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GRG 374—Frontiers in Geography
Fall 2011

Course Description

Geography 374 is designated as a "capstone experience" for students majoring in geography. Taken from the name of the stone placed atop a wall or structure that marks its completion (the opposite of a cornerstone), "capstone" means crowning achievement or culmination. In other words, then, this class is supposed to signify the "culmination" of your undergraduate career as a geographer. But what does that mean? For me, it means that this course tries to provide a structure, a space, and time for thinking holistically about geography: what is the role of geography, geographers, and geographical inquiry in the context of the wider world, especially in relation to social change? You likely have spent your time as an undergraduate learning about various theories and methods of geography (and, in the process, learning about the world and how different physical and social aspects of it work). This class now gives you the opportunity to step back and think about questions like, What is geography? What role does it play in society? How did it emerge? Why is it located in a university? What is it for? In order to get at some of these questions, the class is organized around three projects:

The central core of the course will consist of working with Workers Defense Project/Proyecto Defensa Laboral (PDL), a community-based organization that works with immigrants on labor issues. Students will develop small research projects that help PDL meet their goal of serving people in the Austin area. We will learn about PDL and about the issues they are working on. This will help further our discussions about what geography is. Work in this part of the class will consist of the research outcome (a report, map, data base, etc.), and an in-class presentation on the project.

During the middle part of the course we will enter into a conversation about the relationship between geography and the social world. We will read and discuss various pieces about geography, its history, its purpose, and its engagements with the world, culminating in a position paper.

The final part of the course will focus on writing formal research and grant proposals. We will learn how to search for funding agencies, what goes into a proposal, how to write them, and what exactly they're for. Students will identify a funding agency and write an appropriate proposal for a project of their choosing. Students will be required to produce an outline of their project early on, as well as to submit and revise a rough draft.

An important aspect of this course grade is student engagement with and participation in class activities and discussions. Serious engagement with the issues of the course, as shown through thorough preparation and regular participation in class, is of paramount importance. This class is about coming to your own understanding of geography and the geographer's place in the world; therefore, without active engagement, you will get little from this course.

This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. (Language from the Center for the Core Curriculum.)

Texts

All readings are available online through Blackboard.

Assignments and Requirements

Community research project	30%
Position paper	20%
Grant Proposal	20%
Participation	10%
Peer Responding	10%
Response and reflection papers	10%

Other Policies

• Late papers will lose one grade for every day late (including weekends).
• I do not accept papers via email.
• No laptops, cell phones, or text messaging in class.
• Attendance: **Beginning with the fourth, you will lose one-third of a grade for each absence.**

Grading and Workload

University guidelines state that "for each hour a class meets, an average of two additional hours of preparation is expected of the student." This class meets three hours a week, which means that you should expect about six hours of out-of-class work per week. Please remember that grades are defined by university policy in the following manner: "A (excellent), B (above average), C (average), D (pass), and F (failure)."

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of using someone else's words or ideas and passing them off as your own. It constitutes a serious breach of academic honesty and can result in a failing grade or expulsion from school. If you consult with or use any sources (essays, encyclopedias, websites, books, magazines, etc.), you must acknowledge them in your paper. Please be aware of university policies on academic integrity.

Students with Disabilities or Special Needs

One of the goals of this course is to create an environment which encourages and allows all students to participate in and benefit from class activities. Students with disabilities and/or special needs will be reasonably accommodated in this regard. If you have a disability or special need, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities (http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/).

The Undergraduate Writing Center

The Undergraduate Writing Center provides individual advice on all aspects of writing to UT undergraduates on a drop-in basis or by appointment. I encourage you to take advantage of this resource.

• Location: Flawn Academic Center 211, phone 471-6222.
• More info, including the current semester's hours, at http://uwc.utexas.edu/

A Few Comments

I cannot stress this enough: Communicate with me! Please ask for help when you need it. If you are having problems, let me know *early*, and I will do what I can to help. I have weekly office hours, which are times when I am specifically available for students. By all means, come and talk to me about any concerns or problems you have with any aspect of this course—or just stop by to talk about ideas and issues raised in class. Feedback (positive and negative) about the course is always welcome, and I'm happy to consider ideas you may have for improving the course along the way. I am also available at other times; just ask!

Class Participation Rubric

A

Student consistently takes an active role in class, participating regularly in discussions, volunteering thoughts, asking thoughtful questions, and defending opinions. Comments consistently draw on the assigned readings, demonstrating a thoughtful and thorough engagement with the texts, while moving discussion forward and building on comments by other students or the instructor. Student does not monopolize discussion, but is also a thoughtful listener, fostering participation by others.

B

Student sometimes takes an active role in class, sharing relevant ideas and asking appropriate questions. Student contributes to class discussions and listens to their classmates with respect. As a result of having completed assigned reading, these students are prepared to answer questions when called upon.

C

Student occasionally takes an active role in class, participating and asking questions infrequently. Student hesitates to share ideas and may not always listen to or respect the opinions of others. Student usually participates only when called upon. As a result of not having completed the assigned reading, student may not be prepared to answer thoughtfully with detail or substance.

D

Student rarely takes an active role in class, rarely participating in discussion and rarely sharing ideas or asking questions. Student displays poor listening skills and may show disrespect for others. As a result of being unprepared for or disengaged from class, student may fail to offer ideas even when called upon. When student does participate, comments may detract from the progress of the discussion or repeat points already covered.

Course Schedule

	Date	Topic	Reading/Major Due Dates
Week 1	Th 8/25	Course Introduction	
Week 2	T 8/30 Th 9/1	Your experience as a geographer What is geography?	**Response Paper #1 due** Unwin 1, Websites, Murphy
Week 3	T 9/6 Th 9/8	Immigration & labor Immigration & workers centers	Moody, Ness, Theodore & Martin Gordon, Fine
Week 4	T 9/13 Th 9/15	The construction industry & PDL The construction industry & PDL	Building Austin, Building Injustice (PDL websies) **Visit by Emily Timm, PDL**
Week 5	T 9/20 Th 9/22	History of Geography History of Universities	Unsin 2, Merrett Lohmann, Heyman
Week 6	T 9/27 Th 9/29	History of Social Science Geography & Policy	Riis, Addams Peck, Owens
Week 7	T 10/4 Th 10/6	Activism & the Academy Participatory Action Research	Blomley, Collins Cahill, Shaw
Week 8	T 10/11 Th 10/13	Teaching/Scholarship Construction research	Hay, Mitchell **Research Plan Due**
Week 9	T 10/18 Th 10/20	Construction research Introduction to Grants/Proposals	**Reading Journal/Position Paper due** Miner Ch 1 & 16, Punch Ch2, Miner short guide
Week 10	T 10/25 Th 10/27	Funding Sources Funding Sources	Miner Ch 2, 3,4 (RFL trip somewhere in here)
Week 11	T 11/1 Th 11/3	What's in a Proposal? Proposal Plan Due	Punch Ch 6, Miner Ch 5-14
Week 12	T 11/8 Th 11/10	Construction Research Construction Research	**Const. research draft due**
Week 13	T 11/15 Th 11/17	Proposal Writing Workshops Proposal Writing Workshops	
Week 14	T 11/22 Th 11/24	Writing Workshops Thanksgiving	**Proposal draft due**
Week 15	T 11/29 Th 12/1	Presentations Presentations, Course Wrap-up	**Construction Research due** **Reflection paper due**
	Fri 12/10		**Proposal due**