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Urban political economy Introduction and current topics

Course description and objectives:

Urban political economy provides a rigorous and enlightening framework for analyzing and theorizing the relationships between urban processes and the intersecting forces of politics and economics, particularly within the context of capitalism. Emerging as an interdisciplinary paradigm (although predominantly championed by sociologists in its early stages) in the 1970s, it supplanted the dominance of the Chicago School during the 1980s. However, it experienced a decline in the 1990s, yielding ground to the surge of post-structuralist and post-modern intellectual currents that were in vogue at the time. Yet, the emergence of globalization and financialization, alongside the disruptions stemming from the 2008 financial crisis and its aftermath—marked by widespread foreclosures in the US and austerity measures in Europe and the Global South—rekindled scholarly and political attention to this paradigm in the 2010s. Conversely, delving into these issues has prompted a reinvigoration of this mature school of thought. In this light, the course aims to provide an introductory exploration of the paradigm and of its applications in diverse situations, through the examination of its classical underpinnings and ongoing contemporary debates.

To this end, our primary activity will involve reading and engaging in discussions about various research articles and book chapters. The selected texts adhere to five distinct principles (no less).

- Firstly, while all the texts adopt an urban political economic perspective, each pair of readings address a different subject of inquiry. These encompass a range of topics, from gentrification and touristification to urban decline and public finance. Furthermore, variations emerge in their approaches towards these subjects. Some lean towards a culturalist perspective, while others emphasize the weight of politics. Still others underscore technological changes or professional practices in their analyses.
- Secondly, the majority of the texts are focused on urban development and real estate production. This decision is rooted in the belief that these topics align more closely with the interests, knowledge, and research areas of the PPGAUD (and incidentally reflects my own area of expertise).
- Thirdly, by selecting several texts published several decades ago or employing a historical approach, my intention is to access to a

deeper understanding of spatial processes over time and offer an escape from presentism.

- Fourthly, these texts have been grouped due to the numerous connections that can be made between them. This should facilitate our ability to expand our discussions from one meeting to the next, thus uncovering links and contrasts between them. In light of this, I encourage you to begin identifying these correspondences from now.
- Lastly, my humble belief is that these texts exemplify noteworthy scholarly work. As such, they serve as exemplary models worth acquainting ourselves with and following.

The class schedule is structured as follows: Beginning with an introductory session that delves into the definition and historical context of urban political economy as both a paradigm and school of thought (session 1), we will then proceed to examine two foundational works within this framework: Molotch's insights on "urban growth coalitions" and Fainstein's perspectives on "city builders" (session 2).

In the third session, we will examine how culture factors into urban political economy. This examination covers its dual significance: firstly, as a necessary complement to the political-economic analysis of urban change (as demonstrated by Zukin); secondly, as a social production best comprehended through the lens of urban political economy analytical tools (as argued by Gotham).

Moving on to the fourth session, our focus shifts to the topic of race, which plays a pivotal role not only in residential "choices" of urban populations, but also in the decisions of the *producers* of the built environment. While present in the literature, it wasn't until the 2000s—amid a broader shift in social science towards enhanced comprehension and conceptualization—that race began to be theoretically integrated into urban political economy. In this context, the works of historian D. Jenkins and geographer J. Hackworth mark steps towards that integration. In addition, Hackworth's piece offers an opportunity to delve into the distinctive phenomenon of shrinking cities, quite uncommon in the Brazilian context.

The works of sociologist S. Sassen and geographer P. Taylor on the so-called global cities have had a profound impact on our approach to analyzing urban functions and hierarchies since the 1990s. However, their focus is less on the direct material production of global cities themselves. This perspective is tackled by the analysis of political economist A. Haila in her examination of the emergence of Hong Kong as a global network hub. Venturing into the cultural domain of urban political economy, geographer K. Olds will enlighten us on how transatlantic networks of Chinese investors and real estate professionals have played a role in reshaping the downtown areas of Canada's West Coast. We will explore the writings of Haila and Olds further in the fifth session of the course.

As previously noted, the financialization of the economy—intricately linked with real estate and urban development—has sparked a global

resurgence of urban political economy since 2010. The works by Guironnet, Attuyer, and Halbert (pertaining to France), and Shimbo et al. (focused on Brazil) discussed in the sixth class, will provide insight into the mechanisms and ramifications of this captivating process that has held the field's attention for the past 15 years.

More recently, and with equal enthusiasm, the momentum within the field has shifted towards the digitalization of real estate and urban production. The chosen paper for session 7 will enable us to address this topic and, simultaneously, to further our discussion on the creation of racial segregation and financialization.

The eighth and concluding session explores the place of nature within urban political economy and the emergence of urban political ecology. "Nature's Metropolis," penned by the historian W. Cronon – incidentally, it's the best book on cities I've ever come across – offers an insightful account of the intricate relationship between the profound transformation of the Great West and the flourishing of Chicago during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the other hand, C. Leidereiter's chapter stands as an exemplary case study rooted in the framework of urban political ecology. This study will also introduce you to the topic of austerity policies' effects at the local level.

Despite its intention to encompass a broad spectrum of subjects and to provide space for geographical and gender diversity, it's evident that certain crucial aspects of urban political economy will remain unexplored within this course. One such notable omission is the pivotal role of social movements in driving urban change—an area that has been integral since the inception of this field.

Furthermore, a more pressing concern lies in the scarcity of texts representing or originating from Southern countries. This discrepancy is primarily attributed to the limitations and narrow perspective of your visiting professor, rather than a lack of interest. To address this gap, post-graduate students are wholeheartedly encouraged to introduce any references or commentaries that can help overcome this constraint and offer a more comprehensive view.

Readings:

All papers are included in reading order in the booklet. They have a typical 8000 to 10000 words length. So, consider that you will devote around three hours each week to the readings.

Course requirements:

A large part of the class consists in the readings, and perhaps re-readings if you realize after class that you missed part of what has been going on. Regular and cheerful attendance is expected and part of the evaluation. It means that you are expected to contribute not only to what you understand and appreciate, but also what you do not understand and/or hate.

Each week, a pair of students will be in charge of the in-class presentation of the readings (and topic) of the week. It should be supported by a written memo (three to five pages) briefly summarizing the main arguments of the article and raising a number of themes / questions for further discussion in class (see the in-class presentation method in the appendix).

Class schedule:

1. Introduction

- Nevarez, L., 2007, "Urban political economy", *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, G. Ritzer (Ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeosu013.pub2>
- John Walton, 1993, "Urban Sociology: The Contribution and Limits of Political Economy", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19, 301-320. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.19.080193.001505>

2. Two classics

- Molotch, H., 1976, "The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place", *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(2), 309-332.
- Fainstein S., 2001, "Economic Restructuring and Redevelopment" and "The Development Industry and Urban Redevelopment", *The city builders: Property development in New-York and London, 1980-2000*, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

3. Culture and capital

- Zukin, S. 1982, "The creation of a "loft lifestyle"", *Loft living: Culture and capital in urban change*, Baltimore: John Hopkins university press, pp. 58-80.
- Gotham, K. F. 2002, "Marketing Mardi Gras: Commodification, Spectacle and the Political Economy of Tourism in New Orleans", *Urban Studies*, 39(10), 1735-1756. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098022000002939>

4. Racialized urban capitalism

- Destin, J., 2021, "Revolt" and "Failure", *The Bonds of Inequality: Debt and the Making of the American City*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hackworth, J. (2018), "Race and the Production of Extreme Land Abandonment in the American Rust Belt", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 42: 51-73. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12588>

5. Globalization of real estate

- Haila, A., 2006, "The neglected global city builder", in *The global cities reader*, Neil Brenner and Roger Keil (dir.), London: Routledge, pp. 282-287.
- Olds, K., 2002, "Liquid Assets: Producing the Pacific Rim Consumptionscape in Vancouver, Canada" & "Liquid Images: Producing the Global Finanscape in Shanghai, PR China", *Globalization and urban change: Capital, culture, and Pacific Rim mega-projects*, Oxford: Oxford university press.

6. Financialization of urban development

- Shimbo, L., Sanfelici, D., & Martinez-Gonzalez, B., 2021, « Consultorias imobiliárias internacionais e racionalidade financeira na avaliação e gestão de imóveis em São Paulo ». *EURE*, 47(140), 221-242. <https://dx.doi.org/10.7764/eure.47.140.11>
 - Guironnet, A., Attuyer, K., & Halbert, L., 2016, “Building cities on financial assets: The financialisation of property markets and its implications for city governments in the Paris city-region”, *Urban Studies*, 53(7), 1442–1464. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098015576474>
7. *The digitalization of real estate markets*
- Fields, D., 2022, “Automated landlord: Digital technologies and post-crisis financial accumulation”, *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 54(1), 160–181. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X19846514>
 - Migozzi, J., 2023, “Digital Technology and the City: New Forms of Urban Segregation in Cape Town?”, *Metropolitics* [on line], 30 June. <https://metropolitics.org/Digital-Technology-and-the-City-New-Forms-of-Urban-Segregation-in-Cape-Town.html>
8. *From urban political economy to urban political ecology*
- Cronon, W., 1991, “Annihilating Space: Meat”, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, New York: WW Norton.
 - Leidereiter, C., 2021, “When disaster meets austerity, Environmental inequality and historical injustice during crisis”, Rita Calvário, Maria Kaika, Giorgos Velegrakis (ed.), *The Political Ecology of Austerity: Crisis, Social Movements, and the Environment*, Routledge.

Method for the in-class presentation

The presentation will consist of the presentation and discussion of the text itself (A) and the organization of a debate with the other students (B).

A. Presentation (35 minutes at least):

1. Introduction (10 min)
 - o Background:
 - Presentation of the authors (professional position, academic discipline, other notable publications, research topics)
 - Presentation of the publications (year, journal, book, etc.)
 - o Object of inquiry and research protocol:
 - Scientific debate addressed by the texts
 - Research questions and main hypotheses
 - Main concepts, including their definition, whether they are extracted from the text or issued from other sources
 - Data, sources and methods employed in the article
2. Summary highlighting the development of the argumentation and more broadly the organization of the demonstration of the articles (10 min)
3. Presentation of the main results of the articles (empirical, analytical and theoretical) (5 min)
4. Consideration of the texts' relevance, limitations, and significance within the field of urban political economy. Reflection on its connection to the class topic, as well as its relevance to cases you have studied in other classes, know about, or are researching." (5 to 10 minutes)

N.B.: the texts can be presented sequentially, but it is more stimulating for you and the audience if they are articulated in your presentation.

B. Debate (25 minutes at least):

Formulate at least 4 questions in order to launch the debate with the group. The questions can be related to theoretical issues, but also to the way in which the text(s) allow to change our vision of a place, a process or some actors, as well as cases in Fortaleza or elsewhere. You can also propose doing an activity or a game based on the texts and questions you have in mind.

Note that a 2-3 pages report on the debate will be attached to the memo.