

GEOG 2600. Geography behind the Headlines  
Winter Semester, 2026-2027 Academic Year  
Department of Geography & Environmental Studies

Instructor: John Milton, Associate Professor (Teaching)  
Office: A-239, Loeb Bldg.  
E-mail: [johnmilton@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:johnmilton@cunet.carleton.ca)  
Office Hours: TBA – on-line

Timetable: Thursdays, 8:35 – 11:25am; January 7 – April 8, 2027  
Location: 8:35 – 11:25 On-line Hybrid Course combining videos available  
asynchronously and weekly optional live classes  
Brightspace course link: <https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/445687>

---

GEOG 2600 [0.5 credit]. Geography Behind the Headlines. Exploration of the geographical backgrounds to selected issues of current public interest, through geography's perspective of integrating human and physical environments. Issues selected will be structured from the global through the national/regional to the local, identifying the interdependencies among the scales. Lecture three hours a week. (from University Course Catalogue)

*To elaborate:* “Did you see the news today ...”. We are bombarded with information, of all sorts. Our technology keeps us ‘connected’ 24/7. It’s difficult to get away from the world! So, how do we go about understanding this cacophony, this constant noise, created by constant information?

Our most serious challenges, challenges such as climate change, sustainability, social inequity, security/safety, and global public health, are all inherently spatial. Therefore, it would seem that in order to solve such complex problems, we must first understand their geography. The geographic lens provides a way of thinking, understanding and problem-solving that integrates and organizes information in the real-world setting.

The goal of the course is to introduce you to the geographic lens and how it can provide your discipline with added insight into the questions we face. Using news articles, we will explore the ways in which geography exists behind the headline, and the ways in which geography helps us understand these events critically. This is a course very much built on personal and group exploration. We be using GenAI (Co-Pilot) to explore ideas individually and together in class. This course is offered on-line with live classes Thursday mornings. However, these will be recorded so those who cannot attend, for whatever reason, will be able to watch the classes when they can.

## Course Plan

---

January 7. *Class 1 - Course Introduction*. Introducing the Geographic Lens and the discipline of Geography.

January 14. *Class 2 – A Chat with Copilot*. Introducing our co-instructor, Copilot, and the art of the chat.

January 21/28. *Classes 3/4 - Module 1. Highlighting Place as the Site of Lived Experience*. Today's headline is ... *Thinking about Robots in Society*.

February 4/11. *Classes 5/6 - Module 2. Highlighting Connections Linking Places Through Space and Time*. Today's headline is ... *Thinking about an Integrated World or a Fragmented World*.

---

## Academic Break – No classes February 16 - 20

---

February 25/March 4. *Classes 7/8 - Module 3. Highlighting Human–Environment Socio-Ecological Integration*. Today's headline is ... *Thinking about the connections between Climate Change and Global Change. Interconnections between Environmental Change and Politics: Hydro-politics*.

March 11/18. *Module 4. Classes 9/10 - Module 4. Highlighting Geographies of the Imagination*. Today's headline is ... Today's headline is ... *Thinking about People on the Move. From environmental refugees to economic migrants to digital nomads: Imagining a better life*.

March 25. *Module 5. Classes 11 - In-class Test*.

April 1. *Class 12 - How Geography adds nuance and insight to your program of study*. Review for Final Exam.

---

*Final Exam. TBA*

---

*NOTE: The order of the topics may change in order as new news breaks!!!*

---

## Course Textbook

There is no textbook for this course.

## Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, you will possess

1. An *appreciation of the importance of geography* in exploring and understanding the world and the problems we face today from the local to the global scale,
2. The *ability to incorporate the geographic lens* in a critical manner to any problem addressed by your discipline,

3. The *ability to explore ideas* in general in a critical and comprehensive manner,
4. The *ability to use emerging AI software* in an ethical and responsible fashion to explore ideas and knowledge on a wide range of topics, and
5. The *ability to write in a critical manner*.

*Engagement with the Course Materials.* You are required to explore the posted article/topic using the guidelines I provide before the class so you can participate. Then, simply attend class. That is the best way to go. However, this course is being offered as an asynchronous course so if you are unable to attend, videos of the classes will be released following each class. I will endeavour to do so immediately following the end of the class. I will also be posting a video talk on a sub-discipline of geography weekly as well focusing on the sub-discipline most closely relevant to the news item or topic we are covering that week to introduce you to the full diversity of our discipline. These will be important for the final exam.

### Course Structure

I have assembled a series of four news items for us to explore. These explorations will take pace over two classes. The basic approach to each module is as follows:

1. I will have select a news item (topic) relevant to the subject of the specific module. You are expected to have read this article before the first class of the module.
2. In the first class of the module, we will the dimension of the geographic lens and conduct a chat with Co-pilot, Google's AI software, on the topic of the article and its general subject exploring how different disciplines approach and understand the subject.
3. In the second class of the module, we will conduct a second chat with Copilot, this time focussing on how geography helps us better understand the article's subject and the broader topic. We will discuss the importance of the geographic lens and perspective in understanding the subject/topic, and its value in identifying solutions to these problems.
4. These modules will be important for the final exam so don't simply ignore them.

Just how successful the course is will depend upon your interaction and engagement.

### Evaluation and Grading

Course evaluation is based upon an initial assignment, two explorations, and a final exam broken into two parts: an on-line pedagogical test in week 11, and then an on-line final essay.

*Discover your Sub-discipline of Geography.* Part of discovering the value of geography is discovering which sub-discipline of geography your program has the most in common with and can benefit the most from. Therefore, in this opening assignment, you will have a chat with Copilot as a way of discovering that sub-discipline of geography that has the most in common with your program of study. How you will go about doing this is presented in Appendix 1.

*Module explorations.* You will be doing two explorations using Copilot. For the first of these you will choose one of the two articles we use in module one or two and build on our in-class discussion of the subject and dimension of the geographic lens highlighted in that module from the

perspective of your degree discipline. Then for the second exploration, you will choose one of the two articles we use in module three or four and build on our in-class discussion of the subject and the dimension of the geographic lens highlighted in that module again from the perspective of your degree discipline. How you will be conducting these explorations is presented in Appendix 2. Simply follow the steps and have fun exploring ideas and points raised by Copilot (and me).

*Final Exam.* The final exam is divided into two parts to make your life easier.

1. *First, there will be an on-line pedagogical test.* In week 11 of the semester, you will do an on-line test on the two pedagogical objectives of this course. It will be an on-line open-book test. This test will consist of two questions. We will discuss these before Reading Week so you have ample time to prepare.
2. *Second, there will be an on-line Essay Exam.* There will be a formal exam for this course focusing on how geography can add insight and critical value to your discipline. This second part of the final exam will be schedule during the formal exam period. As was the case for the pedagogical test, this will be on-line open book. We will discuss this and its structure in class later in the semester but early enough so you have ample time to prepare.

Failure to complete any of the tasks (minimum number of explorations and/or the exam) can result in the student failing the course.

### Grading

<i>Discovering your Sub-discipline of Geography</i>	<i>10%</i>
<i>Two Explorations –@ 25% each</i>	<i>50%</i>
<i>On-line Pedagogical Test</i>	<i>15%</i>
<i>Final Essay Exam</i>	<i>25%</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

*Final 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+	56-59	F = Below 50
A	85-89	B	73-76	C	63-66	D	53-56	WDN = Withdrawn
A-	80-84	B-	70-72	C-	60-62	D-	50-52	DEF = Deferred

ABS = Student absent from final exam.

FND (Failed, no Deferral) = Student could not pass the course even with 100% on final exam.

Final grades are subject to the Dean’s approval.

*Late Submissions of Worksheets.* In the real world, you are expected to meet your deadlines. Learn to meet deadlines. It makes life so much easier and better. You have two full weeks to complete each exploration. Follow the guidance above and you will find that the semester will be stress-free. Really. However, I will accept late assignments up to one full week. The penalty applied to late submissions will be two full grades (e.g., suppose your assignment is graded as an A-, your grade for that assignment will be B). Just hit the due dates. Life is so much easier when you do!

*Deferred Assignments/Grades.* Only official deferrals petitioned through the Office of the Registrar will be honoured. Students who are unable to complete a final paper or write a final examination because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control or whose performance on an examination has been impaired by such circumstances may apply within five working days to the Registrarial Services Office for permission to extend a term paper deadline or to write a deferred examination. Permission can be granted only if the request is fully and specifically supported by a medical certificate or other relevant documents.

*Written Assignments* - If you feel you need assistance in improving your writing skills, you are encouraged to get in touch early in the term with the CSAS, <https://carleton.ca/csas/>. Students are strongly advised to retain a hard copy (and electronic backup) of all assignments and term papers in the event of loss for whatever reason.

### Statement on Academic Integrity

This course encourages both collaborative work and working with AI. Given this, I expect students to abide by the following stipulations:

- a. *Come to class ready to participate.* There are no right or wrong answers here. You will be sharing your personal explorations. These explorations will lead you to topics of personal interest. We will all benefit from each other's chats.
- b. *Bring your discipline into the class.* Geography is the lens through which interdisciplinary and even trans-disciplinary discussions and actions takes place. When you are conducting your weekly explorations, you are free to incorporate your discipline into the engagements with Co-Pilot.
- c. *Use of generative artificial intelligence tools (Co-pilot).* This course emphasizes ethical and responsible engagement with and use of AI. This is a rapidly emerging toll that has the ability to open new doors to you every day. But it has to be used properly, responsibly, and ethically. We will be discussing all of this so you will be able to use AI in future years properly.

*Elaboration on the use of AI.* AI software is already becoming an important tool in society – and it will only become more important in the years ahead. It is therefore vital that you learn how to use this software effectively, responsibly and ethically.

*Scope of Use of AI.* Students will be using AI tools in this course to maximize their productivity and efficiency, while building skills in AI use more broadly. Examples include but are not limited to:

- *Researching* (e.g., AI-driven literature/idea search) – This will be a core use in the weekly explorations, and
- *Editing your writing* – you have permission to edit your writing using AI, but do not use AI to actually write your work. This is an important distinction. Use AI, if you wish, to edit and conduct grammar-checks. Do not use it for producing the first drafts of your work; that should be your voice.

*Documenting Use of AI.* It is necessary to document your use of AI in this course as follows:

- *Incorporate all your AI chats as outlined in the appendix on your weekly explorations.* As is outlined in the weekly explorations, you will be required to include all AI chats in your submissions.
- Should you use materials obtained through your interactions with AI in your written critical work, you are required to *cite* this as you would any literature in your work.
- *Include an acknowledgement at the end of your assignment (before your reference section) listing how you used AI in producing the assignment.*

*Why have I adopted this policy?* This policy fully integrates AI into the academic workflow, preparing students for a future where AI is prevalent in professional settings. It aims to develop students' proficiency in using AI as a powerful tool while maintaining a strong emphasis on academic integrity and the student's own intellectual contributions. This integration fosters advanced skills in leveraging AI for comprehensive project development and problem-solving.

*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, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations. This also includes any AI-generated work.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else,
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment,
- using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement,
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one’s own,
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s work and/or failing to use quotations marks, and
- submitting any work generated by an AI chatbot program (e.g., ChatGPT), unedited or modified/ edited by the student.

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.

In addition, students cannot submit work produced in any other course. The work submitted must be original and based on the materials presented in this course.

### Statement on Student Mental Health

As a university 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. Here is a list that may be helpful:

#### *Emergency Resources (on and off campus):*

- Emergency numbers: <https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>
- Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 9-8-8, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- For immediate danger or urgent medical support: call 9-1-1

#### *Carleton Resources:*

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

#### *Off Campus Resources:*

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

### 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](https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline)).

*Pregnancy.* Please, write to me before the start of the semester or speak with me about any requests for academic accommodation during our first class. For accommodation regarding a formally scheduled final exam, you must complete the Pregnancy Accommodation Form.

*Religious obligation.* Again, please write to me before the start of the semester or speak with me concerning any possible requests for academic accommodation during our first class.

*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, 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](mailto: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 accommodation for the formally scheduled exam (if applicable).

*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 where 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/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>.

*Accommodation for Student Activities.* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided for students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me or speak with me during the first class concerning any possible requests for academic accommodation the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

Appendix 1. Discovering the Sub-discipline of Geography that has the Most in Common with Your Program of Study

Appendix 2. How to Structure your Two Exploration Assignments