

APPROACHES TO GEOGRAPHICAL ENQUIRY (GEOG 5000, FALL 2025)
Department of Geography & Environmental Studies, Carleton University
(Draft, August version)



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Class Meetings: Thursdays, 14:35 to 17:25
Office Hours: By appointment
Brightspace: <https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/370300>

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

A review of the major philosophical perspectives shaping research and explanation by geographers. Particular attention is paid to interpretations of social structure and human action, the nature of the biophysical universe, and the interaction between human beings and their environments.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course reviews a diverse range of perspectives, approaches, and debates shaping research and explanation in contemporary human geography. Graduate students in various disciplines may find the course useful for their respective research interests or projects.

Prerequisite: Graduate student standing, or permission of the department. Open to graduate students from all disciplines.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course provides students with opportunities to: (1) examine important theories, concepts, and debates in human geography; (2) situate their research in relation to different geographical literatures and approaches; (3) support the elaboration and refinement of their research interests or projects; and (4) practice oral presentation, critical reading and writing-as-thinking skills.

APPROACH

The class meets once weekly for a 3-hour seminar. As a graduate seminar, this is a reading and discussion intensive course whose success depends on in-class engagement. Weekly seminars revolve around student presentations and discussions of course readings.

READINGS AND BRIGHTSPACE

All required readings are available online through the ARES portal on Brightspace. Course readings have been chosen to provide an overview of significant theories and concepts in human geography; represent new or enduring works in particular areas of geographic research; offer illustrations of different approaches to geographic inquiry; and to focus on specific or emerging themes or debates.

EVALUATION AND ASSIGNMENTS

Class Participation (20%)

Class participation is based on attendance and meaningful engagement with the course materials, seminar discussions, and other in-class activities. This requires that students complete the required readings *before* coming to class.

Thinking Geographically (10%)

What does it mean to think geographically? A brief reflection paper (750 words) that considers your own research interests in relation to one or more geographic concepts derived from course readings. These papers are due by 23:59 on [September 22](#) via Brightspace. We will return to these papers in week 12 as part of a reflective learning exercise in class. More details to be provided in class.

Reading Commentaries (2 x 10% = 20%)

For two weeks of the term, students are asked to prepare a written reading commentary that engages at least two of the weekly readings (not including any introductory entries from the *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*). Each reading-based commentary should be approximately 1,000 words and provide your critical reflections on a concept *or* idea *or* debate *or* question connecting the selected readings. Commentaries are due *after the class for your chosen week* by 23:59 via Brightspace. Students should try to submit one commentary before [October 16](#). More details to be provided in class.

Reading Discussant (2 x 10% = 20%)

For two weeks of the term, students are asked to serve as the “discussant” of the weekly readings by preparing an *analytical* overview of the readings, accompanied by a one-page handout. Discussants should focus on ideas, arguments, and/or concepts raised in the readings and elaborate on connections and/or tensions between the readings. Students should also develop two succinct overarching questions pertaining to the weekly readings to steer class discussion. These should be posted to the class discussion forum on Brightspace the day *before* class by 18:00. A schedule of

reading discussants will be compiled in week 1 and posted on Brightspace. More details to be provided in class.

Review Essay and Presentation (30%)

This assignment requires students to conceptualize, research, and write a 3,500-word review essay similar to the “progress reports” in the journal, *Progress in Human Geography*. The purpose of the review essay is to survey and critically assess recent geographical or other relevant literature in a specific thematic area related to your research interests or graduate research project. Students should discuss their proposed topic with the instructor *before* the fall reading week and then present a chosen reading related to their review essay topic at the “reading jamboree” in week 8. These readings should be posted to the discussion forum in Brightspace by **October 23**. Students will also present their review essay topics and progress in a 10-15-minute presentation to the class in week 13 of the term. Final assignments should be uploaded to Brightspace by 23:59 on **December 8**. While the class presentation and discussion are an important part of “workshopping” ideas for this assignment, marking will focus on the written review essay. More details to be provided in class.

All written assignments should adhere to proper spelling, grammar, the consistent use of academic referencing (<https://library.carleton.ca/guides/help/citing-your-sources>) and the assignment guidelines discussed in class. Please retain a hard copy (with electronic backup) of submitted work.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Week 1: Course Introduction (September 4)
Week 2: Space and Spatiality (September 11)
Week 3: Place and Sense of Place (September 18)
Week 4: Feminist Geographies (September 25)
Week 5: *No Class Scheduled* (October 2)
Week 6: Colonialism and Geography (October 9)
Week 7: Racial Capitalism (October 16)
Fall reading week, October 20-24
Week 8: Reading Jamboree and Review Essay Discussion (October 30)
Week 9: The Production of Space (November 6)
Week 10: The Anthropocene (November 13)
Week 11: Infrastructures, Precarity, Extraction (November 20)
Week 12: Mapping, Power, Territory (November 27)
Week 13: Class Summary and Presentations (December 4)

GRADES

In accordance with the Carleton University Calendar, the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 57-59	F = < 50
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56	
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D - = 50-52	

ABS = student absent from the final exam; DEF = Deferred; FND = failed, not deferred; GNA = grade not available; WDN = withdrawn from the course.

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 professor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Late and Deferred Assignments or Grades

Assignment turned in late without an approved extension will be subject to a reduction of the overall mark at the rate of 5% for each calendar day past the due date. Assignment extensions will be considered for extenuating circumstances. In such cases, contact the instructor to discuss possible accommodations before an assignment is due and complete *the Self-Declaration for Academic Considerations form*. For details on the proper use of this form and policy, consult the *Course Outline Information on Academic Accommodations* and read about the procedure for requesting academic consideration found here: <https://carleton.ca/fpa/wp-content/uploads/Academic-Consideration-Procedures-for-Students.pdf>. If you are unable to submit assignment(s) before the end of the term, only official deferrals petitioned through the Office of the Registrar will be honoured.

Drop Date

Please check the Carleton University Calendar for the last day in the term to withdraw from a course with full fee adjustment.

Academic Integrity

Prohibition on the Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

The use of generative artificial intelligence tools (e.g. ChatGPT) for the creation or submission of graded work is prohibited in this course.

Academic Standing and Conduct

Students must familiarize themselves with the regulations concerning academic standing and conduct in the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar: <http://www.carleton.ca/calendars/ugrad/current/>.

Instructional and Conduct Offences

Instructional offences include (among other activities): cheating, contravening examination regulations, plagiarism, submitting similar work in two 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 Undergraduate Calendar: <http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/>.

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, artworks, research results, diagrams, 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, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- 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 follows a rigorous process for academic integrity allegations, including reviewing documents and interviewing the student, when an instructor suspects a violation has been committed. Penalties for violations may include a final grade of "F" for the course. The key to avoiding plagiarism is to learn how to do research and how to cite sources properly. The following web site provides advice: www.library.carleton.ca/help/avoid-plagiarism.

Writing Consultation Sessions for Students

If you need assistance with your writing skills, contact SASC to ask about their writing consultation sessions (<https://carleton.ca/csas/support/one-on-one-appointments/writing-consultation-sessions/>).

Requests for Academic Accommodations

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (students.carleton.ca/course-outline).

Academic consideration for extenuating circumstances affecting coursework: if students encounter extenuating circumstances that temporarily hinder their capacity to fulfil in-class academic requirements for a period that is five days or less, they can request academic consideration by contacting the instructor as soon as possible, and normally no later than 24 hours after the submission deadline for course deliverables. "Extenuating circumstances" are circumstances that are beyond a student's control; have a significant impact on the student's capacity to meet their academic obligations; and could not have reasonably been prevented. Please note that requests are not automatically approved. If you require accommodation for missing a course deliverable or deadline for *extenuating circumstances*, complete the *Academic Consideration for Coursework Form* at <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-consideration-coursework-form/>. Approving and determining the accommodation remains at the discretion of the instructor.

Statement on Student Mental Health

As a 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. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>.