

## **UPP 535    PLANNING FOR THE INFORMAL ECONOMY**

Time:            Mondays, 3:00pm to 5:50pm  
Location:        2232 ADH

### **Nik Theodore**

Address:        400 S. Peoria St., Suite 2100  
Telephone:     996-8378  
Fax:            996-5766  
E-mail:         [theodore@uic.edu](mailto:theodore@uic.edu)

Office hours: by appointment via email

### **Course Description**

The re-emergence of the informal economy in U.S. cities is part of wider processes of informalization that are remaking employment relations in the U.S., where the casualization of work, the extension of production subcontracting relationships, and the weakening of government regulatory oversight are now well established trends. There has been a tendency to regard informal work practices such as day labor, street vending, and care work in the home as isolated phenomena that are the preserve of recent migrants, many of whom lack legal immigration status. This association between informal economic activities and undocumented migration is perhaps warranted, given that the reemergence and growth of the informal economy has coincided with the imposition of neoliberal reforms throughout the global South, policies that have shaken the foundation of many national economies, destabilized traditional modes of family support, and catalyzed unprecedented levels of transnational migration. But an overemphasis on “push” factors that contribute to rising levels of undocumented migration, and the spread of informality, is too simplistic. The reemergence of informality in the U.S. is part and parcel of the breakdown of established employment institutions that have placed a floor under wages and working conditions. Informalization—which has been most pronounced in low-wage industries and occupations—has facilitated the absorption of migrants and other new entrants into U.S. labor markets, and has exerted a powerful “pull” that has drawn migrants and other low-wage workers into certain sectors of the economy. Migrants, particularly those who lack legal status, increasingly are the “workers of choice” for employers seeking to cut costs and flexibilize their workforce, while a range of U.S.-born job seekers who face employment barriers (e.g., ex-offenders, the long-term unemployed) also have turned to jobs that have been substantially informalized. It is against this backdrop that the informal economy has been flourishing in the United States.

This course will examine these wide-ranging developments from an urban planning perspective. Drawing on scholarship from a range of disciplines including urban political economy, women’s studies, anthropology, sociology, and urban planning, the course will explore the changing contours of informality in U.S. cities. We will consider how the interplay between labor market dynamics, state regulation, and socioeconomic marginalization has produced and maintained informality, as well as assess attempts to re-regulate the informal economy through community organizations, planning, and alternative economic practices.

## **Grading**

Research paper	50%
Attendance and participation`	30%
Final presentation	20%

*Late assignments will not be accepted.*

## **Course Objectives**

By the conclusion of this course, students should have:

- Developed an understanding of different approaches to conceptualizing informal economic activity, and be able to assess the appropriateness of various urban planning approaches to the challenges posed by informality.
- Built the foundations for critically assessing the growth and role of informal economic activity in major U.S. cities and elsewhere.
- Formulated ideas about medium- and long-term approaches to managing conflicts arising from economic informality.

The class will be organized using a seminar-style format. Needless to say, students will be expected to come to class having done the readings so that they can fully participate in the discussion. In addition, one week during the semester, students will work in pairs to lead the class discussion. Taking ownership of your education in these ways will not only help you find a potentially unique angle to an ongoing critical issue, it will train you to participate more meaningfully in the conversations that are occurring within the planning field.

The final assignment will be a research paper on a topic of students' choosing. The paper should be approximately 20 pages in length and it should conform to conventional academic citation formats. Group projects will also be considered, but project teams will need to provide a short proposal that outlines the topic and the participating students' division of responsibilities. Students will share their research papers in a final presentation at the end of the semester.

## **Academic Integrity**

All students should consult CUPPA's academic integrity policy in the current student handbook:

[http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/upp/current\\_students/handbooks/MUPP%20Handbook%202010-11.pdf](http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/upp/current_students/handbooks/MUPP%20Handbook%202010-11.pdf)

## Course Schedule

**January 10** Course introduction: planning and the informal economy

**January 17** Martin Luther King holiday – No class.

Readings: Roy, Ananya (2005). “Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning.” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71(2), 147-158.

Briassoulis, Helen (1997). “How the Others Plan: Exploring the Shape and Forms of Informal Planning.” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 17, 105-117.

Faruk Tabak (2000) “Introduction: Informalization and the Long Term,” in Faruk Tabak and Michaeline A. Crichlow, eds., *Informalization: Process and Structure*, pp. 1-14. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

**January 24** Defining and measuring the informal economy

Readings: Chen, Martha, Joann Vanek and James Heintz (2006) “Informality Gender and Poverty: A Global Picture,” *Economic and Political Weekly* (May 27): 2131-2139.

Castells, Manuel and Alejandro Portes (1989) “World Underneath: The Origins, Dynamics, and Effects of the Informal Economy,” in Alejandro Portes, Manuel Castells, and Lauren A. Benton, eds., *The Informal Economy: Studies in Advanced and Less Developed Countries*, pp. 11-37. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Alderslade, Jamie, John Talmage and Yusef Freeman (2006) *Measuring the Informal Economy – One Neighborhood at a Time*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.

**January 31** Informality, informalization and the erosion of labor standards

Readings: Benería, Lourdes and Maria Floro (2005) “Distribution, Gender, and Labor Market Informalization: A Conceptual Framework with a Focus on Homeworkers,” in Neema Kudva and Lourdes Benería, eds., *Rethinking Informalization: Poverty, Precarious Jobs and Social Protection*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University.

Chen, Martha (2007) “Rethinking the Informal Economy: Linkages with the Formal Economy and the Formal Regulatory Environment,” DESA Working Paper #46.

Ascoly, Nina and Chantal Finney (2005) “The Shifting Patterns of Women’s Work: Informalisation Sweeps the Global Garment Industry,” in Nina Ascoly and Chantal Finney, eds., *Made by Women: Gender, the Global Garment Industry and the Movement for Women Workers’ Rights*. Clean Clothes Campaign.

## February 7    **Informality and the State**

Readings: Centeno, Miguel Angel and Alejandro Portes (2006). “The Informal Economy in the Shadow of the State,” in Patricia Fernández-Kelly and Jon Shefner, eds., *Out of the Shadows: The Informal Economy and Political Movements in Latin America*, pp. 23-48. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Cross, John C. and Sergio Peña (2006) “Risk and Regulation in Informal and Illegal Markets,” in Patricia Fernández-Kelly and Jon Shefner, eds., *Out of the Shadows: The Informal Economy and Political Movements in Latin America*, pp. 49-80. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Quijano, Aníbal (2000) “The Growing Significance of Reciprocity from Below: Marginality and Informality under Debate,” in Faruk Tabak and Michaeline A. Crichlow, eds., *Informalization: Process and Structure*, pp. 133-165. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

## February 14    **Neoliberalism and informality**

Readings: Itzigsohn, José (2006) “Neoliberalism, Markets and Informal Grassroots Economies,” in Patricia Fernández-Kelly and Jon Shefner, eds., *Out of the Shadows: The Informal Economy and Political Movements in Latin America*, pp. 81-96. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Broad, Dave (2000) “The Periodic Casualization of Work: The Informal Economy, Casual Labor, and the *Longue Durée*,” in Faruk Tabak and Michaeline A. Crichlow, eds., *Informalization: Process and Structure*, pp. 23-46. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Sassen, Saskia (2000) “The Demise of Pax Americana and the Emergence of Informalization as a Systemic Trend,” in Faruk Tabak and Michaeline A. Crichlow, eds., *Informalization: Process and Structure*, pp. 91-115. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Regini, Mario (2000) “The Dilemmas of Labor Market Regulation,” in Gøsta Esping-Anderson and Mario Regini, eds., *Why Deregulate Labor Markets?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## February 21    **Understanding the spread of informal work practices in the U.S.**

Readings: DeFilippis, James, Nina Martin, Annette Bernhardt, and Siobhán McGrath (2009) “On the Character and Organization of Unregulated Work in the Cities of the United States,” *Urban Geography* 30(1): 63-90.

Ascoly, Nina (2005) “Introduction: Why Gender is Important,” in Nina Ascoly and Chantal Finney, eds., *Made by Women: Gender, the Global Garment Industry and the Movement for Women Workers’ Rights*. Clean Clothes Campaign.

Reyes, Diane S. (2005) "Costs Beyond the Workplace: The Toll on Women Workers' Lives," in Nina Ascoly and Chantal Finney, eds., *Made by Women: Gender, the Global Garment Industry and the Movement for Women Workers' Rights*. Clean Clothes Campaign.

Lee, Kimi and Nina Ascoly (2005) "Women on the Move: Gender and Labour Mobility in the Global Garment Industry," in Nina Ascoly and Chantal Finney, eds., *Made by Women: Gender, the Global Garment Industry and the Movement for Women Workers' Rights*. Clean Clothes Campaign.

## **February 28 Migration, immigration policy and the informal economy**

Readings: Massey, Douglas S., Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone (2002) Chapter 4 of *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Muñoz, Carolina Bank (2007) "The Tortilla Behemoth: Sexualized Despotism and Women's Resistance in a Transnational Mexican Tortilla Factory," in Amalia L. Cabezas, Ellen Reese, and Marguerite Waller, eds., *The Wages of Empire: Neoliberal Policies, Repression, and Women's Poverty*, pp. 127-139. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Mellon, Cynthia (2007) "Roses, Thorns, and Seven Dollars a Day: Women Workers in Columbia's Export Flower Industry," in Amalia L. Cabezas, Ellen Reese, and Marguerite Waller, eds., *The Wages of Empire: Neoliberal Policies, Repression, and Women's Poverty*, pp. 140-151. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Sassen, Saskia (2002) "Global Cities and Survival Circuits," in Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, eds., *Global Women: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, pp. 254-274. New York: Metropolitan Books.

## **March 7 No class this week.**

Readings: Chen, Martha Alter, Renana Jhvala and Frances Lund (2002) *Supporting Workers in the Informal Economy: A Policy Framework*. Geneva: International Labour Office.

Bayat, Asef (2004) "Informalization and the Politics of the Informals in the Global South," in Ananya Roy and Nezar Alsayyad, eds., *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia*, pp. 79-102. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Zarembka, Joy M. (2002) "America's Dirty Work: Migrant Maids and Modern-Day Slavery," in Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, eds., *Global Women: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, pp. 142-153. New York: Metropolitan Books.

- March 14**      **Day labor and the restructuring of the construction industry**
- Erlich, Mark and Jeff Grabelsky (2005). "Standing at a Crossroads: The Building Trades in the Twenty-First Century." *Labor History* 46(4): 421-445.
- Valenzuela, Abel (2003) Day Labor Work. *Annual Review of Sociology* 29: 307-333.
- March 21**      **Spring Break – No class.**
- March 28**      **Local policy options: banning or planning?**
- Readings:      Los Angeles "Day Labor Center Ordinance" (2008).
- Day Labor Research Institute (2001). *Day Labor in San Rafael, California: The Feasibility of Uniting Contradictory Positions*. Boise, ID: Day Labor Research Institute.
- April 4**        **Street vending**
- Readings:      Bromley, Ray (2000) "Street Vending and Public Policy: A Global Review," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 20: 1-29.
- Bhowmik, Sharit K. (1999) *Hawkers and the Urban Informal Sector: A Study of Street Vending in Seven Cities*. National Alliance of Street Vendors of India.
- April 11**      **Migrant civil society: alternative institutions and the social regulation of informality**
- Gordon, Jennifer (2007) "Transnational Labor Citizenship," *Southern California Law Review* 80(3): 503-588.
- Poo, Ai-jen and Eric Tang (2005) "Center Stage: Domestic Workers Organizing in the Global City," in Sarumathi Jayaraman and Immanuel Ness, eds., *The New Urban Immigrant Workforce: Innovative Models for Organizing*, pp. 105-118. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe.
- April 18**      **Student presentations**
- April 25**      **Student presentations**