

PS378 The Future of Work

Seminar Leader: Boris Vormann
Course Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:45-12:15
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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

The 21st century has been hailed by many scholars and policy-makers as the beginning of the urban era. Many commentators see postindustrial cities as harbingers of a knowledge-based, no-collar, sharing economy. This course focuses on urbanization patterns to explore changing divisions of labor, philosophies of work, and political arrangements in four distinct historical moments. We begin by analyzing late 18th-century debates about the spirit of commerce and visions of a harmonious society at a moment where modern states were forming. In the 19th-century context of accelerating industrialization processes, we examine how economic geographies changed with the rise of national markets—and how visions of work and urban living were revisited with them. Our discussions about the Fordist period in the mid-20th century will deal with critiques of state technocracy, political hopes for entrepreneurial revolutions, and dystopias of stagflation and suburban uniformity. In the last section on the post-industrial era we will discuss recent literatures on accelerationism, green growth and de-growth, and how these discourses are reimagining the potential of social policy and democracy—and the future of work.

Requirements

Reading material

- Class Reader (available at the library)

Class preparation

In preparation for class, read the texts thoughtfully and engage with their core argument. Take notes while reading and try to identify questions in advance: Why do the authors argue as they do? How do they raise and substantiate their claims? How does their line of argumentation relate to earlier readings and discussions in class?

Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected, as regular attendance is essential to the success of this course. There will be an attendance sheet for every session. Each absence beyond two (that is more than two absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) will lead to the subtraction of 1 point from the overall final grade. Late arrival counts as an absence. If you miss more than 30 percent of the class you cannot pass.

Assignments, Grade Breakdown and Essay Deadlines

Oral

- **Classroom Participation (2*15%)** **30%**
This seminar involves thoughtful and active participation in class discussions and working groups. This includes a persistent reflection on current events related to the course's core themes. The classroom is a protected space and you should feel free to voice your arguments and comments. Please do not hesitate to address the seminar leader if you feel that this is not the case.

- **Discussion Leads** **20%**
Discussion leads consist of three aspects:
 - a short (max. 5 minute) presentation that reflects on how a given reading ties in with earlier discussions. Does it contradict other authors? Does it contribute an entirely different perspective?
 - a short (max. 5 mins) reflection on three core themes of this course and how they are addressed in the text: the changing role of the state, the city, and the division of labor
 - a series of 3-5 questions to initiate and sustain the discussion

Written

- **10 Response Papers (each ~500 words; 10*5%)** **50%**
Each student is required to write 10 response papers (1.5-spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman) on sessions of their choice (i.e., one response paper for the session on Feb 14; three responses in each part of section II on Regimes). Response papers should include a short abstract of the primary texts' main tenets, an analysis that embeds the reading in earlier class discussions, and the articulation of one central synthetic question that engages the issues and debates addressed in the reading as a starting point for broader discussion.
 - Response papers need to be submitted in print by the beginning of the respective session.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers and Academic Integrity

Late submissions will be downgraded by 5 points, and by an additional 5 points per extra week. After four weeks of the deadline the essay cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

Schedule

Week Beginning	Tuesday	Thursday	Assignments
I. Anticipations, Geographies and Periodizations			
1 Jan 28	The Division of Labor in History To prepare, please watch this lecture and read: Graeber, <i>Bullshit Jobs</i>	***Decide on Discussion Leads*** Urban Triumphalism Graeber, <i>Triumph of the City</i>	
2 February 4	Collaborative Commons Rifkin, <i>Zero Marginal Cost Society</i>	Is this the End? Mason, <i>Postcapitalism</i>	
3 Feb 11	<i>No Class</i>	A Question of Politics? Brynjolfsson & McAfee, <i>The Second Machine Age</i>	
4 Feb 18	Economy and Time Perez, <i>Technological Revolutions</i> Freeman & Soete, <i>Industrial Innovation</i>	Economy and Space Coe et al., <i>Economic Geography</i> Massey, <i>Spatializing Modernity</i>	First Response Paper
II. Regimes			
MODERN PRODUCTION: THE EMERGENCE OF THE AMERICAN SYSTEM			
5 Feb 25	Regimes of Urbanization Ethington & Levitus, <i>Placing American Political Development</i>	The State and Industrialization Skowronek, <i>Building the American State</i>	Three Response Papers
6 March 4	The Railroad and the Corporation Chandler, <i>The Managerial Revolution & American Industrial Enterprise</i>	Mass Production Hounshell, <i>From the American System to Mass Production</i>	
7 March 11	Labor and Unionism Skocpol, <i>Protecting Soldiers and Mothers</i>	The City Restructured Warner & Whittemore, <i>American Urban Form</i>	

KEYNESIAN-FORDISM: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE NEW DEAL ORDER

8
March 18

Past Futures
Keynes, *Economic Possibilities*
Fraser, *The Labor Question*

The New Deal
Brinkley, *The Idea of the State*

9
March 25

Fordism to Flexible Accumulation
Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*

Urban Restructuring
Peck and Tickell, *Neoliberalizing Space*

10
April 1

Ending the Not Quite Golden Age
Reich, *Super Capitalism*
Cowen, *Logistics Liabilities*

Inequalities in Urban History
Marcuse, *The Partitioned City in History*

Three
Response
Papers

THE DIGITAL ECONOMY: GOVERNING POSTINDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

11
April 8

Network Society
Castells, *The Space of Flows*

Creative Cities
Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*
and watch [The New Urban Crisis](#)

Spring Break

12
April 22

The Digital Economy
Huws, *Labor in the Global Digital Economy*

Automation and Acceleration
Autor, *Why are there still so many jobs?*
Williams/Srnicek, *#Accelerate Manifesto*

13
April 29

Externalizing Costs
Patel and Moore, *Cheap Things*

Some Contradictions?
Calhoun, *What Threatens Capitalism Now?*

Three
Response
Papers

III. Possible Futures

14
May 6

Future of Capitalism
Block, *The Future of an Illusion*
Barr, *Shifting Tides*

A Green New Deal?
Mann, *The End Might be Nigh*
Aronoff, *What the Future Could look Like*