

SGO4604 Work and workers of the global Work-Place

Both globalization and effects of the “New Economy”, emphasizing flexibility and deregulation of labour markets, have spurred a renewed interest in labour issues in Human Geography over the past couple of decades. Focusing on varying working conditions, we discuss labour regulation and labour resistance in many very different contexts. The course draws on several contemporary discourses: Effects of globalization and neo-liberal policies on work regimes; the critique of the place of labour in neo-classical theoretical models; and the nature of contemporary capitalism and imperialism as discussed in Marxist theory. Emphasis is placed on the agency of labour; workers actively shaping conditions of their lives and of production. Examples are drawn from (among other countries) Canada, China, Great Britain, India, Namibia, Philippines, Russia, Senegal and Vietnam.

Learning outcomes

The objective of the course is to introduce to the student contemporary discourses of Labour Geography. We focus on processes of change within labour regimes in several contexts, with the following specific aims:

Aims of knowledge

- The student should be capable of identifying and analysing present-day positions, building on the understanding provided by classical and contemporary theorists in the field.
- The student should be capable, where relevant, to link intermediate and grand theories when discussing empirical examples of work and working conditions.

Aims of learning

- To improve the students’ understanding of the complexities of socio-economic change, and improve their ability to convey this complexity in writing as well as in discussions.
- To enable the student to argue *pro et con* different positions in many debates, and encourage openness to valid arguments in any paradigm.
- To enable the students to express themselves independently and with a high level of precision.

Critical approach

- The student should become a critical thinker, with a clear understanding of central concepts of the discourses.
- Working conditions and labour regimes change character according to scale of production, place and space. Through the course, the student should acquire a taste for dilemmas in labour regulation, both at the workplace and at national levels. This is a true sign of mature thinking.