

GRG 374: Frontiers in Geography: Fall 2009: Tues/Thurs. 12.30-2 pm in GRG 408.

The course provides majors with the opportunity to think about and discuss the methods and objectives that define geography in order to establish a sense of professional awareness and disciplinary identity. The course will familiarize participants with the history of geographical inquiry; explore current issues in research, and the directions in which the discipline is heading. This exposure means reading widely, reviewing and critiquing ideas and methods in order to formulate a personal philosophy of geography.

Frontiers is the opportunity for those who are graduating to integrate materials and ideas from different classes and tracks into in a larger framework, including applied geography. Who are you as a geographer? How do you look at the world from a holistic, ethical and technical point of view? Can these viewpoints be made compatible? Accept this challenge, and use it as a unique opportunity to reflect on your accomplishments and burgeoning identity as a citizen of Austin, Texas, the US, and global community. Use the readings as a starting point for thinking about the personal and professional contributions you are going to make toward resolving the range and scale of environmental issues in today's world. What topics or ideas in the major you have selected excite you and how do you convey your curiosity and commitment to colleagues and friends?

Please come to class prepared. This is your seminar, and it is important that YOU prepare to summarize and critique the essays thoughtfully. Constructive, energetic, and imaginative discussion is vital if this course is to succeed.

It is YOUR course: I shall be its moderator: So don't allow me to speak much.

Discussion will be framed around various topics covered by the readings. As you peruse the materials ask yourself two questions.

- 1. What is the author telling me about my discipline?**
- 2. What are the strengths and weakness of the particular essay? Referring both to content and argument, how do I make my own assessment convincing? Remember an opinion must be based on factual evidence and reasoned discussion, not merely upon belief or opinion.**

This course fulfills a Substantial Writing Component. Assigned papers must be typed, double-spaced, with consistent footnotes and references (unless otherwise instructed).

Any assignment that is turned in late is automatically reduced by one letter grade.

Office Hours. GRG 228 before and after class.

Grading

- 1. Class attendance and participation (25%) MORE THAN THREE CLASS ABSENCES WILL RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC LETTER GRADE REDUCTION**
- 2. A 2-3-page essay that answers ONE of the questions posed for class discussion (30%)** Bring the essay to class and refer to it to support and articulate your position. Submit a total of **six (5% each)** topics of your own choosing for the entire course. Hand in each one the day after we discuss the topic. I will edit, comment, and return each submission to you. *You may resubmit an assignment at any time until the last day of class.* Just mark the paper as a RESUBMIT with initial title, and I will regrade it.
- 3. Three pages about Geographical Periodicals (due Sept. 16) (5%)**
- 4. West Mall commentary (Sept. 25) (5%)**

5. If you were to design a course titled “**Geography of ----**” what would it consist of? **Provide a one-page handout for the class (15%).**
6. When people ask, “What do you do as a geographer?” what do you say (3-5 pages)? Provide an explanation of the discipline: your own philosophy of geography that dispels the usual, simple notions about memorizing world capitals **(20%)**

Aug 27 Thurs: Introductory Remarks: a written paragraph.

Sept. 1 Tues: Traditions of Geography.

- Pattison, William. 1964, “The Four Traditions of Geography,” *Journal of Geography* 63, 211-16. <http://pcift.chadwyck.com/pcift/search>
- Gober, Patricia. 2000. “In Search of Synthesis,” *Annals AAG*.91: 1-11.

Discussion

- Summarize Pattison, justify the “tradition” you prefer, and show how Gober’s synthesis affects your tradition.

Sept. 3 Thurs: Traditions of Geography

Meinig, Donald W. “Geography as an Art.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 8 (1983): 314-28 <http://www.jstor.org/journals/00202754.html>

- Stilgoe, John R. 1998. *Outside Lies Magic*, 1-5.

Discussion

Assess Meinig’s position, and compare it with assumptions about the meaning of the discipline in other classes you have taken.

Does Stilgoe reinforce the main argument that Meinig is making or not?

Sept. 8 Tues: No class

- Consult a recent issue of a Geographical periodical, such as the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *Geographical Review*, *Historical Geography*, *Progress in Human Geography*, or a similar professional journal.
- Select ONE article that catches your attention in TWO different issues of the journal you select, and use them both to expand/deepen/diverge from one of Pattison’s Traditions
- **FOR CLASS DISCUSSION List the article title and journal you consulted AND IN TURNING IT IN follow the format OF CITATIONS YOU FIND IN THAT JOURNAL (5%).**

Sept. 10 Thurs: Discussion of Findings.

Use what you have learned in your PCL exploration, and from CLASS commentary to hand in a final version on Sept. 15.

Sept. 15 Tues: The Scope: Cultural (or M-L) Geography.

- Sauer, Carl O. 1941. “Foreword to Historical Geography,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 31, 1-24. <http://www.jstor.org/journals/00045608.html>
- Cosgrove, Denis, “Geography is everywhere.”
- Meinig, Donald. 1979. “The Beholding Eye,” in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscape* (New York: Oxford), pp. 33-47.

Discussion

- What is “historical” geography and why does Sauer believe it important? Do you consider his misgivings about US Midwest geography actually what we would now call an attack on GIS?

- Summarize Cosgrove and Meinig, and decide whether they add to Sauer's statement about Geography? (That is, what does he leave out that they include?)

Sept. 17 Thurs: Human-Land Issues: Agents of Environmental Change.

- Speth, William W. 1977, "Carl Ortwin Sauer on Destructive Exploitation," *Biological Conservation* 11, 145-160.
- Nye, David E. 2003. "Technology, Nature and American Origin Stories," *Environmental History* 8:1: 8-24.
- Using Speth, to which Master Narrative (Nye) does Sauer belong? How do we contribute to the debate about environmental change?

Sept. 22 Tues: West Mall Discussion—turn in essay (5%).

Having visited the West Mall through one of Meinig's "eyes", report your experiences and assessment. Title your essay and turn it on Sept. 24.

Sept. 24 Thurs: Human Agency and Post-Colonial Structures.

- Mikesell, Marvin. W. 1960. "Deforestation in Northern Morocco," *Science*.
- Davis, D.K. 2004, "Indigenous Knowledge..." *Geoforum*
http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=JournalURL&_cdi=5808&_auth=y&_acct=C000059713&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=108429&md5=bb05f404901ce65bc415ffc35f647582

Discussion

- How does Mikesell frame the environmental history of Morocco (summarize) and its ecological issues? Does Davis (briefly summarize) agree or disagree with him? Is her assessment more or less convincing: explain your position.

Sept. 29 Tues: Human-Land Perception: Deep Ecology and Geography.

- White, Lynn. 1967. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155, p 1203
<http://www.jstor.org/journals/00368075.html>
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1976. "Geopietry: Man's Attachment to Nature."
- Merchant, Carolyn. 1992. "Deep Ecology," in *Radical Ecology*.

Discussion

- The so-called White debate sparked twenty years or more of discussion about how religious beliefs relate to in environmental activity. Is such a topic of value geography?
- Does Merchant point out new directions for us as geographers: indicate three directions that you would want to defend; maybe Tuan helps here?

Oct. 1 Thurs: Spatial Tradition: City and Metropolis.

Baudrillard, J. 1985. "Vanishing Point," in *America* (NY: Verso) extracts.

- Soja, Edward. 1989. "Taking Los Angeles Apart: Towards a Postmodern Geography," in *Postmodern Geographies*.

Discussion

- What insights does Baudrillard's analysis afford in terms commentary and scale, and does Soja's essay agree with his characterization of space?
- Can you, "Take Austin Apart"? Provide a sketch map and commentary.

Oct. 6 Tues: Spatial Traditions: Expressions of Social Power

- Harvey, David. 1979. "Monument and Myth," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 69:3,362-81. <http://www.jstor.org/journals/00045608.html>
- Stratford, Elaine. 2002, "On the Edge: a Tale of Skaters and Urban Governance," *Social and Cultural Geography* 3/2, 193-206.

Discussion

- How do Harvey (summarize) and Stratford (summarize) invest urban spaces with political and social power? What are the strengths of their arguments, and what do they omit or ignore? Is what they say relevant to the American experience?

Oct. 8 Thurs: Biophysical Processes: Biogeography and Resource Management

- Cowell, M., and A.J. Parker, 2004. "Biogeography in the Annals," *Annals AAG*
- Young, K. and K. Zimmerer, 1998. *Biological Conservation in Developing Countries*

Discussion

- What is biogeography, and how do biogeographical issues differ from resource/economic geog.?
- Assess the case Young and Zimmerer make for conservation in the Third World?

Oct. 13 Tues: Attitudes toward the Environment: Conservation and Historical Ecology

- Doughty, R.W. 2000. "Conclusion," in *The Eucalyptus: A Natural and Commercial History*.
- Popper, Deborah and Popper, Frank 1999. "The Buffalo Commons: metaphor as method," *Geographical Review* 89:4, 491-510.

Discussion

- What does conservation really mean for geographers? What training do we need to have? Draw from the resources track you have been exposed to assess Doughty. Is the buffalo commons suggestion merely a sidetrack from serious conservation concerns?

Oct. 15 Thurs: The Humanistic Vision: Turning Space into Place

- Buttimer, Anne. 1985. "Home, Reach, and the Sense of Place," in Buttimer and Seamon eds. *The Human Experience of Place*.
- Relph, Edward, 1993. "The Reclamation of Place," *Orion* (winter)

Discussion

- Explain the difference between space and place by summarizing Buttimer. Does she present a compelling need for this concept?
- What does Relph mean by "reclaiming" place? Can you think of ways to apply any of his ideas in planning or urban geography?

Oct. 20 Tues: Hornsby Bend Field Excursion

Oct. 22 Thurs: The Author in Geography.

- Buttimer, Anne. 1989. *The Practice of Geography*, (Chap. one).
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1997. "Alexander Von Humboldt and his Brother."

Discussion

- Why does biography matter to Buttimer? Why is it something we need to explore in the discipline?
- Using Tuan, show how a "good" geographer would tackle a topic of your choice (be specific)?

Oct. 27 Tues and 29: Regionalism: Re-inventing the Region?

Readings.

- Hesse, Herman. 1975. "Description of a Landscape," in *My Belief: Essays on Life and Art*.
- Berry, Wendell. 1972. "The Region," in *A Continuous Harmony*.

Discussion

How do Hesse and Berry "guide us" through their regions? How can we do this as geographers?

Parmenter, Barbara. 2006. *Regions and Regionalism*.

Tall, Deborah, 1993. *From Where We Stand*. pp. 89-99.

Discussion

- Do Tall (summarize) and Parmenter (summarize) share much in common?
- How are the **four** authors useful guides for illuminating Pattison's appeal for an area studies tradition? What can we gain from looking at their vocabulary, themes, and narrative styles?

Nov. 3 Tues: Contemporary Issues: Sources Matter, So Does Style.

- Dan. P. Donaldson. 2001, "Teaching Geography's Four Traditions with Poetry," *Journal of Geography* 100, 24-31.

Discussion

- What is Donaldson saying about our appreciation of Geography?
- Be prepared to read to the class a haiku titled "Geography," and turn in another one titled "West Mall."

Nov. 5 Thurs: Contemporary Issues: Ethics Does Matter?

- Morrill, Richard L. 1984, "The Responsibility of Geography," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*.
- Hobbs, Joseph. 2000, "Exploration and Discovery," *Geographical Review* 91.

Discussion

- Is Morrill (summarize) correct in seeking to connect ethics to our professional identity, and how intellectually helpful is his Presidential Address?
- Is what Hobbs is doing relevant in today's world? What would you do in the field

Nov. 10 Tues: Contemporary Issues: Status and Ethnicity

Verness, April. 2001. "But its not supposed to feel like home," in *Textures of Place*, P. Adams, S. Hoelscher, and K. Till eds (Minneapolis: Univ. Minn. Press), pp. 355-74.

- Ellis, M. *et al.* 2004. "Work Together, Live Apart?" *Annals AAG* 94:3, 620-37.

Discussion

Is Verness just being defensive and self absorbed? Explain.

- Are Ellis etc presenting an effective way of dealing with race in our society?

Nov. 12 Thurs: Confused Geographies?

Relph, Edward. 2001. "The Critical Description," in *Textures of Place*, pp. 150-66

Discussion

Can we resolve the "confusion" that Relph (summarize) points out in everyday urban landscapes? Respond to his concern by referring to something in Austin currently that illuminates what he has to say.

Nov. 17 Tues: Your Own Geography? (A-M)

Design your own geography course. Title it, set out a brief syllabus and explain why you have selected the topic from a track you know. **Provide a single page handout for each class member** and persuade fellow students to take your course. We will vote.

Nov. 19 Thurs: Your Own Geography? (N-Z)

Nov. 23 Tues: Careers in Geography: Discussion with local Geographers/Employers.

Dec. 1 Tues: Philosophy of Geography (A-M)

Dec. 3 Thurs: Philosophy of Geography (N-Z).

Last Class Day is Dec. 4th Friday.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING:

- 1. All papers need a thesis or an argument. Take a position and support it by referring the assigned essays: please avoid declarations without logical and reasoned support for them. Each paragraph should have a topic that relates to your thesis.**
- 2. Papers need a clear beginning, middle, and end.**
- 3. You need use paragraphs-they denote clear, smooth, and logical transitions between thoughts and arguments.**
- 4. Tone and word choice should be appropriate for the occasion and for the audience. Avoid colloquial expressions in a paper, and big words do mean looking smarter. Select simple, clear and expressive words (avoid repeating the same word, and never use I feel) that add to the sense of authenticity. After all you are the expert and it is your paper.**
- 5. Sentences should be varied in length and structure. If all sentences in an essay are structured exactly the same, the paper is tedious and boring. One way to catch this is to just look at your paper--do all sentences start with "The" or "She"? This is generally a clue that you rely too much in one structure.**
- 6. Awkwardness, wordiness, and the passive voice. Get rid of all of them. Look for strings of prepositions, extra nouns, adjectives, and "to be" verbs. If you find lots of these, edit out. Examples: it was said, can be characterized, he is expected to stay at home, etc.**
- 7. Avoid phrases, such as it seems that, may be said. . Or, the author appears to suggest: You have authority with the reader: be confident, not undecided, about what you say. It is your essay; so argue your position with confidence (not arrogance).**
- 8. Nothing will help you more in the process of writing than editing. Outline your paper, write it, and set it aside. Come back to it, and spend time reading it aloud. Reading papers aloud is the easiest way to catch errors, and it helps you make sense of what you have written. Keep writing, and writing, and enjoy writing, as practice turns you into a good writer.**

9. After a direct quote always give the page number of author/date or the source you have quoted. Pay attention to these smaller details, if you care, then reader will care too, and vice versa.

part= attendance 25% 50points

8 essays 5% each 10 each

PCLperiods 5% 10

Wm 5% 10

Own Course 10% 20

Philos 15% 30

200 points