

Economic Geography
Geography 345
Department of Geology and Geography
Ohio Wesleyan University
Spring 2009
Course Syllabus¹

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Office Hours: 11-12 MWF and by appointment

I am in my office many times other than office hours. If my door is open, students are welcome and invited to come in if they wish to see me. I am also happy to make appointments to meet with students at other times.

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A. Course Overview

This course introduces students to several important topics in Economic Geography as well as to various theoretical perspectives and research approaches. The course is designed from the perspective that “economy” cannot be studied apart from other spheres of life (e.g. political, cultural, social). In this sense we will study Economic Geography by considering the effects of time and space, and geographic structures within a heterogeneous perspective on natural and human environmental geographic systems.

What is meant by the term “geographic *structure*”? – Indeed, what is “Geography” anyway? Geography is the study of relations between society and the natural environment. Geography looks at how society shapes, alters and increasingly transforms the natural environment, creating humanized forms from stretches of pristine nature, and then sedimenting layers of socialization one within the other, one on top of the other, until a complex natural-social landscape results. Geography also looks at how nature conditions society, in some original sense of creating the people and raw materials which social forces “work up” into culture and economics (the two are perpetually intertwined), and in an ongoing sense of placing limits and offering material potentials for social processes like economic development. The “relation” between society and nature is thus an entire system, a complex of inter-relations. These processes are what geographers call

¹ As per the usual caveat, this syllabus is a work in progress. I may alter the syllabus throughout the semester depending on events that emerge, new readings that surface, if I choose to include films as a pedagogical tool, invite guest lecturers, or if I choose to include in the syllabus any contemporary news-worthy events pertaining to the class.

the “socio-spatial dialectic” (Edward W. Soja, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 70, No. 2, Jun., 1980, pp. 207-225).



- people modify the spaces they live in
- people in turn are modified by the spaces they live in

In this course we are going to analyze how human agents—working within the socio-spatial-dialectic—consume, produce and exchange things – through both cultural and economic consumption, production and exchange (indeed, culture(s) and economics are mutually constitutive)—and how these interactions impact and are impacted by the natural and built environment. So, **ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY** (a sub-field of Human Geography) **is the study of the geography (or, rather *geographies*) of people’s struggles to make a living**. In order to understand how people struggle to make a living and the spatial impacts of those struggles, Economic Geographers study the locational variation between natural resources and the human groups which use them. Economic Geography attempts to understand the ways in which economic systems manage scarce resources at the surface of the earth. It attempts to theorize about the ways in which the distribution and availability of scarce resources influence the organization of and change in economies and economic systems. It attempts to understand how human groups organize their **SPACE-ECONOMY**. A **SPACE-ECONOMY** is the way in which the economy and the surface of the earth is organized to overcome both **the natural and human induced SPATIAL DISPARITIES** between humans and resources. A **spatial disparity** is the locational difference between two mutually interacting locational phenomena. For example, Americans use petroleum (and are quite dependent on this resource) found in areas far from America; there is a **spatial disparity between the location of the resource--petroleum-- and its users (Americans)**. A major series of questions Economic Geographers ask are: what is the nature of the various economic spatial disparities on the surface of the earth, and how and in what ways are they overcome, and what are the results of this process?

The study of Economic Geography emphasizes such things (but not exclusively) as: the influence of population growth on the development and use of scarce resources; the ways in which economic organization (price, labor, etc.) influence the development and movement of resources and humans; theories about agricultural, industrial and service locations--why and how do humans choose particular locations to develop, produce and distribute resources?; and the nature of trade (movement of things) between places.

How are we going to study the human struggle to make a living (Economic Geography) and impacts of the natural environment (Space)? We will follow particular themes in the economic geography of the world. These themes will include, but are not limited to: (1) the environmental and scientific transformations of the surface of the earth which have led to the present-day distribution of world economic systems; (2) the growth and demographic characteristics of the world's population (now six billion people); (3) the nature, scope, geography and history of the industrial revolution (4)the space-economy of the United States as a developed country, and the present-day nature of the American economic system and its geographical problems and prospects; (5) the emergence, development, character and space-economy of the Global South (especially Latin America); (6) the emergence of the so-called "world economy;" and (7) globalization. These latter two themes will be interwoven throughout the course.

We will begin the course by studying Economic Geographic theory. Next we will consider how shifts in Economic consumption, production and exchange (i.e from Fordism to post-Fordism and from industrial to post-industrial and predominantly service oriented economies) have impacted Spaces in the Industrialized West. Because my area-specialization is in Latin America, this will follow with an analysis of how these shifts in economic consumption, production and exchange have impacted Spaces in Latin America. More than the structural economic shifts from Fordism to post-Fordism, in Latin America, we will consider how the swings from a protected economy under Import Substitution Industrialization to the open economies of Neoliberalization have impacted the peoples and Spaces of this region. Finally you, the students of Economic Geography, are going to conduct a study on the Economic Geographies of the city and county of Delaware. You will conduct field-work (an inherent aspect of Geography) and research a site of Economic production here in Delaware. You will use what you will have learned about Economic Geography to produce a profile about this site.

As we move through the course you will note that many of these themes are closely interrelated and overlapping. For example the development of the American economy in the latter half of the Twentieth century is closely related to the emergence of the world economy and globalization. Globalization and the world economy are inextricably tied into the Global South, and developments in the Global South are closely linked to developments in the industrialized West (such as de-industrialization).

B. Class Conduct

Required Reading

You are required to bring text/articles with you to class on a daily basis as we will frequently refer to the readings during lectures.

- Text: Paul Knox, John Agnew and Linda McCarthy: The Geography of the World Economy, 5th edition, 2008.
- Text: David Harvey: Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development, 2006, Verso Press London, England.
- Articles: Additional articles are found on eres. Password is “economic” – be sure to type it in lower-case.

You must be willing to read in order to receive a passing grade in this class.

Expectations on readings vis-à-vis lectures

Students are expected to do the readings for each class period and to participate in class discussions about the readings. The lectures will be based on the readings as well as supplementary information that will contribute to the readings and the overall themes and goals of the class. So, it is important to do the readings as well as come to class to participate in the lectures.

Attendance is required

You cannot pass this course without coming to class. I will take attendance daily.

Throughout the semester:

- You are allowed two unexcused absences—no questions asked.
- Each additional unexcused absence will result in a demotion of your grade by one letter.
- I will excuse absences if you provide me with an official written document – such as a doctor’s note in case of illness. Excused absences are exempt from the two rules stated above.

Do not come to class late!!! This disturbs me and the rest of the class.

Class decorum

I do not mind if you eat or drink in the class- just do so discreetly. However, it is not tolerable for you to read magazines, newspapers, fill out crossword puzzles, ***fiddle with cell phones, black berries etc., , sleep!***, or do work for other classes during Geography 345. Please take care of these duties before or after class.

- If you repeatedly leave the classroom to check your cell phone, you will be counted as absent, unexcused.
- If you repeatedly text or fiddle with your cell phone, blackberry, etc., you will be counted as absent, unexcused.
- If you sleep in class, you will be counted as absent, unexcused.

C. Class Requirements

Three take home tests worth 50 points each. The tests will cover the readings *and* lectures of the class. The tests will consist of short essay questions.

- First test: Friday, February 20th, due February 23rd
- Second test: Friday, March 20th, due March 30th
- Third test : Friday, April 24th, due April 27th

Class Participation worth 50 points: You are expected to contribute to the class discussion around the readings and topics at hand. Come to class prepared to discuss the readings, make connections with the readings, and comment on lectures. The participation points are based on attendance and your engagement with the readings and class discussion.

5 Pop-quizzes worth 15 points each for a total of 75 points: These will be based on the readings to insure that everyone is staying abreast with the texts.

Term-long research project worth 300 points: You are required to research, plan, create, and present a short 25 minute film documentary based on economic activities here in Delaware County. You will be divided into groups of four to five students each. Each group will vote on a representative. The representative will randomly choose a piece of paper with the name of a site of economic production in Delaware written on it from a hat. This will be your assigned site. Below are the guidelines that you must follow in order to create a successful short documentary about the Economic Geography of this site. Each member of the group will be required to cover one particular aspect of the site. You will be graded for your individual contribution to the overall group project. You will not be graded in mass. In order to carry-out this assignment you will need to go to your site of economic production, conduct interviews, use your geographical eye to see what is going on, do archival research about this site, and create a short documentary that you will present to the class at the end of the semester. You do not need to be a film expert to carry-out this assignment and you will not need to ‘speak’ on film or anything too artistic.

Term-long Documentary Research Project

The ebbs and flows of the multiple social relations—from encounters (social, economic, cultural), contestations, transportation, employment—to questions of changing patterns of race and gender relations, consumption and production—are part of what produces each site of economic production in the town of Delaware, Ohio. According to Massey, the production of each place “can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings” (Massey, 1994). A place is “where a large[er] proportion of... relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent” (Massey, 1994). When analyzing each site of economic production in Delaware, think of the site as a nodal point of relations and flows that work to produce that site. Think of place à la Massey, where each site has “links with the wider world, which integrates in a positive way the global and the local” (Massey 1994). When

researching your site, you will rely on the assigned readings from the class as well as secondary readings and information that you will gather on your own in order to understand how your site as been socially produced.

Refer to this Website for more on how to begin this project NOW:

<http://www.delawareohio.net/departments/Economic%20Development>

- Your group must meet with me to go over and perhaps visit your research site. This is a requirement- if you do not meet with me as a group I will remove **50 point** from your final grade. I insist that you meet with me as a group to coordinate your project so you can successfully execute your goals. You will also sign up for follow-up meetings with me toward the end of the semester – again this is required or **50 points** will be removed from your grade.
- Friday, **February 29th**, Annotated Bibliography due. This will include 4 peer review journal sources, archival information, the names of people you plan to interview. You must go to the library to look for books and articles. It will also be useful to you to go to the public library; the planning commission; The Delaware Historical Society; and access newspaper articles (Columbus Dispatch and The Delaware Gazette) pertaining to your research site. For instructions on how to prepare an annotated Bibliography, please refer to:
<http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm>
Worth **50 points**.
- Friday **March 28th**, outline of documentary and complete Annotated Bibliography due. The outline for your documentary is similar for when you create one for a written paper – see me if you do not know how to do this. The Annotated Bibliography will include the additional materials that I expect you to have researched since the first Annotated Bibliography was due – this will be the same Bibliography as before, plus your additional resources you’ve found. Worth **50 points**.
- The research for this term project will be time consuming—you must be willing to participate in the research and filming of the documentary to take this course. I expect you to fully engage with this project. If it is apparent that you are not working with your group to produce this documentary (i.e. you are “slacking” on your end of the work) you will be docked 50 points for each meeting, as well as 50 points for the final project. **NO SLACKERS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Note on Methodology: You will combine multiple methods to research your site. Archival research (this includes government websites, popular media, and peer review journals, books etc), interviews, and ‘participant observation’ (which consists of watching what goes on in your site, not just going to your site once and making claims about how the site has been socially constructed, but participating in daily activities at your site) . Triangulating these methods will allow you to get the required information to

construct a story about how your site came to be.

Sites of Economic Activity in Delaware, Ohio

Your group will complete one of the 5 projects listed below:

1. Downtown Delaware: Changing socio-spatial patterns of production and consumption. Is the downtown experiencing Gentrification?

In recent years many businesses have closed while new ones have opened on Sandusky Street in downtown Delaware. The owners and investors of the new restaurants and shops established downtown employ particular cultural signs (Bryson, 2001) in order to produce a place that will attract a certain type of clientele (Chandra's Bistro, Simple Indulgences, not one but TWO coffee houses, etc.). What are the socio-spatial impacts of this new form of investment, economic production and consumption? Who attends these new cultural sites of production and consumption? What are the businesses that have closed? Where have those closed businesses gone? Who promotes this new form of investment (private capital, the City of Delaware, corporate-state piloted gentrification)?

How to get started: You will need to familiarize yourself with the economic and cultural gentrification literature (*literature review*). Interview restaurant and shop owners (who eats and shops at these locales? etc.). You will need to go to at least one city planning meeting and figure out how the city promotes the 'regeneration' of downtown. Interview other 'traditional' businesses and see how they feel about the new investments downtown. Is displacement occurring? What role do OWU students play in the reconfiguration of downtown Delaware?

2. The Latinificación of Delaware: is Atzlan moving north?

There is a burgeoning Latino migrant population in Delaware. The causes for migration to central Ohio are many. One example can be found in the changing macro-economic structures à la NAFTA that deregulates trade between Mexico and the U.S. This leads to a flooding of cheaply produced subsidized grains from the U.S. into Mexico, which in turn drives farmers off of their fields in central and south Mexico and into the fields and fast-food restaurants of Central Ohio. What are the socio-spatial impacts of Latino owned sites of economic activity in Delaware Ohio? I have mapped three such sites, but there may be more and I encourage you to find more.

Sites of Latino economic production:

1. La Tienda Michoacana
2. Vaqueros Mexican Restaurant
3. The Radio Station 1550 AM.

You must also take into consideration the Latino Labor force that exists in Delaware. Where do they work and where do they live and how is that impacting the economics of this place?

How to get started: 1. Conduct research/create a geographic literature review into the macro-economic explications for why people migrate (push and pull factors, economic

and cultural factors). 2. Construct a literature review on migrant owned businesses in the U.S. and what their impacts are on the communities where they locate. You will need to interview the owners and workers at these sites. Figure out how the city is spatially changing vis-à-vis new Latino economic consumers and producers. Interview non-Latino businesses owners (remember, cities are often produced and reproduced by the conflicts and contestation over the utilization of urban space). Where do the Latinos live and work who frequent these sites? Where do the Latinos come from? How do they get to and from work (transportation geography)? What is the relationship between the Latino community and the small but historically significant Afro-American population in Delaware (for this you could talk to the owner of the Banks Market on London St.)? Think of these sites as nodal points where social, cultural and economic flows are continuously producing and reproducing these sites across multiple scales.

3. There goes the downtown: how many Wal-Mart's can Delaware support?

The debates over the socio-spatial impacts of Big-box stores like Wal-Mart and Office Depot have captured geographers' attention as of late (Brunn, 2006). Wal-mart, for example, is the largest public corporation in the world. The mega store is the largest single private employer in the U.S. Indeed, it is the largest private employer in the world. The mega store's impacts on retail business in a town like Delaware are multiple. Wal-Mart has been criticized by community groups, women's rights groups, grassroots organizations, and labor unions, specifically for its extensive foreign product sourcing, low rates of employee health insurance enrollment, resistance to union representation, and alleged sexism. You can have a field day—in terms of which topics you intend to focus on in order to understand the socio-spatial impact of Big-Box stores in Delaware—with these sites of economic production.

- 1) The new Wal-Mart under construction on highway 23
- 2) The new mall-cum-box store opening on highway 36
- 3) The current Wal-Mart located in the Wal-Mart Mall on the south side of town
- 4) The intersection of Route 23 S. and Powell Rd. where you find the convergence of a Wal-Mart, Office Depot and a Meijer

How to get started: Do a literature review on Big-box stores (see Brunn 2006 for a good resource). Conduct interviews with management, employers and shoppers (consumers at these sites). Interview small independent businesses in Delaware—like the last independent hardware store owner adjacent to campus; or the Shoe Tinker Downtown near Buns restaurant—to learn how these stores are impacting commerce and social space in Delaware. This is a huge project; you will need to narrow it down to make it do-able.

4. The economies of transportation Geography: The Kroger Distribution Center—there a lot of cookies and snacks in Delaware.

Why is there a Kroger distribution center in Delaware? What incentives did the state,

county, and city offer the grocery-retail company to choose Delaware? What are the impacts on employment structures in Delaware (who actually works there, how do they get to work, is it unionized, do workers enjoy healthcare)? How does it impact the roadways? Who pays for the maintenance of the roadways? What goes-on inside the distribution center? How many trucks enter and leave each day? How did city zoning laws or the re-zoning of the site impact the company's decision to locate in Delaware? Who built the plant (local firm, national, or even international)? Where does the food come from? What are the center's environmental impacts?

How to get started: Put together a geographic literature review on transportation geography and retail geography. You will need to gain access to the plant (I will help with this; we can set up a tour of the plant). Conduct interviews and analyze the socio-spatial impacts this plant has on the town of Delaware. Also, visit this website: <http://www.bizjournals.com/cincinnati/stories/2007/04/16/daily35.html>

5. Light Manufacturing on the West side: from mass production to just-on-time manufacturing.

The west side of Delaware—following London Street until it becomes highway 42—is the center of manufacturing in the town. Geographically, this area has been zoned for manufacturing in part because of the transportation infrastructure that it enjoys combined with its location near the quarry. The quarry functions as a detractor to zoning the area for residents or retail. According to the city's webpage, "the total labor force of Delaware County is 43,800, with an unemployment rate less than three percent, the lowest in Ohio. The largest employers are manufacturers of automobile coatings, plastics, [and] copper products." This means that manufacturing is diverse in Delaware. There exists a long history of manufacturing here in Delaware (including a cigar factory in the 1840s). Similarly to other sites of manufacturing, due to global shifts in economic trade and regulation, Delaware's manufacturing sector has experienced many changes in the last 30 years. See this website for more: <http://www.thomasnet.com/profile/39433/greif.html>
Some ideas for sites of investigation:

- PPG Industries
- Luvata Ohio INC.
- SkyClimber INC. http://www.delawareohio.net/documents/Planning_Section.pdf
- Inno-Pak (what is this company?) AHP a DSE company (I do not know what they do—can you find out?)
- Flexible Bus Company
- Deltaplex Industrial Complex (What do they do?)
- Liberty Castings
- Quarry

How to get started: Conduct an historical analysis (post WWII to the present) of manufacturing shifts in the U.S. and Delaware. How have things changed? Focus on economic geography literature pertaining to the shifts from fordism to post-fordism. In light of these changes, consider: employment structures (do these plants hire directly or go through temp agencies, how many people does each company hire) unionization;

health-care; have there been shifts in the structures of manufacturing production? Environmental concerns. What role does the Delaware airport play in the presence of manufacturing centers in Delaware (transportation geography)? Why are these companies here and how do they function as nodal points with the global/local dialectic?

D. Class and Reading Schedule

Week One: Reading Economic Geography

- January 12 = Introduction to Economic geography, read syllabus
- January 14 = Knox et. al (2008) Chapter 1: The Changing World Economy
- January 16 = Knox et. al (2008) Chapter 1: The Changing World Economy

Week Two: Reading Economic Geography

- January 19 = Bryson et l. “Reading Economic Geography” from erez
- January 21 = View Documentary on Delaware
- January 23 = guest lecture/ question and answer discussion from Dr. Carson

Week Three: Development and underdevelopment

- January 26 = Knox et al. (2008) Chapter 2: Global Patterns and Trends
- January 28 = Choose Groups/ Orientation on Equipment Usage
- January 30 = Fulbright Training session. **No Class**; Meet with your groups in the library; divide tasks; start research for Bibliography

Week Four: Development and underdevelopment

- February 2 = Knox et al. (2008) Chapter 2: Global Patterns and Trends
- February 4 = Gunderfrank: The Development of Underdevelopment
- February 6 = Two Groups need to sign up to meet me during class period. Those not meeting, work on your project: No Lecture.

Week Five: Understanding Globalization(s)

- February 9 = Bryson excerpts from erez
- February 11 = Massey, Aspatial Globalization
- February 13 = Three Groups need to sign up to meet me during class period. Those not meeting, work on your project: No Lecture.

Suggested Readings: Massey Chapters One & Two (from erez)

Week Six: Understanding Globalization(s)

- February 16 = Massey, A global sense of place
- February 18 = No Lecture: Work On Projects. I will be available for consultation.
- February 20 = Knox et. al (2008) Chapter 12 The reassertion of the Local in the Age of the Global: Regions and Localities within the World Economy

Suggested Readings: Massey Chapters Three and Four (from eres); and Eric Swyngendouw , *Glocalization* (from eres)

Week Seven: The Economic Geographies of Neoliberalism

- February 23 = Gutierrez, *Defining Neoliberalism*, and David Harvey, *Neoliberalism and the Restoration of Class Power*, in Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven development pp. 7-34—**First Test Due: 1:10 PM**
- February 25 = David Harvey, *Neoliberalism and the Restoration of Class Power*, in Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven development pp. 34-68
- February 27 = Naomi Klein, *The Other Doctor Shock: Milton Freidman and the Search for a Laissez-Faire Laboratory*, from, [The Shock Doctrine: The Riser of Disaster Capitalism](#). Athens Ohio Latin Americanist Conference: No class: Conduct Fieldwork for you Documentary.

Week Eight: The Emergence of a World Economic System

- March 2 = Knox et al Chapter 3 The Geographic Dynamics of The Global Economy
- March 4 = No Lecture: Work On Your Documentary. I will be available for consultation
- March 6 = Knox et al Chapter 4 The Geographic Dynamics of The Global Economy

Week Nine: Spring Break, no class

Week Ten: Western Hegemony and the emergence of Fordist Style Production

- March 16 = Knox et al. (2008) Chapter 5 Evolution of the Industrial Core Region pp. 143-165
- March 18 = No Lecture: Work On Your Documentary. I will be available for consultation
- March 20 = Knox et al. (2008) Chapter 6 Evolution of the Industrial Core pp. 165-180.

Week Eleven: Association of American Geographers Conference. You have this entire week to work on your documentary. Do so. We will meet the following week to go over your progress.

Week Twelve: Deindustrialization of the Core: The Shift from Fordism to Post-Fordism

- March 30 = No Lecture: Two groups must sign up to meet me to go over the progress of your documentary—**Second Test Due 1:10 PM to the Class Room**
- April 1 = Knox et al. (2008) Chapter 4&5 The Globalization of Production Systems
- April 3 = Knox et al. (2008) Field Excursion to Cincinnati, Work on Projects

Week Thirteen: Economic Spaces of the Global South

- April 6 = Knox et al. (2008) Chapter 6, Second Test Due
- April 8 = Three groups must sign up to meet me to go over the progress of your documentary
- April 10 = Knox et al. (2008) Chapter 7

Week Fourteen: The Spatial Impacts of Neoliberalization and Globalization in Latin America

- April 20 = Chapter 8 The Dynamics of Interdependence: Transformation of the Periphery
- April 22 = No Lecture: Work On Your Documentary. I will be available for consultation
- April 24 = Knox et al. (2008) Chapter 10 Industrialization: The Path to Progress?

Week Fifteen: Finish Documentaries – Third Test due April 27, 1:10 PM bring the test to my office

May 5, 2009 @ 1:30 P.M: We will view the documentaries as a group during the final. You are required to view all documentaries. If you fail to come and view all documentaries, your grade will be demoted one letter grade for each missed documentary!!! Your presence is required!!!