

COURSE OUTLINE

GEOG 4021 [0.5 credit] - Seminar in Culture, Identity and Place

The Power of Maps

Department of Geography and Environmental Studies
Carleton University, Winter 2018

DRAFT OUTLINE SUBJECT TO CHANGE



Schedule: Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:35 – 9:55 am, Room A220 Loeb Building
Course instructor: Derek Smith, B449 Loeb Building
Email: dereka_smith@carleton.ca
Telephone: (613) 520-2600 x 8131
Office hours: To be determined

Calendar description: Selected topic or field of inquiry concerning the geographic dimensions of culture, identity and place.

Prerequisites: GEOG 3021 and fourth-year Honours standing in Geography or permission of the Department.

Course description:

The purpose of this seminar course is to examine the varied ways in which maps are made and used. The seminar will include a discussion of alternative understandings what maps are, how spatial patterns are communicated in different cultural contexts, and the theoretical field of critical cartography. We will examine the history of mapmaking, and the political and social dimensions of maps past and present – looking at how maps can be used to achieve different objectives, sometimes furthering the interests of certain groups over others. We will also explore participatory or “counter” mapping strategies as a way to empower marginalized communities, and incorporate their local geographic knowledge into natural resource management, community development, urban planning, and other spheres. The use and implications of relatively new geomatics fields and technologies (i.e., geographic information systems, remote sensing, global positioning systems) will also be explored. Finally, we will discuss how geomatics can be used in social science research to generate new understanding of peoples and places around the world. Previous training in cartography may be helpful but is not required.

Overall design of the seminar:

This seminar course has been designed based on the idea that maps are not simply tools for communicating something about spatial patterns of human and environmental phenomena, but rather selective representations that reflect the objectives, cultural background, and values of cartographers and mapping institutions, as well as broader social, economic and political contexts. As such, the primary theoretical framework for the course will be critical cartography, a field that emerged in the 1980s as a critique of dominant western mapping practices. We will also draw from other fields that help reveal the political power of maps and the role of local geographic knowledge in participatory mapping. Together we will explore a variety of concepts and ideas that will help us to better understand the varied ways in which maps and other geospatial innovations are used around the world today, and how they can be used more effectively in the future to address social and environmental issues.

The themes of the seminar will be examined through a combination of lectures, class discussion, in class group work, documentary films, readings, and written assignments. A major group or individual project will help integrate and apply concepts learned throughout the term.

Seminar objectives:

- To become familiar with the historical development and current orientations of cartography;
- To become knowledgeable of the field of critical cartography, and to develop an ability to analyze and “deconstruct” maps;
- To become aware of the strengths and limitations of participatory mapping and related approaches to conduct social science research;
- To enhance critical thinking, writing, and presentation skills.

Seminar readings:

To be determined – readings for the course will be selected from a wide range of books and journals and represent a broad range of theoretical debate, concepts, issues, and case studies. All of the readings will be available through cuLearn, unless otherwise noted.

Course evaluation – To be determined but will include class participation, shorter written assignments and a final project.

Seminar themes / activities – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Week 1 - Introduction to the course

Week 2 - What is a map? / Critical cartography and related theoretical frameworks

Week 3 - The history of cartography

Week 4 - Mapping in the colonial period

Week 5 - Postcolonial cartographies

Week 6 - Local geographic knowledge

Week 7 - Counter mapping

Week 8 - The promise and pitfalls of participatory mapping

Week 9 - Critical GIS, public participation, and the digital divide

Week 10 - The social implications of new geospatial technologies

Week 11 - The art of geovisualization

Week 12 – Student presentations