

Department of Geography
University of Toronto

GGR328HS
Labour Geographies

Winter 2015

Lecture time: Thurs 3-5

Lecture location: WI
523

Website: Portal

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What are the power relations that produce workers as commodities within labour markets? To what degree have workers been able to influence their conditions of work and the world around them? These are the key questions guiding the course, where we shall pay close attention to the role of space, place and scale (body, city, nation, globe) in understanding **labour power**. This course charts the contemporary organization of workers, workplaces, and production within capitalist economies and labour markets, with a regional focus on Anglo-American settings. We examine specifically *geographical* perspectives on the individual and collective power of workers as geographical and historical actors in their own right. The first section of the course focuses on **the rise of insecure & precarious work** in the late 20th century in relation to its antecedents, namely 20th century Fordism but also 19th century *laissez-faire* liberalism. Second, we will explore **uneven patterns and experiences of precarious work**, especially as they pertain to gender, class, race, ethnicity, citizenship & nation, and age in shaping workers' experiences and agency, the social and institutional regulations of labour markets, and the relationship between the state, capital and workers. How are insecure workers and risky work produced and experienced? What are the implications of insecure work for worker organizing and resistance? Through the broad lens of **social reproduction**, we will inquire into the social and spatial burdens posed by insecure work. Through research from the global South on precarity and **informal work**, the course concludes by challenging how precarious work is conventionally conceptualized in academic research and writing. To engage deeply in all these themes, the course uses personal work experiences, lectures, readings, films, art, policy, activist and union documents and class discussions.

Course Objectives

To compare geographical approaches (geographies of work & labour geography) to studying labour markets, work, workers, and production in relation to social reproduction and social differences (ex.: race, gender, nation & citizenship, age, ability, etc.)

To identify the broad contours of geographical, social and historical transformations in employment and production patterns over the course of the 20th century into the 21st.

To evaluate the forces which shape and produce conditions of work on increasingly insecure or precarious terms.

To appreciate the role of workers as historical and geographical actors involved in producing, contesting and negotiating regional, national and global economic systems.

To apply geographical approaches identified and evaluated in lectures and readings in analyzing ones' own workplace experiences and cultural texts (ex.: film, song, media, literature, etc.)

To hone academic writing skills and apply course concepts through individual writing assignments and group based exercises.

Prerequisite: 7.5 FCE's including 1.0 FCE in Geography (SOC SCI/BR=3)

Distribution Requirement Status: This is a Social Science course

Breadth Requirement: Society and its Institutions (3)

Course Requirements, Grading & Due Dates

Assignment	Grade	Due Date	Short Description
Participation	10%	Ongoing (1% x 10 lectures, excluding first and last lectures)	Active engagement and attendance in lecture, by completing pre-lecture readings, active listening & speaking, and participating in group activities.
Film or Music Review	20%	Thursday February 5th at the beginning of class	3 page review of one song or film (double spaced pages; ~250 words per page)
Personal Labour Geographies Essay	35%	Thursday March 19th at the beginning of class	8 page essay examining labour geographies through a job you have or had (double spaced pages; ~250 words per page)
Final Exam	35%	Date TBA	Exam period is from April 8-30

Assignments

Participation (10%): Each lecture will involve some active learning and group activity segments where you will engage with fellow students in small groups and then will report back to the larger class and instructor. Of course, this involves attending lecture so you can participate, engage, ask questions and listen. Please arrive on time to lecture. Completing pre-lecture readings is required and will help you substantially in participating in lecture as well as your other written assignments. Even if you find the reading challenging, you will benefit from having attempted to complete your readings.

Film/Song Review (20%): The purpose of this review is to examine how work, workers, and space are related in your choice of a film or song. This is a 3 page, double space paper, so it isn't very long. Keep your review succinct, analytical rather than summative, and relevant to the course. You should focus on 2-3 themes covered in the course which help you relate the film or song to labour geography (ex.: exploitation; post-Fordism; social reproduction; etc.) Consider how these themes are spatial (ex.: Where is the workplace and how is it spatially organized? How is the workplace designed and how does design shape power relations therein? What is your relationship to workers in other places?) Cite and discuss 2 or more academic articles to reinforce your thesis and main arguments. Organize your review as you would a standard academic essay, including a thesis statement, introduction, body and conclusion. You are welcome to select any film or song you wish but whatever you select must be predominantly work-related (ex.: Michael Moore's documentary *Roger & Me* or Dolly Parton's song *9 to 5*). Full information and guidelines on the assignment will be provided in the first lecture.

Personal Labour Geographies Essay (35%): This 8 page, double spaced essay should focus on one of your own present or past work experiences. Your paper should evaluate, as you deem most relevant, the following points: (1) how your work and workplace are spatially organized, (2) the identities you juggle that shape your work and workplace experiences, and (3) the regulatory, historical, institutional, and/or political-economic forces that shape your work, wages and workplace (as applicable). Please interpret your experience in light of concepts we have been discussing in the course. You should foreground your own voice in the first person by using “I” in narrative form. Your paper should provide descriptions of the work and analysis on the extent to which course themes (2-3) help to explain – or fail to explain – your work, workplace, identities at work, and broader forces at play. If you have never had a paid job, you could discuss an unpaid job or role (i.e. housework or volunteer work) or the work of someone else whose work you know well. You should reference lecture material and course readings, as well as additional relevant readings. Keep in mind to highlight the role of space and scale in your analysis and your descriptions. Full information and guidelines on the assignment will be provided in the first lecture, and there will be opportunities throughout the term to prepare your essay with your classmates, the instructor, and TA.

Notes on assignments

All assignments should be hard copies and are due in class before lecture begins (before 3:10pm). You are also asked to submit an electronic version of your paper to Turnitin.com. (Please see later section on Turnitin.com). Email submissions will not be accepted. Contact me in advance if you need to submit your assignment early so that we can make arrangements for that (otherwise, it will be ‘late’ since anything submitted to the department drop-box will be time stamped at 5pm).

Late assignments

If you cannot give me your assignment in class, please leave it in the Department of Geography’s drop-box in the main reception area on the 5th floor of Sidney Smith Hall (Monday to Friday). There is now an after-hours drop-box. Note that anything submitted to the drop-box will be time stamped at 5pm (sometimes early on the day before a long weekend).

The penalty for late assignments is 5% per day reduction in the assignment mark, including Saturday & Sunday. After seven days past the assignment deadline, assignments will no longer be accepted.

You must let me know as soon as possible about circumstances that will prevent you from handing in work on time, though informing me of these circumstances is not sufficient enough alone to warrant an extension. If the reason for requesting an extension is medical, you will need to provide me with a completed Illness Verification form (from the following website). Medical documentation must be provided within 5 business days of assignment due dates. Please consult your college registrar if you are having difficulties during the term that prevent you from completing your course work. For non-medical emergencies, they may be able to provide a letter documenting your situation. Be aware that submitting a note which has been altered or obtained under false pretenses is considered a very serious offence by the University.

Turnitin.com

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included in an institutional repository, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com website. You may opt out of submitting your assignments to Turnitin.com. If you choose this alternative, you must submit all copies of

research notes and draft versions of assignment which you used to research and write the assignment.

Plagiarism

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning & scholarship and to ensure that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's academic achievement. As a result, cases of cheating and plagiarism will be treated very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.html) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.

Potential academic offences include, but are not limited to:

- In papers and assignments:
 - Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement
 - Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor
 - Making up sources or facts
 - Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment, including working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work, or having someone rewrite or add material to your work while "editing"
- On tests and exams:
 - Using or possessing unauthorized aids
 - Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test.
 - Misrepresenting your identity.
- In academic work:
 - Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
 - Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.

Developing skills to avoid unintentionally plagiarizing

Students sometimes plagiarize without intending to do so. Yet whether one intends to plagiarize or does so accidentally matters little because any breach of academic integrity is viewed seriously. I strongly recommend honing good academic practices to avoid plagiarizing. In this course we will touch on some concrete habits and practices you can use in your everyday studying and learning life to prevent plagiarism from occurring in the first place. Academic integrity is a *process* that we have to learn and actively cultivate.

Special Needs and Additional Resources

Accessibility

If you require accommodations for a disability or have any accessibility concerns about the course, classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible (disability.services@utoronto.ca or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>). Though you are not obligated to do so, if you are comfortable I encourage you to see me in person to discuss how we can create a learning environment that suits your needs.

Academic skills

Academic skills – research, writing, reading, studying, note-taking, citing, etc. – require much practice: we are not born with them! If you have ever put 150% effort into studying for a test and received a poor grade, you might benefit from a skills workshop on effective note-taking,

reading, or studying for tests and exams. Think of this as ongoing professional and intellectual development that will help you far beyond one course. The following U of T websites are starting resources and you are encouraged to browse them: www.writing.utoronto.ca and the Academic Skills Center <http://www.asc.utoronto.ca/>. They sometimes offer workshops, one-on-one consultations, and online resources.

Mental health and well-being

Students' mental health is a growing concern on university campuses. The Organization of University and College Health released a study in 2013 showing that a majority of undergraduates were juggling multiple mental health concerns. The U of T offers Counseling and Psychological Services to its students and you should take advantage of these services (www.caps.utoronto.ca).

English language support

For many U of T students, English is not a first language. The English Language Learning center offers support to students whose first language is not English, as well as those who consider English their first language but find formal, academic English challenging and want to improve their skills. In either case, you can find assistance here: <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell>.

Course Expectations

Attendance

You are required to attend each class. If you are not able to attend class, please let me know. Only valid reasons for not attending will be considered (e.g.: illness, emergencies, etc.), and will be assessed on an individual basis.

Participation

Participation marks are based on your attendance and the *quality (not quantity)* of engagement in lectures, group discussions and activities, and office hours. Strong participation includes demonstrating genuine engagement and effort throughout the term in all aspects of the course (ex.: interaction with your peers).

Contact and email

Office hours and weekly lectures are the best opportunities to communicate with the instructor. Take advantage of office hours and lectures to ask questions and chat about the course. Use email for short yes/no questions. Please review the syllabus, assignment hand-outs and other material on Blackboard before using email. Please only use your mail.utoronto.ca email for communicating with me, and make sure to check your U of T email account regularly. This is how I will communicate with the class and you may miss important course information if you do not check your U of T email and Portal.

Readings

Reading is an extremely important component of this class. You should allot approximately 4 hours a week to complete the readings, take notes and reflect before coming to class. Group activities in class may require you to engage in discussions on the readings. The lectures will not summarize the readings, but expand on them. You will find yourself disoriented and fall behind if you do not come to class with some grasp of the readings. By no means are you required to have a firm grasp of the readings in their entirety, as some of the readings might be challenging. But by working through these texts head-on you are developing invaluable academic, reading, and research skills.

Electronic devices

It is difficult to focus, learn, listen and engage with one another with respect if we cannot focus on one another or the course material. Laptops, tablets or equivalent are permitted in class as long as you sit at the front of class (first few rows) and you are using the device solely to take notes. You should not be connected to the internet during the class, unless it is part of the group or individual activity. If laptops and other devices become distracting or a problem over the term they will not be permitted. Phones, cameras and other electronic devices are not permitted. If you wish to record a lecture, please seek permission from me before the class begins.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings will be posted on Blackboard as PDF documents and links to UT Library sources.

Section 1 – Theoretical & Political Foundations

January 8th

L1 Introduction to labour geography

Herod, Andrew (2012). "[Workers as geographical actors](#)". *Labor History*, 53(3): 335-353

Read the course syllabus in its entirety

January 15th

L2 Making workers, labour markets and labour-power

Peck, J. (1996). Ch. 2: Making workers: Control, reproduction, regulation. In *Work-Place: The Social Regulation of Labor Markets*. New York: Guilford Press. (pp. 23-45). [PDF on course website]

Castree, Noel; Neil M. Coe; Kevin Ward; & Michael Samers. (2004). [Ch. 2: The social relations of labour: Working in a capitalist world](#). In *Spaces of Work: Global Capitalism and Geographies of Labour*. Sage. (pp. 25-62). [PDF also available on course website]

Section 2 – The Rise of Precarious & Insecure Work

January 22nd

L3 Fordism, 'standard employment', and organized labour

Harvey, David (1990). Ch. 9: From Fordism to Flexible Accumulation. In *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Blackwell. (pp. 141- 172). [PDF available on course website]

Kalleberg, Arne L. (2009). "[Precarious work, Insecure workers: employment relations in transition](#)" *American Sociological Review* 74(1): 1-22.

January 29th

L4 Neoliberalism & insecurity

Peck, Jamie (1996). Ch. 2: Flexibilizing Labor: Insecure Work in Unstable Places. In *Work-Place. The Social Regulation of Labour Markets*. Guilford. (pp. 119-152). [PDF available on course website]

Roberts, David J. & Minelle Mahtani. (2010). [Neoliberalizing Race, Racing Neoliberalism: Placing "Race" in Neoliberal Discourses](#). *Antipode* 42(2): 248–257.

February 5th

L5 Neoliberalism & social reproduction

Strauss, Kendra. (2013). [Unfree Again: Social Reproduction, Flexible Labour Markets and the Resurgence of Gang Labour in the UK](#). *Antipode*, 45(1): pp. 180–197.

McGrath, Siobhán & James DeFilippis (2009). [Social Reproduction as Unregulated Work](#). *Work*,

Employment and Society, 23(1): pp. 66-83.

Film/Song Review Due

Section 3 – Placing, Experiencing and Resisting Insecure Work

February 12th

L6 Immaterial, Service and Creative Work

McDowell, Linda. (2009). Ch. 2: The Rise of the Service Economy. In [Working Bodies: Interactive Service Employment and Workplace Identities](#). Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 25-48. [PDF also available on course website]

Bain, Alison & Heather MacLean. (2012). [The Artistic Precariat](#). *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*. 6: 93–111.

February 19th

Reading Week – No Lecture

February 26th

L7 Insecure Masculinities & Work

Cowen, Deborah & Amy Siciliano. (2011). [Surplus Masculinities and Security](#). *Antipode* 43(5): 1516–1541.

Braedley, Susan. (2010). Accidental health care: Masculinity and neoliberalism at work. In *Neoliberalism and Everyday Life*. Ed. Susan Braedley & Meg Luxton. pp. 136-166. [PDF available on course website]

March 5th

L8 Migrant Work and Global Labour Markets

Kelly, P. (2012). “Labor, Movement: Migration, Mobility and Geographies of Work”. In [The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Economic Geography](#). Ed. Barnes, T, Peck, J, and Sheppard, E., pp. 431-443. [PDF also available on course website]

Harrison, Jill L. & Sarah E. Lloyd (2012). [Illegality at work: The new productive era of immigration enforcement](#). *Antipode* 44(2): 365–385.

March 12th

L9 Organizing in an Era of Insecure Work

Chun, Jennifer J. (2009). [Ch. 1: The Symbolic Leverage of Power](#). In *Organizing at the Margins: The Symbolic Politics of Labor in South Korea and the United States*. Cornell University Press. [PDF also available on course website]

Constable, Nicole. (2006). [Migrant workers and the many states of protest in Hong Kong](#), *Critical Asian Studies* 41(1): 143-164.

March 19th

L10 Global Perspectives on Informal Work and Precarity

Lloyd-Evans, S. (2008). [Geographies of the Contemporary Informal Sector in the Global South: Gender, Employment Relationships and Social Protection](#). *Geography Compass* 2(6): 1885-1906.

Breman, Jan & Marcel Linden. (2014). [Informalizing the Economy: The Return of the Social Question at a Global Level](#), *Development & Change*, 45(5): 920-940.

Personal Labour Geographies Essay Due

March 26th

L11 Alternative Work Spaces

Cameron, Jenny (2013). [Chapter 2: Take back work: Surviving Well](#). In *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities*. Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press.

Heynen, Nik. (2009). [Bending the Bars of Empire from Every Ghetto for Survival: The Black Panther Party's Radical Anti-hunger Politics of Social Reproduction and Scale](#). *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 99(2): 406-422.

April 2nd

L12 Exam Review Week

No readings

April 8th–30th

Final Exam period

Final exam date TBA