Geography 3001
Social Geography Methods, Fall 2010
Dr Pamela White
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Thursday September 9 to November 25, 2010, 18:05 – 20:55, Room 315 Southam
Office Hours and Location: Thursdays 5:00 to 6:00 pm, Room B350 Loeb; or by appointment.

Description
This course will discuss and examine the common methods used for acquiring, analyzing and presenting primary information related to contemporary issues in social geography. It provides students with the opportunity to explore topics such as mental maps, sampling and questionnaire design, participant observation, interviewing, discourse and other qualitative research methods.

This course will consist of a two hour lecture followed by a discussion group period of one hour.

Required Text

A selected number of readings will be ON RESERVE in the Library. Most of these readings can also be found in the Library’s electronic journal collection.

Evaluation

40% Five (5) reviews to be handed in to professor at the beginning of each class beginning September 23, 2010. Each review is 2-3 pages maximum. Each counts for 8 marks.

50% Poster presentation and papers demonstrating at least two (2) of the techniques discussed in class. The Poster presentation will be presented in class on November 18, 2010. There will be no extension given to this date and requirements.

10% Class contributions to discussions

Late submissions of the analytical critical reviews and the poster presentation will result in a mark of zero for the respective assignment. Exceptions to this will need to be discussed with the Professor and a physician’s letter will be required.

Week by Week Class Outline

Week 1: September 9, 2010
Introduction to social research methods in Geography

Week 2: September 16, 2010
Understanding Qualitative Research and Its Place in Human Geography
Selection of poster topics
**Week 3: September 23, 2010**  
*Power, Ethics and Subjectivity in Qualitative and Quantitative Research*  
**Assignment due:** Winchester article  

**Week 4: September 30, 2010**  
*Question development and research plans*  
**Assignment due:** Swanson and Hall articles  
**Discussion in-class:** Developing a research plan by G. Valentine --- “At the Drawing Board: Developing a Research Plan”, pages 41-54 in M. Limb and C. Dwyer, Qualitative Methodologies for Geographers (On reserve in library)  
**In-class exercise:** Developing research questions: ethical considerations  
**Class update:** Poster project research plans: examples from class members

**Week 5: October 7, 2010**  
*Introduction to focus groups and interviewing research participants*  
**Assignment due:** Your poster research plan à la G. Valentine  
**Discussion in-class:** Hessler and Bradburn: On reserve in Library.  
**Class update:** Review of the questionnaires being developed by class members

**Week 6: October 14, 2010**  
*Focus group demonstration and discussion*  
**Assignment due:** Hessler and Bradburn  
**Discussion in-class:** Focussing on focus groups: comparing article by J. Cameron (in Hayes text) and the focus group demonstration.

**Week 7: October 21, 2010**  
*Presenting our research findings: How to prepare a conference poster.* See I. Hayes article on reserve in Library and examples using electronic technologies.  
**Assignment due:** Assessment of article by Peter J. Hopkins, "Thinking critically and creatively about focus groups”, *Area*, Vol. 39, No. 4 p. 528-535, 2007.  
**Discussion in-class:** Poster progress updates

**Week 8: October 28, 2010**  
*Semi-structured interviews*  
**Discussion in-class:** M. Read, “Taking Stands” On reserve in Library  
**Discussion in-class:** Update on project progress.

**Week 9: November 4, 2010**  
*Making sense of the findings, reading texts and emerging techniques*  
**Assignment due:** M. Read Taking Stands  
Update on the project progress
Week 10: November 11, 2010  
*Action Research in Geography*

**Discussion in-class:** Sydney Tar Ponds, Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Understanding collaborative research. Film Shelby Adams or Africville. Viewed in class.

**Final update on the poster projects**

Week 11: November 18, 2010  
*Poster Presentation In-class Conference*

Week 12: November 25, 2010  
*Wrap-up: Is qualitative research appropriate for geographers: Challenges, benefits and disadvantages of qualitative research.*

Return of all posters

ASSIGNMENTS

**Critical Analytical Review of Assigned Readings (40% of final mark)**

- Five reviews
- Each paper will be discussed in-class the week previous. Participation in class is important
- Each review to be a maximum 2-3 pages.
- On the date it is due, each review to be handed into the professor at the beginning of the class
- Marks will be accorded for demonstration of an understanding of the material and for the examination of the content of the assigned reading and discussions in-class. A different critical assessment lens will be used for each reading. Depending on the reading, students will describe the material, compare, contrast, assess and critically discuss the readings.
- The readings come from the assigned text: *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography* (Hayes) and from papers put On Reserve in the library.
- Failure to hand in the paper on the day of the class will result in a zero grade for that assignment unless a valid reason exists for not handing in the review on the due date.
- This assignment is worth 40% of the final mark.
- There are five (5) critical reviews to complete during the term. Each one is worth 8% of the final mark

**Poster Presentation and Papers (50%)**

- Students will prepare a poster suitable for exhibit at a conference and write a paper that summarizes their methods, findings and an assessment of their learning.
- Each poster will be presented to the class along with a brief review of the findings.
- Thus the poster presentation component consists of three (3) elements:
  - 25% ---- POSTER
  - 10% ---- PAPER: RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES/ FINDINGS (10-15 pages)
  - 15% ---- PAPER : INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ASSESSMENT (10-15 pages)

**Poster themes for 2010**

- **Boundaries and borders:** real, imagined, physical, cultural, socio-economic, political, socially constructed, gendered
- **Contested landscapes:** mixed land-use and planning challenges

You will need to identify a topic, select at least two research techniques to be used, determine how to conduct the research, draft a research plan, undertake the techniques, collect the information, analyse the results and write up the research methodologies, your findings and reflect on your personal learning. As noted above at minimum, **two techniques are to be used.**
**Qualitative research techniques (at least two are required)**
These will all be discussed in-class. You can use the class members to pre-test questions, as a focus group and to discuss findings and experiences of doing research.

**Questionnaire**
Develop a questionnaire and interview a sample population on a topic of importance to geographers such as use of public transportation, perception of safe or unsafe spaces, homelessness and housing availability. Use pen and pencil, internet, social networks.

**Focus group**
Develop the focus group guide and animate a group discussion(s).

**Semi-structured interviews, one-on-one in-depth interviews**
Interview a select group of respondents to understand how boundaries are created, maintained and change. Or, use this approach to better understand how landscapes are defined, determined and used and the tensions that may result from differing conceptions of place.

**Mental maps, photo exposé**
Define a cultural region and its boundaries, child’s world, and safe/unsafe places – is it a contested landscape?

**Reading a text**
Reading a landscape: contested interpretations of a landscape as revealed in photograph, painting, novel, or film. See ---- Article by P. Shurmer-Smith, *Reading texts*, on reserve in the Library.

**Participant observation:** observing difference/being different/being similar and how is space used to create and delimit space, boundaries and borders. Examine spaces and landscapes such as Chinatown, strip clubs, bowling leagues, toddler play groups, rural fairs, dog friendly spaces and parks, mixed use paths – bicycles, jogging and walking. See ---- Article by K. Bennett, *Participant observation*, on reserve in the Library.

**Poster presentation: How to do a poster will be discussed in-class**
See the article by I. Hayes on reserve in the library on how to present your material as a poster. Remember --- You want to make an impact on the viewer and you need to present the overview of your findings.

**Poster (25% of final mark) Due November 18**
**Display options**
- One or two pieces of poster (Bristol) board, appropriately titled with graphic material to demonstrate how you conducted the research. Maps, pictures, graphic materials should be used to the advantage of the presentation.
- Using electronic software to present results using graphics, photos and textual materials on a printed poster.

**Research methodology/research findings Paper (10% of final mark) Due November 18, 2010**
What was the theory or body of knowledge that you used to frame the research questions, hypothesis? How did you conduct the research and what were the techniques that you used? Provide a summary of the research results ----what did you find out using these techniques? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using the selected techniques?

**Individual learning paper (15% of final mark) Due November 18, 2010**
What did you learn from this project about the efficacy of the approaches used?
The class scheduled for November 18, 2010 will consist of the poster presentation session. The posters in each category will be displayed. Students will have the opportunity to view everyone’s posters. Students will then present a brief summary of the project, the methods used and the findings of the research. The class will undertake a general discussion of the findings.

All poster projects and papers will be returned to students on the last day of term November 25, 2010.

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Instructional & Conduct Offences

Instructional offences include among other activities cheating, contravening examination regulations, plagiarism, submitting similar work in 2 or more courses without prior permission, and disrupting classes. Conduct offences apply in areas of discrimination and sexual harassment. Further information about University regulations which define and regulate these offences is presented in the 2010-11 UG Calendar: [http://www.carleton.ca/calendars/ugrad/1011/regulations/acadregsuniv14.html](http://www.carleton.ca/calendars/ugrad/1011/regulations/acadregsuniv14.html)

Academic Accommodations

- **For students with disabilities:** Contact the Paul Menton Centre (PMC) to register for formal evaluation of disability-related needs in order to obtain the necessary letters of accommodation. Registered PMC students are required to contact the Centre (613 520 6608) every term to ensure that the instructor receives your letter of accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due. **Paul Menton Centre, Room 500, Unicentre**

- **For religious observance:** Students must work out accommodation (for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements) on an individual basis with the instructor in the first two weeks of class. Consult the Equity Services website or an Equity Advisor for the policy and list of Holy Days. **Equity Services 613 520 5622**

- **For Pregnancy:** Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact and Equity Advisor in Equity Services (ext. 5622) to complete a letter of accommodation. The student must then make an appointment to discuss her needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

### Requests for Academic Accommodations

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<th>For Student with Disabilities</th>
<th>Contact Paul Menton Centre (6608) to obtain letters of accommodation.</th>
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