

Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Carleton University

Doctoral Core Seminar: Geography, Society and Environment (GEOG 6000), Fall 2024
“An Integrative Orientation to Problems in Geographic Thought”

Course outline

(Subject to change; last updated August 28, 2024)

Instructor / facilitator:

Derek A. Smith

Email: dereka.smith@carleton.ca

Office hours by appointment.

Schedule:

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:35 to 4:25 pm (with one or more short field outings on or close to campus, or potentially elsewhere in Ottawa if possible)

Course objectives:

- To provide students with an appreciation of the intellectual history of geography, its current orientations, and its relevance for solving problems and informing policy;
- To enhance critical thinking about the production of geographic knowledge, including an ability to question and reflect on underlying philosophies, ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies.
- To enable students to locate their own geographical research interests within a broader intellectual context; and
- To cultivate an environment of interdisciplinary collegiality, mutual respect, and an openness to a broad range of geographical approaches to understanding social and environmental change.

Seminar format:

The course follows a seminar format, in which students will play active roles in introducing topics and discussing assigned readings and seminar themes. Students will also be given opportunities to present their own research plans and share advances in their own more narrowly defined fields of study. In addition to core themes, some content may be chosen in collaboration with students. One or more short field outings will provide opportunities to make connections between theory and “real world” locations and discuss how geographic concepts and methodological approaches can be put into practice to gain a better understanding of socioenvironmental phenomena. Please note that this seminar is provided as an in-person class and that students should not expect to be provided special accommodations for remote participation.

Brightspace and communications:

The Brightspace learning platform will be used for this seminar, but mainly as a place to obtain the most up-to-date schedule and to access the required readings. All readings will available either through

Brightspace (from the “Tools” menu, select “Ares Reserves), directly from a website, or in some cases as an email attachment. Communications to individual students or to the entire group will be sent by regular email. Please ensure that you check your Carleton email regularly for announcements. I can be contacted by email with any questions you may have or to set up meetings. Please note that I do not read or reply to emails outside of regular weekday work hours.

Course assignments and evaluation:

The course grade will reflect the student’s overall performance and intellectual development. It will be based on short written commentaries (25 percent of final grade); contributions to seminar discussions (35); and a critical review paper (40 percent).

Class participation (35 percent of final grade)

An assessment of class participation will be based on being prepared for our meetings and being an active, engaged, and respectful participant, as well as on the oral presentations prepared for the seminar (i.e., the review paper proposal and the review paper presentation in December). Seminar discussions will include a co-facilitation approaches, whereby students will introduce specific readings to the rest of the class. Additional contributions can be made to the seminar by sharing additional materials, bringing our attention to relevant events, and in other ways that complement seminar discussions.

Commentaries (25 percent of final grade)

Students are required to share with other members of class and the instructor thoughtful comments stimulated by the assigned readings. The main purpose of these contributions is to demonstrate an understanding of the material but to also reflect on one’s own reactions to the readings. The suggested length is 400-600 words (not including references). These commentaries should be sent by email by the deadline, with a hard copy submitted at the beginning of class. There will be a total of eight commentaries over the course of the term. Commentaries should centre on the theme of the upcoming seminar meeting, but can include connections to previous readings and discussions, and when applicable, make connections to your own areas of interest. Commentaries will be given a letter grade, with feedback.

Review essay (40 percent of final grade)

The main purpose of the review essay (7,500 words) is to develop a more thorough understanding of your own particular field within geography and to provide your own critical assessment of both the strengths and limitations of current knowledge in this area. This should include some explanation of how the field has developed over time, leading to current knowledge in this field, and the dominant understandings, research approaches and methodologies that are used today. In other words, what is known and how do we know what we know? The essay should also examine issues that have been neglected and/or questions that have been difficult to answer. In other words, what are the knowledge gaps in your field and what are the challenges in trying to answer outstanding questions in this field? Are there new approaches that you believe are promising? Your assessment might also include a discussion of how new ideas or technologies are opening up new avenues for knowledge in this field, or alternatively, limitations with current models, theoretical approaches and/or research practices. You may also wish to address how broader societal concerns have shaped and continue to shape research priorities in the field.

Students will be given an opportunity to present their ideas for the review essay to the class in late October or early November, and then present the review near the end of term as a way to get feedback for the final paper. The first presentations will be more informal, but the final presentation should be done in a conference style – 15 minutes maximum, with 5 minutes for questions and discussion. Please prepare a one-page abstract for seminar participants at the beginning of class. The deadline for the final paper is December 8, the last day of the term. Extensions to this deadline can be made if requested at least one week in advance. Please submit both a digital and hard copy to me, as well as a copy to your supervisor or co-supervisors (hard copy or digital, whatever they prefer).

You will need to consult your supervisor(s) on both the topic and approach to this review essay. Supervisors may also be involved in the assessment of the essay.

A useful library subject guide for graduate students in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies is available at: <https://library.carleton.ca/research/subject-guides/geography-graduate-studies-detailed-guide>.

While the structure of the final grade will be based on the components outlined above, given the diversity of student backgrounds and research orientations, it will also take into account intellectual growth achieved during the term. While superior, doctoral-level work is the goal that each student should aim for, at this early stage of your research career, you are encouraged to “think outside the box” and to take intellectual risks and push boundaries rather than trying to get things perfect.

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.

Reference materials

In addition to the required readings listed in the schedule below, you may at times wish to consult the following sources for overviews of subfields, concepts and methodologies you are not familiar with. The books and book chapters are more comprehensive, critical reviews. The handbook and encyclopedia entries are more concise but are for the most part thoughtful essays or critical overviews written by highly regarded experts in the related field.

Aitken, Stuart C. and Gill Valentine, editors (2015) *Approaches to Human Geography: Philosophies, Theories, People and Practices*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Cresswell, Tim (2024) *Geographic Thought: A Critical Introduction*. Second edition. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Cuff, David and Andrew Goudie, editors (2008) *The Oxford Companion to Global Change*. Oxford University Press.

Goudie, Andrew, editor (2003) *Encyclopedia of Geomorphology*. London: Routledge.

Kobayashi, Audrey L., editor (2020) *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, second edition. Oxford, UK: Elsevier.

Stoltman, J. P. (2012) *21st Century Geography: A Reference Handbook*. SAGE Publications.

Seminar topics fit within the following four broader themes: (I) Geography past and present; (II) Ontology, and different ways of knowing; (III) Theoretical approaches and key concepts in geography; and (IV) How do we know what we know? Geographic epistemologies and methodologies.

A detailed schedule will be presented and discussed during our first seminar meeting.

Statement 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;
- 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.

Statement on 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. Here is a list that may be helpful:

Emergency Resources (on and off campus): <https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

Carleton Resources:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>

- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources:

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

Requests for Academic Accommodations

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, you must complete the Pregnancy Accommodation Form (available here: <https://carleton.ca/equity/contact/form-pregnancy-accommodation/>).

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details (available here: <https://carleton.ca/equity/focus/discrimination-harassment/religious-spiritual-observances/>).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>.

Accommodation for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>.