

GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING

GPHY886 – POLITICAL ECONOMY OF URBANIZATION



Course Instructor	Dr. Dan Cohen	Email: dan.cohen@queensu.ca
Office	Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Room E302	
Contact Time	Weekly seminar (3 hours) Office hours (by appointment)	
Format	Seminar	
Class Assessment	Participation: 20% Primer and seminar presentation: 20% Critical reflections/questions: 15% Term paper proposal: 5% Term paper: 40%	

COURSE OVERVIEW

Political economic approaches to cities allow us insights into how urban areas are shaped by, and reshape, socioeconomic forces from the changing global economy to the struggles of social movements calling for justice. In this view, the urban is not only a distinct scale (e.g. a municipality) but also where economic, social, political, and environmental processes all come together as a restless and political site of change and evolution.

This discussion-based seminar introduces political economic thought and debates in urban geography for both those new to the subject and those centering it in their studies. The course reviews classic works of urban political economy and their methods of understanding cities, contemporary urban theories, and specific urban phenomena such as policymaking and urban planning, platform and smart cities, and the growing power of finance in shaping urban space.

Students will participate in weekly discussions, lead a seminar, and produce a term paper (or an alternative they propose) on the subject of their choice. No prior knowledge of political economy is required.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

To complete this course, students will demonstrate their ability to:

1. Critically review academic literature related to urban political economy.
2. Discuss current debates in urban studies and political economy.
3. Apply geographic theories to the study of an urban process.
4. Present complex concepts in written formats.

COURSE TOPICS

Topics covered may include: Theories of urban political economy; Neoliberalization, austerity, and urban governance; Racial capitalism and urban spaces; Gender, sexuality, and the city; Research methods for urban geography; Urban policymaking and planning; Financialization and marketization; Platform economies and smart cities.

SELECTED COURSE READINGS AND TEXTS

There is no textbook for this course. We will read approximately four journal articles / book chapters per week.