

GEOG/ENST 2005: Geographic Inquiry

Instructor: Sophie Tamas
Office: Loeb 331A
Phone: 613 520 2600 ext 3578
Email: sophie.tamas@carleton.ca
Office hours: TBD

Teaching Assistants: TBD

I. Course Description:

Content

This course offers an introduction to qualitative approaches to producing knowledge. Students will be encouraged to think critically and creatively about how and why we do research, how truth-claims are authorized, the underlying assumptions that shape academic inquiries, and the ethical dimensions of doing research with people and communities. Our exploration of these big theoretical questions will be grounded in experiential learning, as students will work together to study the impact of COVID-19 on themselves and their communities.

Format

Most course activities will be asynchronous and involve using CULearn or CUPortfolio. There will be a full-class videoconference to begin and end the course and there will sometimes be lab-section or small-group videoconference calls.

Learning Objectives

This course aims:

- to make you wonder how you know what you know, what 'knowledge' is, and why it matters;
- to help you understand and critique the links between academic practices and social injustices;
- to expand your thinking and academic skills by introducing Indigenous, feminist, and other non-mainstream approaches to inquiry;
- to provide relevant and meaningful primary research experience studying the impact of COVID-19 in your community; and
- to offer collaborative learning that helps you connect with your classmates.

II. Prerequisites

There are no courses precluded by this course.

III. Texts

There is no textbook required for this course. A weekly illustrated letter to students will be posted on CULearn and students will forage for supplemental resources online.

Please note that all course materials used, including letters, slides, handouts, and the course outline, are my own intellectual property and protected by copyright. They are for your educational use only and may not be distributed, reproduced, or posted for commercial purposes without my express written consent.

IV: Course Calendar

Course content is divided into twelve learning modules, each of which contains a letter from the instructor with supplementary links and associated questions or reflective tasks. Because we are all working in different and often unpredictable circumstances, you can move through the modules at your own pace – however, the first six modules must be completed by the fall break. Modules will be posted as soon as they are available but no later than the dates indicated below. Module themes and titles may vary as they are being developed.

We will meet (online) as a big group for our first and last classes (**Thursday September 10 at 3:35 and Thursday December 10 at 3:35**). Access details will be posted on CULearn.

Lab sections will sometimes be asked to meet via videoconference calls with their TA during scheduled lab times. Small group and individual meetings will only occur outside designated lab times if it is convenient for everyone involved. Students must participate in the lab section in which they have registered.

Students will be expected to regularly create and post content on CUPortfolio so reliable access to the internet will be required.

Module 1 - Starting up: Where we're going, why and how
10 September

Module 2 - Theorizing our worlds: Ontology and epistemology
17 September

Module 3 - Theorizing our words: The purpose and power of research
24 September

Module 4 – Watching, witnessing and standing by: Observational research
1 October

Module 5 - Asking and listening: Interviews and stories
8 October

Module 6 - Who wants to know? Subjectivity and relations in research
15 October

Module 7 – Human knowledge in a more-than-human world
22 October

(Fall break)

Module 8 - Hiding in plain view: The everyday and the extraordinary
5 November

Module 9 - Look here: Visual methods
12 November

Module 10 - Text, genre and representation
19 November

Module 11 - Making sense: Authority, meaning and ethics
26 November

Module 12 – Consolidation: Where we've been
3 December

V: Evaluation

Grading scheme

Module reading blog – 30%

Students are expected to create and maintain a reading blog in CUPortfolio in which they respond to the short-answer questions or other small tasks assigned in each module. As the semester continues, students can return to their blog posts and revise or extend them as their learning expands. Reading blog assessment will be both quantitative (based on the amount and timing of posts) and qualitative (based on the quality of the content posted). A rubric will be provided and students will receive feedback at midterm; blog posts will be assessed on an ongoing basis.

Mapping your standpoint – 20%

Students will be asked to create a personal profile on their CUPortfolio page that describes their location, age, gender, and current household composition. They will be expected to explain the representational decisions that they made in creating their profiles, to show how their location is shaped by material, relational, and socio-economic factors, and how this impacts their relationship to knowledge. Profiles will be due by week 3. Rubrics will be provided on CULearn.

Thematic Inquiries – 50%

Students will be asked to apply what they are learning by investigating the impact of COVID-19 on themselves and their communities. Students will be divided into four teams (one for each lab section), each of which will focus on a different question:

Section 1: What are your main concerns about the impact of COVID-19 on your family and community?

Section 2: Where are you or the people in your community finding help? What services or solutions have you seen?

Section 3: What services would you like to see, to help you or your community deal with the social, economic, and health impacts of COVID-19?

Section 4: How do you feel about the safety measures suggested by public health officials? (Wearing masks in public; physical distancing; avoiding gatherings; and not using shared facilities). How have these public safety measures changed your everyday life?

To introduce themselves to each other, in week 4 students on each team will share the profiles they have created. Each student will also write up their own preliminary response to their team question, based on their own experiential knowledge, and post it to the team discussion forum in CULearn. This will be followed by a brainstorming exercise facilitated by the TA and/or instructor, in which students will develop ideas for how to expand or enrich their understanding of the question (working within practical and ethical constraints). Students may work individually or in small groups. They will be expected to document their process and its results by keeping a personal research journal on CUPortfolio. Research should include both primary fieldwork and secondary research from pertinent academic and other sources of information. Students will be supported by the TA and/or instructor asynchronously and/or by scheduling individual or group videoconference meetings (no more than once a week, during regular 'lab' hours).

Students will share what they have done and what they have learned from it with their teams in late November. Each team will then decide how best to convey what they have learned to the rest of the class at our final meeting on December 10 (the default suggestion will be to create a 'highlight reel' which could be shared via screen-sharing during a final class videoconference).

Students will also be invited (but not obliged) to make their research available for further analysis as part of an ongoing study of the community impact of COVID-19. Doing so (or not) will have no impact on grades for this course.

Evaluation of the thematic inquiries will be divided between two components. Thirty percent will be individually assessed based on the quality of students' work as documented in their research journals on CUPortfolio. Students will also be asked to complete a confidential team evaluation form, in which they reflect on and critically evaluate their own and their classmates' contributions to the work of the team. Ten percent of each student's grade will be based on how thoughtfully and thoroughly they complete their peer evaluation form. The final 10% will be based on how they are evaluated by their peers.

Communication of Grades

Grades will be posted on CULearn as they become available. However, 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.

The Teaching Assistants in this course will be working closely together and with the Instructor in order to ensure that grading is consistent and fair for all students. That being said, mistakes can be made. Students who wish to appeal or discuss their grade(s) are welcome to do so, as follows:

- 1) A 'cooling off' period of 24 hours is required. This is to ensure that students have the time to consider the evaluation provided.
- 2) Grade appeals must be made in writing and emailed to the Teaching Assistant. The course code (GEOG/ENST 2005) must appear in the subject line. In order to respect your confidentiality, correspondence must be sent from a Carleton email address. Students should summarize the grade they received and explain why they believe this evaluation is unfair or inaccurate.
- 3) The Teaching Assistant will arrange to meet with the student to discuss the grade.
- 4) If the Teaching Assistant and the student are unable to come to terms, they will both meet with the Instructor. Grades may be increased, decreased, or remain the same.

Academic Conduct

Our ability to express ourselves, to interpret intention and meaning, and to regulate emotion relies heavily on non-verbal, largely unconscious physical cues from our environments. We constantly (in culturally-specific, imperfect ways) 'read' postures, facial expressions, the gaze, tone, timing, volume, proximity, gestures, aromas, and countless contextual factors. **We are therefore much more likely to give or take offense when we are communicating online.**

It might take extra effort to become engaged or connect, especially if you don't like distance education. You could be dealing with caregiving obligations, financial hardships, mental and physical health issues, or living in less-than-ideal circumstances,

Our primary obligation to each other is kindness. We are all trying new things and the learning curve for instructors, TA's and students will be steep. Mutual respect is required in all interactions. Conduct that inhibits the open and safe exchange of ideas and perspectives will not be tolerated. If something is inhibiting your participation or making you uncomfortable in class, it is your responsibility to promptly bring this issue to the attention of the Teaching Assistants or the Instructor. Creating an inclusive, welcoming learning environment takes a team effort. We rely on feedback from students to make this the best experience possible.

The usefulness of this course depends on your engagement. Courtesy protocols for videoconference calls will be explained and expected. Please be aware that your attention (or lack thereof) is palpable; if you are distracted during class encounters this has a negative impact on the entire group. To help you remain attentive, synchronous scheduled activities will include regular breaks and/or be short in duration.

If you live in circumstances that compromise your availability, please let us know early in the semester so we can find solutions (for instance, you may be a primary caregiver with children at home or be sharing a computer with others in your household). Unless there are exceptional circumstances, students are expected to schedule their employment or other activities around their class obligations, which will only fall during times indicated by the university timetable.

Academic Integrity

Ideas and the words that express them are the currency of the academic world. Good scholarship locates itself within its field by showing, through proper use of citations and bibliographies, whose ideas it has borrowed and built upon. Scholarship that fails to do so steals intellectual property and cannot contribute to the advancement of knowledge.

Plagiarism is defined by the Carleton University Senate 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 it as your own, without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- Submitting work written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- Using ideas, direct quotations, or paraphrased material without appropriate acknowledgement in any academic assignment;
- Using another’s data or research findings without attribution;
- Using direct quotations without quotation marks;
- Handing in substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission from the instructor.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the instructor. All suspected cases are sent to the Associate Dean, who conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student. Penalties are not trivial and can include failing the course.

It is the students’ obligation to ensure that they are familiar with the rules for proper citation and attribution of sources. I urge you to be extremely careful in this regard, particularly if you are using on-line or other non-standard sources. The library website offers a wide range of style guides and other citation tips as well as subject area specialists who would be happy to assist you.

VII: Requests for academic accommodations

Some students need special arrangements to meet their academic obligations during the term. **This year, due to COVID-19, these needs may be amplified and complicated.** All students who are struggling with their studies or circumstances are encouraged to speak to me or to their TA, to seek peer support, and/or to get in touch with the friendly folks listed below. If you are elsewhere in Ontario, call 2-1-1 for help finding local services.

Centre for Student Academic Support – <https://carleton.ca/csas/>

Writing Services – <https://carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>

International Student Services – <https://carleton.ca/isso/>

Graduate Students Association - <https://gsacarleton.ca/>

Equity Services - <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Health and Counselling Services - www.carleton.ca/health

Pregnancy obligation: write to the professor 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 see <https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf>

Religious obligation: write to the professor 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 see <https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf>

Accommodation for Student Activities: write to the professor 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 see <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

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 its 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/sexual-violence-support/wp-content/uploads/Sexual-Violence-Policy-December-1-2016.pdf>

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).