

# Rethinking Economy (Geography 606:02, Spring 2014)

## New Meeting Time: Wednesday 9:00 – 12:00

Lucy Stone Hall, room B-120.

Instructor: Kevin St. Martin, [kstmarti@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:kstmarti@rci.rutgers.edu)

This course will begin from the proposition that **how we think about the economy matters**. Economic theory does more than describe the economy, it constitutes and actively shapes it. Dominant economic theories represent the economy as homogenous and singularly capitalist thus precluding imagining and enacting economic difference and experimentation. The course will engage with a variety of research currents across several disciplines that are rethinking economy as a diverse and decentered field rather than a single entity or dominant force. For example, economic geographers and other scholars have recently turned their attention toward “alternative economic spaces” and practices, and have done so by drawing on feminist understandings of the economy, anthropological investigations into non-capitalist economies, sociological re-workings of “the market” as a site of contingency rather than law, and post-structural critiques of “development” which posit that “another production is possible.” These are all endeavors that are working to decenter the economy as a single form or identity, and thereby reveal economic spaces and landscapes as decidedly more diverse, differentiated, and open to intervention.

In addition to new representations of economy, the course will explore the variety of experiments and alternative economic practices in motion today. It will integrate examples from the solidarity economy, fair trade, alternative food networks, cooperative production, cooperative and co-housing, reclaiming commons, and bartering and informal markets as cases of organizations, institutions, or movements that are enacting alternatives to the current economic “system.” It will read these cases for their economic difference, relationship to place, implications for community and environmental wellbeing, and transformative potential across spatial scales.

## Course Themes

- Representing and Performing Economy
- Alternative and Diverse Economies
- Poststructural Marxism
- Subjectivity, Space, and Economy
- Assembling Markets and Associating Actors
- Economies of Community and Environmental Wellbeing
- Cartography of the Commons

## Readings

Key texts for the course will include a selection from the following:

- Roelvink, G., K. St. Martin, and J. K. Gibson-Graham. Forthcoming. *Performing Diverse Economies*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Hardt, M. and A. Negri. 2011. *Commonwealth*. Belknap Press.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. 2006. *A Post-Capitalist Politics*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Callon, M. 1998. *The Laws of the Markets*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Gudeman, S. 2008. *Economy's Tension: The Dialectics of Community and Market*. Berghahn Books.
- Harvey, David. 2000. *Spaces of Hope*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Escobar, A. 2008. *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes*. Duke University Press.
- Gidwani, V. 2008. *Capital, Interrupted: Agrarian Development and the Politics of Work in India*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Andy Merrifield, 2011. *Magical Marxism: Subversive Politics and the Imagination*. Pluto Press.

Other reading will include articles as well as selections from the following volumes:

- MacKenzie, D., F. Muniesa, and L. Siu. 2007. *Do Economists Make Markets?: On the Performativity of Economics*. Princeton University Press.
- Wolff, R. and S. Resnick. 2012. *Contending Economic Theories: Neoclassical, Keynesian, and Marxian*. MIT Press.
- Douzinas, C. and S. Zizek. 2010. *The Idea of Communism*. Verso.
- Latour, B. 2007. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Fuller, D., A.E.G. Jonas, and R. Lee. 2010. *Interrogating Alterity: Alternative Economic and Political Spaces*. Ashgate.
- Ruccio, D. ed. 2008. *Economic Representations: Academic and Everyday*. Routledge.
- Gibson-Graham, J.K., S.A. Resnick, and R.D. Wolff. 2000. *Class and Its Others*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Barker, D.K. and E. Kuiper. 2003. *Toward a Feminist Philosophy of Economics*. Routledge.
- De Sousa Santos, B. 2006. *Another Production is Possible: Beyond the Capitalist Canon*. Verso.

Students will be given the opportunity to choose course readings of interest that fit into course themes throughout the course.

## Films

*Argentina's Economic Collapse*

*The Take*

*Capitalism Hits the Fan*

*Ethos: A Time for Change*

## Requirements

Students are expected to fully engage with the readings, enthusiastically participate in class discussion, and work toward integrating the material into their own research interests.

Students will be expected to write brief (1-2 page) reaction papers each week, lead discussion, and make presentations. Weekly papers should reflect upon the readings and their usefulness or relevance to each student's own work or interests. There will be written (take-home) mid-term and final exams. Exams will be an essay format and will be based on discussion questions developed in class.

All students will be required to give at least one brief presentation of their reaction to the readings and will, each week, develop questions for discussion.

**Please do not hesitate to contact Kevin St. Martin ([kstmarti@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:kstmarti@rci.rutgers.edu)) for more information about this course.**