The socio-economic dynamics of capitalism today represent an important spatial re-configuration of economic relations on a world-scale. A key aspect of these processes of internationalization has been the contemporaneous development of regionalization, notably the triadic partitioning of the world economy into three major blocs: the Asian bloc centred around Japanese international production networks; the European bloc with its deepening of the supranational infrastructure of the European union and its creation of a homogenous space of value through the Euro; and the North American economic bloc dominated by U.S. economic and political hegemony and incorporating Canada and Mexico into a preferential trading bloc with a hemispheric political project of extending free trade to the rest of Latin America. While taking account of the broader processes of globalization, this course will focus upon the socio-economic forces of the three national capitals -- Canada, Mexico and the U.S. -- that constitute the North American economic bloc through the institutional and market architecture of NAFTA.

Several overarching questions should be kept in mind as we proceed through the course. How do we explain the historical and spatial trajectory of North America, as well as the uniqueness of Canadian economic decline, the paradoxes of U.S. economic power and the impasse of Mexican development? What are the key economic, political and spatial dimensions of contemporary restructuring within North America? How have the political projects of neoliberalism and economic integration of North America reinforced or altered these processes? And what are the alternative political-economic projects and social forces that might emerge to challenge the long-term structural processes that have shaped the states and societies of North America?

The organization of the seminar has two central aspects. First, each seminar takes up one of the main theoretical themes of political economy analysis, in the process contrasting Weberian approaches, in the works of such thinkers as Manuel Castells and Michael Storper, with Marxist ones, notably David Harvey and Nicos Poulantzas. Second, each theme is examined by contrasting empirical developments in the three countries. Students may, therefore, undertake research into Canada, Mexico, the U.S. or the region as a whole.

The leading journal in this field in Canada is Studies in Political Economy. Students should familiarize themselves, possibly by taking out a subscription, with its contents and debates.

In recent years, the Weberian/institutionalist research programme has become a significant challenge to Marxist accounts of the state and socio-economic restructuring. This is particularly seen in the sweeping 3 volume study of Manuel Castells, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, 1997, 1998), that attempts a totalising account of a new stage of informational capitalism. The first volume, The Rise of the Network Society, has been ordered for the course. As well, David Harvey's Limits to Capital has been ordered.
Course Requirements

Seminar Participation .............................................................. 20%
Research Problematic (based on one week’s readings)........ 20% (5-7 pp.) ....... Due: March 1
Research Essay ................................................................. 60% (20-30 pp.) .... Due: April 30

***Course Syllabus***

Introduction: Questions of Method


Part 1 Defining the Problem: Locating States in the World Economy

1. What Unit of Analysis? Markets, Socio-Spatial Fixes and National Capitalisms


2. Debates about Economic Restructuring


Harvey, *Limits to Capital*, Chs. 4-5.


3. Debates about the Capitalist State and Economic Intervention

Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, Ch. 3.


Castells, The Rise of the Network Society, Ch. 2.

Harvey, The Limits to Capital, Ch. 12.

D. Harvey, Spaces of Hope (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), Ch. 4.


Part 2 Defining the Social Formation: States, Social Classes and Economic Performance
5. Mapping the Ruling Class and its Strategies


6. The Ascendancy of Financial Capital?


Harvey, *Limits to Capital*, pp. 239-54, 284-8, 316-29.


7. **Class Re-Alignment**


E.O. Wright, *Class Counts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Ch. 3.


8. **Labour Movements, Economic Performance and Capitalism**


Part 3  Defining the Conjuncture: Spatial Processes of Restructuring


Harvey, The Limits to Capital, Ch 13.

P. Dicken, Global Shift: Transforming the World Economy, Third Edition (New York: Guilford, 1998), Part II Intro and Ch. 3.


10. Regional Spaces of Production: New Industrial Districts or Uneven Development?


11. Urban Spaces of Production: Dreams or Nightmares in World Class Cities?


GTA (Golden) Task Force, *Greater Toronto* (Toronto: Queen’s Printer, 1996), Ch. 2 and pp.159-69.


Part 4 Defining the Future: Contesting Alternatives Between Social Democracy and
12. **Strategies of Transformation and the Limits of Progressive Competitiveness**

Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, Ch. 7 and Conclusion.


