Department of Geography and Environmental Studies

Doctoral Core Seminar: Geography, Society and Environment (GEOG 6000)
An Integrative Orientation to Problems in Geographic Thought
Fall 2017

Instructor: Derek A. Smith
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Office Hours: By appointment

Seminar: Mondays and Wednesdays 11:35 to 1:25 (with a 30-minute break in each session)

Course Objectives:

- To provide students with an appreciation of the intellectual history of geography and related disciplines, and its relevance to current debates;
- To enable students to locate their own geographical research interests and perspectives within a broader intellectual context;
- To develop an environment of collegiality, mutual respect and appreciation for the intellectual benefits of exploring a broad range of interests and perspectives related to the geography of social change, the geography of environmental change, and their inter-relations;
- To begin the process of assisting students to develop a focus for their dissertation research;
- To develop a community of scholars with an appreciation of the challenges and rewards of doctoral-level research.

Course Format:

The course follows a seminar format, with students expected to come to class well prepared to be active participants and facilitators of the discussion. Guest speakers will provide opportunities to discuss additional topics in geographic research.

Course Assignments and Assessment:

The course grade will be based on an assessment at the end of term of the student’s overall performance and intellectual development that takes into account, among other components, the following important assignments:
**Weekly commentaries (15 percent of final grade)**

Students are required to share with other members of class and the instructor, via cuLearn, brief but thoughtful comments stimulated by the assigned readings and other class content. The chief purpose of these preliminary contributions is to encourage frank and specific reflection on one’s own reactions to the readings in anticipation of the in-class discussion. These commentaries must be uploaded no later than noon on the Friday prior to Monday’s seminar, except when there will be student presentations (see class schedule below); note that in one case, the discussion will begin on a Wednesday due to the October 9 holiday (for this class, the deadline will be Tuesday at noon). There will be a total of eight (8) commentaries over the course of the term. Commentaries should focus on the primary theme of the seminar, but can include connections to previous seminar readings and discussions, and students are also encouraged to respond to each other’s commentaries. All readings are available either via cuLearn by accessing the Ares site (look for the “View course in Ares” link on the left-hand side of the page) or on reserve in the MacOdrum library.

In-class discussions will be animated through a co-facilitation approach. Students will share the role of co-facilitator (along with the instructor). Assignment of facilitation duties will be agreed to in advance.

**Review essay (35 percent of final grade)**

Each student will prepare an essay (7500 words) on a topic that reviews the links between selected course themes and each student’s own substantive research focus. Students will be given an opportunity to present their ideas for the review essay to the class in late October/early November, and to then present the review in class as a way to get feedback for the final paper. This 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 and bibliography to be distributed to the rest of the class at the beginning of the presentation. These presentations will be scheduled for December 4 and 6.

Students are encouraged to model their essays as a *Progress in Physical Geography* or *Progress in Human Geography* review article that explores a key concept or idea in their own field, in a manner that is accessible to a broad audience of geographers. As an example, please refer to one of the following:


Students are encouraged to consult with their supervisors on both the topic and approach to the review essay. Supervisors will also be involved in the assessment of the essay if possible. Each student’s final essay will be returned personally, at which time they will be given the opportunity to reflect on their progress during the term before their grade for the course is finalized.

The final deadline for submission of the review essay is December 15.

*Class participation (50 percent of final grade)*

An assessment of class participation will be based primarily on being an active, engaged and informed participant and occasional co-facilitator in the weekly seminars, as well as on an assessment of the three oral presentations prepared for the seminar (i.e., the proposed doctoral research presentation in September, the review essay proposal in late October/early November, and the review essay presentation in December).

While the structure of the final grade will be based on the components explained above, it will also take into account an assessment of personal intellectual growth achieved during the term and the contributions to the collective intellectual growth of the seminar participants. While superior scholarship is the goal that each student should aim for, in this first term, you are particularly encouraged to ‘think outside the box’ and to take intellectual risks with the confidence to push intellectual boundaries rather than trying to ‘get things perfect’ at this early stage of your doctoral career.

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.

*Schedule:*

**Wednesday, September 6 - Introductions**

Each student and the instructor will provide a personal and academic autobiography (about 10 minutes) as a way of introducing ourselves to each other and revealing the academic interests that have brought us together in this course.

As a separate item, each student should select 1-2 key publications (books or articles) that have shaped their enthusiasm for engaging in doctoral work. They will briefly speak to how and why.
Monday, September 11 – Geographic thought: Common themes and challenges

Reviewing the history and current state of the discipline, what are the enduring themes that geographers have pursued? What is distinctive about the discipline? Is there a case for maintaining an integrative interpretation of what geography is? If so, what is that case, and what is necessary to make it effective? These are not questions we will fully resolve this week! They begin an exploration that really continues all year.

Readings:


Wednesday, September 13 – Geographic thought (continued) / Workshop (NCERC and SSHRC applications)

Readings:

Johnston, Ron (2011) Promoting Geography (or Part of It)—Yet Again! The Professional Geographer, 63(3): 325-331.


Monday, September 18 – How do we know what we know?

They don’t call the degree a Doctor of Philosophy for nothing. Much more than at the level of the Masters degree, a PhD demands you reflect critically on the nature of reality and the whole process of
knowledge creation, because that’s what you will be engaged in. If geography is a discipline of broad scope, you will not be surprised to find there is no single route to plausible knowledge.

Readings:


Wednesday, September 20 – How do we know what we know (continued) / Guest speaker: Chris Burn

Readings:


Monday, September 25 – Student presentations > Doctoral research proposals.

In conjunction with your thesis supervisor, each student will prepare a draft application for an Ontario Graduate Scholarship and the appropriate Tri-Council (NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR) Doctoral Scholarship (or if not applicable, geared toward another audience). Each student will have up to 20 minutes to outline their proposal and receive feedback. For assistance, you may consult the following materials:
Available through cuLearn:


On reserve in the MacOdrum Library, second floor and as an electronic reserve (via cuLearn/Ares):


Wednesday, September 27 – Student presentations > Doctoral research proposals (continued) / Guest – Trish Ballamingie (on GEOG 6001)

*September 29 – NSERC deadline for PhD scholarships*

Monday, October 2 – Theory in Geography

Readings:


Wednesday, October 4 – Theory in Geography (continued) / Guest speaker, Jessie Vermaire

Readings:

To be determined.
October 9 - holiday, no class

Wednesday, October 11 – Spatial science / critical cartography

Readings:


October 13 – SSHRC deadline for PhD scholarships

Monday, October 16 – Humans and Nature

Readings:


Wednesday, October 18 – Humans and Nature (continued) / Guest speaker, Doug King

Readings:


One or more additional readings to be determined.

October 23-25 – Fall Break, no class.

Monday, October 30 – Presentation of review essay proposals

Each student will give a 10-15 minute presentation, followed by class feedback and discussion.

Wednesday, November 1 - Presentation of review essay proposals (continued)

Monday, November 6 – Positionality and Ethical Challenges

Readings:


One or more additional readings to be determined.
**Wednesday, November 8 – Positionality and Ethical Challenges (continued) / Guest speaker, Gita Ljubicic**

**Readings:**


*One or more additional readings to be determined.*

**Monday, November 13 – The integrative ethos: Research collaboration across the divide**

**Readings:**


**Wednesday, November 15 - The integrative ethos (continued) / Guest speaker, Pablo Mendez**

**Readings:**


*One or more additional readings to be determined.*

**Monday, November 20 - Case studies in interdisciplinary research (topic and readings to be determined)**
Wednesday, November 22 - Case studies in interdisciplinary research (continued) / Guest speaker, Karen Hebert

Monday, November 27 – Topic to be determined

November 29 – Topic to be determined

Monday, December 4 – Review essay presentations

Students will each give a 20-minute presentation of their review paper. This is a chance to share your work and get collective feedback prior to submitting the final paper.

Wednesday, December 6 – Review essay presentations (continued) / Course conclusion

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Plagiarism

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- 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;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

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.
Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at http://www.carleton.ca/equity/. 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.

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.

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). Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website www.carleton.ca/pmc for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).