an elaboration of a more specific goal statement for economic geography, these key concepts are foundational for economic geography. Following Phil Gersmehl (from his *Teaching Geography*), these concepts can be defined as follows:

- location refers to position in space,
- place is the mix of natural and artificial features that give meaning to a location,
- links are the connections between places, and
- a region is a sizable area with generally similar appearance or internal links that tie it together

A goal statement for this course is that *the geographically informed person knows and understands the patterns and networks of economic interdependence on the earth's surface*. Location refers to “patterns” in the statement, links refers to “network” and “interdependence,” and place and region both refer to “earth's surface.” We can take these key concepts further by dividing the field of economic geography as shown below.

1. the location and spatial distribution of economic activities (e.g., steel mills, superfund sites, outlet malls)
2. the spatial interaction or the connections between places (e.g., pollution, transportation, trade, capital flows)
3. economic change of a place or region at various scales (why some places are becoming richer or poorer, the environmental consequences of economic development)

A definition of the subfield is as follows. Economic geography is the geography of people making a living. It deals with the spatial patterns of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services at local, regional, national and international levels. In other words, it deals with the economies of places and the connections between those places. Economic geography brings a crucial perspective to such important geographic questions as how did a place get to be the way it is, should it be that way, and can we change it.

## **Student Learning Goals/Outcomes**

A goal is something you want to achieve; an outcome is something you have achieved. Students whose major is in the Department of Geography, Geology, and the Environment are expected to achieve certain departmental outcomes, which are closely related to SRU's university outcomes for student learning and development < <http://www.sru.edu/PAGES/14666.asp>>. The departmental outcomes for GGE students are shown below.

1. Each graduate will develop strong written and oral communication skills, demonstrate the ability to work in a collaborative environment, and exhibit professional attitudes and behavior
2. Each graduate shall possess and apply critical thinking and problem solving skills
3. Each graduate shall develop skills in quantitative, qualitative, technological, laboratory, and field procedures

In addition, students in the geography majors are expected to

- develop general knowledge and understanding of the concepts of location, place, human environment interactions, movement, and region.

The learning outcomes for Economic Geography support all of the above departmental and program outcomes. At the completion of the course you should be able to

1. articulate the goals, concepts, and subject matter of economic geography,
2. evaluate differing perspectives on the nature, locational patterns and processes of primary, secondary, and tertiary economic activities at the local, national, and international levels,
3. explain why some areas are better off than others and what to do about it, i.e., a critical account of the spatial patterns of inequality and what gives rise to these patterns
4. connect examples from outside the class to the outcomes above,
5. demonstrate your analytical skills through the use of information resources and tools such as mapping and spreadsheet software in three data collection and analysis projects,
6. demonstrate your writing, speaking and collaborative abilities throughout the semester, and use specific aspects of critical thinking in a variety of oral and verbal contexts (see below).

### **First two study questions**

1. What is economic geography? What are its goals, concepts, and subject matter? Compare Coe, Kelly, and Yeung (CKY): Preface, Chapters 1, 2; Walker, "Teaching Economic Geography" (D2L, E-Reserves); and the syllabus on these four items. For a bonus, these two chapters show how economic geography has changed over time in the US and the UK: Sheppard and Barnes (SB): 11-26 and Clark, Feldman, and Gertler (CFG): 18-44 (Bailey Reserve). A dictionary definition of economic geography may also be useful, see an online or hard copy dictionary. For more economic geography materials, drill down into <http://www.colorado.edu/geography/virtdept/resources/contents.htm>.

2. "Left to its own devices, the free market always seeks a workforce that is hungry, desperate, and cheap—a work force that is anything but free." How does Schlosser (E-Reserves) support this statement in his article about strawberry pickers? How would CKY (chapter 3, 13.3) and economists Alesina and Glaeser (E-Reserves) react to this statement? (bonus: skim CKY, chapter 9).

<b>Course Outline</b>	<b>date</b>	<b>week</b>
<b>Introduction: The Economic Geographer's Toolkit</b>		
a. Lecture: preliminary remarks about the course	8/30	1
b. Discussion: economic geography's goals, concepts, and subject matter	9/1	
<b>Economic Activities in Places: Patterns and Trends in the Inputs, Transformation, and Consumption of Goods and Services</b>		
1. Inputs: Agriculture		2
a. Discussion: in the strawberry fields of California	9/6	
2. Consumption: Services		
a. Discussion: housecleaning services in the US	9/8	
3. Inputs: Fishing		3
a. Oral presentations and discussion: the sustainability of shrimp in the Gulf of Mexico and the tropical Pacific	9/13, 9/15	
4. Inputs: Mining		4
a. Oral presentations and discussion: Marcellus Shale and natural gas extraction in Pennsylvania	9/20, 9/22	
5. Transformation: Manufacturing		5
a. Project: locating an auto factory in a rich country or a poor one? (meet in lab)	9/27, 9/29	
6. Consumption: Services		6
a. Discussion: trends and patterns in US outlet malls (meet in lab on 10/6)	10/4, 10/6	
	Professional Development Day—no class	
	10/11	
<b>Spatial Interaction: Perspectives on Globalization, Flows Between Places</b>		
7. Financial Flows and Globalization		7
a. Discussion: geographies of money	10/13	
	Midterm Exam	
	10/18	
8. Technology and globalization		8
a. Discussion: technology's impact on economic landscapes	10/20	
<i>6. continued. Project: Making maps of demographic variation at the county level in Pennsylvania (meet in lab)<sup>1</sup></i>	10/25, 10/27	9
9. Trade: Flows of goods and services		10
a. Discussion: trade and the environment	11/1	
10. Transportation		
a. Film: Who Killed the Electric Car?	11/3	
<b>Interconnected Geographies: Local, Regional, National, and Global Economic Change</b>		
11. Globalization and National Economic Change		11
a. Discussion: globalization and national economic change	11/8, 11/10	
12. Urban and Regional Economic Growth and Decline		12
a. Project: where the money is - or isn't - in your county (meet in lab)	11/15, 11/17	
<i>Oral presentations: trends and patterns in the US environmental sector</i>	11/22	13
	Thanksgiving break	
b. Discussion: will Pittsburgh rise again?	11/29, 12/1	14
13. Geographic Perspectives on Sustainable Economic Growth and Development		15
a. Discussion: the viability of sustainability	12/6, 12/8	
<b>Conclusion:</b> Closing comments	12/8	

<sup>1</sup> This topic and the oral presentations scheduled for 11/22 belong conceptually in the "Consumption: Services" section but have been moved to spread the projects across the semester.

## Critical Thinking Skills

*We don't need no thought control*, Roger Waters

Critical thinking comprises a number of overlapping abilities or strategies. I've listed some below (for another set of definitions, see this web site: [http://www.criticalthinking.org/aboutCT/define\\_critical\\_thinking.cfm](http://www.criticalthinking.org/aboutCT/define_critical_thinking.cfm)).

1. Observes. One must both look closely and remain open to hidden or unexpected explanations to think critically. Gathering information in a systematic manner can increase one's willingness to accept evidence even if it contradicts one's previous opinions. The recall and comprehension (putting what is recalled in one's own words) of what one sees are important steps in critical thinking.
2. Analyzes. In order to truly understand one must break down material into its component parts so that its organizational structure may be understood. In other words, analysis involves knowing the relationships between parts and recognizing the organizational principles that connect them.
3. Recognizes ambiguity. Ambiguity means having two or more meanings. Issues are often complex, and that complexity only emerges from confusion if one is able to recognize ambiguity.
4. Comes to grips with complexity. Here one recognizes that there are usually no easy answers to important issues or questions. Complex issues do not lend themselves to simple single-cause explanations.
5. Identifies assumptions. All reasoning is based on assumptions. An assumption is something taken for granted, i.e., accepted as true without proof, by a thinker but often left unstated. Since assumptions are not mentioned and thus not backed up with evidence, they offer insight into the validity of our own arguments as well as those of others.
6. Assumes perspective of another. You may have heard the phrase "walk a mile in their shoes." This saying implies a willingness to explore ideas contrary to one's own beliefs and the ability to see problems and issues in a broader perspective than one's own culture or interest group.
7. Adopts multiple perspectives. To adopt multiple perspectives means to see a problem from many angles. There are as many perspectives as there are people, but several important categories include race, class, and gender. Adopting multiple perspectives allows one to anticipate counterarguments and to address them even before one's position is questioned. Multiple perspectives can also lead one to reconsider one's own position.
8. Synthesizes. Synthesis puts parts together to form a new whole. It is the opposite of analysis. Synthesis involves seeing connections among various and seemingly unrelated facts and experiences (e.g., different texts, different courses, different personal experiences, or current events, etc.) Creativity is an important part of synthesis, since the connections one finds may be original.
9. Recognizes bias. A goal of critical thinking is fair mindedness. One tests one's own impressions in all ways possible. Recognizing bias helps one to see their own assumptions and thus to reduce personal prejudice and to recognize it in others.
10. Evaluates. To evaluate one must judge the worth or significance of something and to judge one must have definite criteria. Such criteria may be internal (e.g., how effectively is the purpose carried out?) or external (e.g., why might this work be of interest to someone? How does it compare to other works in its field?)