

Frontiers in Geography
(GRG 374)

Syllabus for Fall Semester, 2011

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Class Hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 11.00-12.15
Office Hours: Tuesday, 1.00-3.00 or by appointment.

A. *Course Purpose and Objectives*

This course is called *Frontiers in Geography*, which the Department of Geography and the Environment expects to be a capstone experience. Capstone can be interpreted in a variety of ways and the faculty of our department have tried many of them while teaching this course, based to a great extent upon their own respective personal and academic histories, styles, personalities, and general sense of what is important and what is not. None of them are wrong. The route I have chosen emphasizes the ‘practice of being a geographer’ as the capstone experience. What does this mean? It means that we want to think about the engagements between what we shall call your ‘daily lived practices’ and the many nature(s) of geography; my goal is to help you think about geographies of the everyday, both personal and professional, although the two can never be totally separated. The result is a mnemonic of sorts, whereby so much of what you experience reminds you of why you are a geographer, while at the same time the engagement will help you to interpret the world around you with a greater knowledge, curiosity, and appreciation. Will it make you a better citizen? That one is ultimately your choice, but let’s hope for the best. So, going back to the ‘frontiers’ part, my vision of capstone is one possible frontier. I will try to ensure that it is a substantive set of views that will stay with you a while.

The specific objectives of this course that are intended to contribute toward this broader practice are: 1) to use your experience in Geography to construct a substantive research project, which will be in written and presented forms (much more on this later); 2) to get a sense of the nature of the university as geography’s home, while including conversations of ethics, social justice, liberal arts, and other major issues facing the university community as it engages with the world at large; 3) to become familiar with Geography as a discipline; and 4) to talk about engagements of you, geography, and the job world.

B. *Subject Itinerary*

The amount of time taken for each of these subjects will vary. I do not provide the specific amount of time spent on each, because given this is a seminar format the time spent may vary

according to class interest and even to current events, which is especially true of issues concerning the University.

- 1) Overview of the nature of the discipline—“what is geography?”—and how these views can inform and help me write my final paper! To some extent this is a summary of what you have been doing for the last few years and to some extent it is an opportunity to stress one professor’s favorite geo-subject: Place.
- 2) Ways in which Geography can help illuminate contemporary settings and practices, using the example of tourism. Discuss research subject and papers.
- 3) Geography as a discipline: history, associations, journals, and departments.
- 4) What is the contemporary relevance of what we do? Where do geographers go?
- 5) Where do *you* go from here? Practical matters: looking for a job in a lousy market, applying, the resume, interviewing. Graduate school?
- 6) Structure and practice of the University, especially in a contentious era; issues of note at the national, state, and UT levels.

C. Grading

Shorter papers	25 percent of total grade
Final paper/presentation	40 percent of total grade
Participation*	25 percent of total grade
Final Examination	10 percent of total grade

*includes attendance

D. Final Paper and Presentation

All the issues outlined below will be discussed in detail on several occasions throughout the semester from this moment forward.

Subject

This paper should be concerned with a Geography of Tourism subject of your choice, although the setting must be within the state of Texas. As you will see, ‘tourism’ will be broadly defined, so there are many subjects at hand. The emphasis may be from within any geographic perspective with which you are comfortable, although use of the concept of place as we have outlined it is a good ‘default’ place to start, given that we will be talking about it in detail. Creativity is encouraged—some of you may want to ‘think outside the box’—and the subject should certainly be interesting to you and colleagues, but ultimately this must be a solid and valid piece of geographic research. From this point forward I will be talking with you collectively and individually about your project and the ways you choose to study it.

Paper

Length: 12-15 pages double spaced, 12 font, Times Roman, standard margins (1"x1 1/2"). Inclusion of photographs and graphics is encouraged, but these do not count as part of the paper's length.

Reference Format: Your choice (MLA, etc.), but be consistent.

References: You should have at least ten 'academic' references, although this can include articles we have used in class. You must cite all references used; if you borrow from the web, you must cite your references accordingly.

Subject: This paper should be concerned with a Geography of Tourism subject of your choice, although the setting must be within the state of Texas. As you will see, 'tourism' will be broadly defined, so there are many subjects at hand. The emphasis may be from within any geographic perspective with which you are comfortable, although use of the concept of place as we have outlined it is a good 'default' place to start, given that we will be talking about it in detail. Creativity is encouraged—some of you may want to 'think outside the box'—and the subject should certainly be interesting to you and colleagues, but ultimately this must be a solid and valid piece of geographic research. From this point forward I will be talking with you collectively and individually about your project and the ways you choose to study it.

Due Date: Last day of class, Thursday, December 1 at 11.00. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Presentation

The presentation is required of all students and should be comprised of the same content as your paper. It must be professionally presented in structure, style, tone, and quality. It must not be read, although reading an occasional quote is appropriate; notes on cards are fine. Power point is presumed in most cases. At the same time, it should tell the same tale you give in your paper. It should be 12-15 minutes in length; practice ahead so you know how much time you'll take.

E. Readings

You will be assigned articles during the semester; they will be made available to you by a variety of e-methods. There is no textbook. You will also be expected to search for references immediately relevant to your research project.

F. Rules—Please Read VERY Carefully

1) This course will be taught in a seminar format, and so everyone is expected to participate fully. This means that all written work and preparation (readings, etc.) must be done on time, that you participate in our conversations in a substantive way, and that you attend class regularly.

2) So, attendance is expected; less than ideal attendance is likely to have a negative impact on your

grade. Please be on time. Consistent tardiness will count toward non-attendance.

3) Do not ask for my notes or assignments if you miss a lecture. Get to know your colleagues; share. This is not a zero-sum game.

4) Late assignments are not accepted. Plan ahead.

5) All written assignments must be typed and proofed for spelling, typographical errors and major grammatical mistakes.

6) You are expected to complete the readings by the assigned times. There will be classroom discussions of the contents and implications of all that we read, so be prepared.

7) Please, no food, side conversations, or gum popping (argh!!) during class. Cell phones are never to be used in this classroom, including texting. This is a cell phone-free zone, so be sure to turn those puppies off before you enter the room.

8) It is appropriate to use laptops in this class. That said, PLEASE, no surfing unrelated to our class, and no emailing, texting, polishing up your Facebook account etc. during class hours.

9) I expect everyone to use e-mail as a form of communication for this class. I communicate regularly by that medium and I expect you to do the same. Normally, I will respond to queries and comments within 24 hours.

10) The 'system' requires me to say : "Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>"

11) The 'system' requires me to say: "By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence."

12) Everyone is expected to know, accept, and practice the basics of honesty and integrity in all personal and professional dealings in this class. The official notice says that I should post the "UT Honor Code(or statement of ethics) and an explanation or example of what constitutes plagiarism (Link to University Honor Code: <http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html>)"

13) And remember, the university's standards of non-discrimination and sexual harassment apply to ALL university participants, from students to the president to staff. Let's discuss this.

14) Finally, whining is not tolerated.