

DRAFT COURSE OUTLINE

GEOG 3404: GEOGRAPHIES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WINTER 2026 [0.5 credit]

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Time and location: Wednesdays, 11:35 to 14:25, room TBA

Instructor: Pablo Mendez (pablo.mendez@carleton.ca)

Office hours: By appointment

TA Information: To be posted on Brightspace <https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/284492>

Course description

Geographical approaches to economic development and difference at local, regional, and global scales. Critical historical, cultural, social, political, economic, and environmental perspectives on 'development', including theories of the state, colonial power, development institutions, and climate change. Spatial dynamics and environmental impacts of economic activity.

Prerequisite(s): [GEOG 2200](#) or permission of the Department.

Lectures three hours a week.

Overview: Geographers describe economic development as an uneven geographical process. This is another way of saying that wealth and economic activity grow more rapidly in some regions than others. This disparity, often influenced by environmental factors like resource access, climate vulnerability, and the capacity to mitigate climate risks, can have a deep impact on the economic resilience of localities and regions: while some of these prosper, others may experience economic decline. For example, the American city of Detroit, Michigan (an economic powerhouse until the 1960s) experienced ruinous decline at the same time as the economy of California's Silicon Valley became highly dynamic and prosperous. But today, as human-induced climate change intensifies, this latter region's success is in turn threatened by expansive forest fires and long spells of drought.

GEOG 3404 examines the relationship between geography, economic systems, and environmental processes. The course critically explores the lasting impacts of colonialism on inequality, development, and Earth's climate, and investigates key concepts of economic development in orthodox economics such as productivity, wages, and economies of scale. Students will also engage with critiques of orthodox economics, including assumptions about market equilibrium and infinite growth, with attention to how economic outcomes are shaped by socio-spatial dimensions like diversity, scale, and location as well as environmental factors such as resource depletion and climate vulnerability. Through theoretical discussions and case studies, students will gain insights into how Economic Geography can inform solutions to climate change while promoting more sustainable, equitable economic futures.

Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this course will: 1) gain a geographic understanding of the concept of uneven economic development in capitalist societies; 2) become familiar with the key elements and actors involved in economic processes, including those influencing or influenced by climate impacts and sustainability efforts; 3) develop the ability to recognize and explain how economic development and environmental change create linkages (or draw on existing connections) between different places at multiple spatio-temporal scales; 4) learn about and acquire the ability to critically discuss important current issues and controversies related to this topic, including how attention to geography and climate change challenges traditional models of economic development.

Course materials

The textbooks required for this course are:

Gabe, Todd (2017) *The Pursuit of Economic Development*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. (Available online free of charge through Carleton's library. You may buy your own copy if you wish; price listed by the publisher ranges from US\$79.99 for the e-book to US\$99.99 for the soft or hard cover version, but prices may change. Use of a second-hand copy is also OK.)

Raworth, Kate (2017) *Doughnut economics: Seven ways to think like a 21st century economist*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing. (Price listed is US\$ \$22.95, but prices may change. Use of a second-hand copy or the digital version is OK. The Carleton library has a copy available online free of charge, but be aware that only three users can access it at any one time.)

Any additional readings will be available free of charge through [Ares](#), Carleton's online reserves. The syllabus and detailed information about the course will be posted on the Brightspace Course Management System.

Topics covered

Colonialism and the concept of development; Orthodox economics and economic development (Productivity and wages; Economies of scale and agglomeration economies; Job classifications; Firm size; Innovation and creative destruction); Critiques of orthodox economics (Economics and science; Homo economicus; The market equilibrium assumption; The notion of infinite economic growth).

Evaluation

Your course performance will be evaluated as follows:

Presentation & Short Essay	20%
Midterm Exams (15% each)	30%
Term Paper	40%
World Café exercise	10%

Presentation & Short Essay: You are required to research, prepare, and deliver one 10-minute group presentation in class, on one of the topics that will be provided by the instructor. Presentation dates and topics will be assigned on the second week of classes. The required group size is two students. Each group member will also be required to submit an 800-word expository essay on the topic of their presentation (you will each need to write and submit your own essay, even though you will be working on your presentation together). Essays will be due before class on presentation day. The use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT to produce assessed content is not permitted. More details about the presentation and essay requirements (including information about late submissions and extensions) will be provided in class and posted on Brightspace.

Midterm exams: The midterm exams will be delivered online on February 11 and April 1, and you are required to write them during class. There will be no lecture or presentations on those days. You may write the exams from anywhere with a reliable Wi-Fi connection. The exams will cover the lectures and the assigned readings up to the exam date. The second midterm is not cumulative. You must work alone on these exams and submit your own answers. You are not allowed to consult the textbook, your class notes, or any other materials or sources. The use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT to produce assessed content is not permitted. The exams may include multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and

written answer questions. More details (including information about late submissions and extensions) will be provided in class and posted on Brightspace.

Term paper: You will research and write a 4,000-word argumentative term paper on a topic chosen from the list of presentation topics, either the same as your presentation or a different one. Even though you will be working together with other classmates on the presentation, you will need to research and write the term paper by yourself and submit your own work. The term paper is due by March 28. The use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT to produce assessed content is not permitted. More details about the term paper (including information about late submissions and extensions) will be provided in class and posted on Brightspace.

World Café exercise: On March 25, you will participate in an in-class discussion exercise organized in a [World Café](#) format. The exercise will provide you with an opportunity to review the key themes of the course with your classmates and the instructor in a structured but informal setting. You will take notes of the discussions you participate in and use them to **prepare an individual 800-word summary to be submitted by Tuesday, March 31**. The use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT to produce assessed content is not permitted. More details about this exercise (including information about late submissions and extensions) will be provided in class and posted on Brightspace.

Grades:

Please note that email requests to “bump up” a grade will not receive a reply.

In accordance with the Carleton University Calendar, the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 56-59	F = Below 50
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56	
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D - = 50-52	

WDN = Withdrawn from the course; ABS = Student absent from final exam; DEF = Deferred (See above); FND = (Failed, no Deferred) = Student could not pass the course even with 100% on final exam.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Retain copies of work submitted

Students are strongly advised to retain a copy or electronic backup of all work submitted and be prepared to provide it to the instructor in the event of loss for any reason.

Artificial Intelligence:

For ethical, environmental, pedagogical, and mental health reasons, the use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT to produce assessed content is not permitted.

Instructional & Conduct Offences:

Instructional offences include (among other activities): cheating, contravening examination regulations,

plagiarism, and disrupting classes. Conduct offences apply in areas of discrimination and sexual harassment. Further information about University regulations which define and regulate these offences is presented in the Undergraduate Calendar: <http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/>

Note on Plagiarism:

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one’s own; and
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course.

Key to avoiding plagiarism is learning how to do research and cite sources properly. The following web site provides advice: <http://www.library.carleton.ca/help/avoid-plagiarism>

Writing tutorial service

If you feel you need assistance in improving your writing skills, you are encouraged to get in touch with the [Centre for Student Academic Support](#) (CSAS).

Academic standing and conduct

Students must familiarize themselves with the regulations concerning academic standing and conduct in the *Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar*. This document can be accessed online at: <http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/>

Requests for Academic Accommodation

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (students.carleton.ca/course-outline).

Student Life Services

Student Life Services, located in Room Nideyinàn 501, offers a range of programs and services to assist students in adjusting to academic life, in improving their learning skills, and in making academic and career decisions.

Student Mental Health

As a University student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. See for example <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>