

Geography 8100, *Geographic Thought*, Autumn 2020

Tuesdays, 3:30-6:15, online (3:30- 4:45; break, 4:45- 4:55; 4:55-6:15)

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pronouns: she, her, hers

Office hours: due to wide-ranging schedules among students, it makes sense to schedule office hours *by appointment* rather than fix office hours to a particular time when many students can't make it. To set up an appointment, please let me know at the start or end of class, by email, by my office telephone, or cell. Under pandemic conditions, I can meet with you in-person in a classroom; outside covid times, students always are welcome to stop by my office anytime.

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The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcome to register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. **SLDS contact information:** [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue.  
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CLASSES UNDER PANDEMIC CONDITIONS

Despite OSU's policy for small in-person classes, this course will operate online for the sake of everyone's health and safety. We will meet as a class via zoom, at least at the outset to enable everyone to get to know one another – an important part of the course especially since this course is the first you will take in your graduate program as a cohort. After a while, we can assess course processes as a group and make changes if desired by consensus.

Per OSU's university's guidelines: "Health and safety requirements: All students, faculty and staff are required to comply with and stay up to date on all university safety and health guidance (<https://safeandhealthy.osu.edu>), which includes wearing a face mask in any indoor space and maintaining a safe physical distance at all times. Non-compliance will be warned first and disciplinary actions will be taken for repeated offenses."

COURSE DESCRIPTION and OBJECTIVES

Geog 8100 is a graduate seminar for all incoming MA and PhD graduate students in Geography across the subdisciplines in the department.

Fundamentally, the design of this course is *relational*. The overarching aims are to: (1) help students critically position their research interests in a particular field of study and the discipline more generally, and (2) develop an understanding of how questions raised in other subfields can complement one's research focus, generating a multidimensional grasp of problems. As elaborated in 'Course Strategy' below, students preparing for a class that deals with issues outside their field of specialization are encouraged to think about how they might make use of the concepts and issues under discussion (actually or hypothetically) as a way to: complement the research questions they currently are pursuing, design research in their field of study to incorporate questions and issues not usually engaged, or design a potentially interdisciplinary project in which they (actually or hypothetically) enlist colleagues from other specializations to pursue complementary questions.

The course is organized as a *history of types of questions* raised by geographers over time through the present to develop sensibilities regarding *why* particular questions were raised at a particular point in time and to what the proponents of such questions were critically reacting. The 'organization of questions' for

the course is not meant to reflect a linear evolution with one set of questions or theoretical orientation replacing another because types of questions raised long ago remain important; rather, the objective is to grasp how each new set of questions presented in the discipline over time reflects a need to address issues unattended by existing orientations. The objective is to situate different types of questions in the literature, understand their relation and potential complementarities, as well as to identify and be conversant with major debates.

The general focus is on concepts, the contexts in which they emerged, and the ways in which they are used empirically in human geography (encompassing URGS and E&S). The general orientation is human geography, although the course includes a session each on physical geography (with guest lecture) and spatial & GIScience. The course provides an opportunity for all students to situate their research interests in their respective fields while considering complementarities with research fields they have not yet engaged. This objective stands as much for human geographers who to date have emphasized a particular conceptual framework as for students in physical geography and spatial & GIScience. Sessions outside one's specialty enable students to discuss issues with their peers and scholars in general in these fields, raise questions and actively participate in venues such as departmental colloquia, and crucially, consider complementary fields of inquiry either in their research program or hypothetically as part of a team of interdisciplinary researchers. Critically reflecting on potential research complementarities is likely to be a new type of creative thinking for students across all subfields. The plan is for class discussion to be open, friendly, provocative, and productive.

The course is taught from the vantage point that theory without consideration of how you can use it productively is difficult to grasp and easy to forget. As a required course and therefore one of a number of 'anchors' in the graduate program, the course aims at helping students to think of themselves as part of an interdisciplinary research community, beyond pursuing a particular subject with an advisor and associated committee. This perspective will benefit students considerably as citizens of the department as well as in the future in job interviews with intellectually diverse audiences and in post-MA and PhD careers (academic or non-academic) as well-rounded professionals able view problems multidimensionally and interact on an interdisciplinary basis.

The course is intended in part to be a shared experience regarding students as well as the department more generally. Students well versed in a particular field of study are welcome to suggest replacing syllabus readings with those they think are especially useful; please indicate such suggestions and provide links to readings as soon as possible and no later than one week prior to reading assignment. Students are welcome to invite students not enrolled in the course to attend classes that may interest them and to which they are welcome to contribute.

The type of reading assigned in the course is not intended to encompass major, seminal works in particular fields (although certainly some readings may be considered such), mainly because a semester-length course cannot reasonably accommodate this objective. The selection of readings is intended to provide sufficient information/discussion/analysis for students to grasp the basic contours of a field of study, while providing time for thinking and preparing for class as well as independent reading towards the final paper.

Following the introduction, the course begins with geographic concepts in human geography (space, place, and territory and the ways these concepts differ from 'location'; spatiality; and scale), and then moves to different fields of study, including: spatial and GIScience/critical GIS; climatology (themes tbd by guest lecturer); Marxism; political ecology; postcolonialism and decolonialism; poststructuralism; feminism; intersectionality and queer theory; critical race theory and racial capitalism; and research viewed as a political process (i.e. *of* the political, not just *on* the political).

COURSE STRATEGY

class and reading organization

One main pedagogical assumption underlying the design of this course is that learning the logic of a field of study requires thinking it through and exemplifying it – passive learning by lecture alone is insufficient. Further, collaborative work among students in small groups can be constructive and fruitful regarding both intellectual exchange and getting to members of one’s cohort. Accordingly, the course is structured so that we pursue each topic in two ways: half a class will be lecture/discussion on generic principles of a particular field of study and the context in which that field of study evolved (with 1-3 generic, article-length readings assigned); the other half session will be devoted to two group presentations (groups of 2 or 3), each on an empirical case study that exemplifies the principles previously discussed. The reading load, then, is on average about 4 article-length readings per class.

The first class of the semester will include a general introduction to the course; the second half of this first class will be lecture/discussion on the first topic. Beginning with the second class of the semester, then, the first half of each class will be group presentations that exemplify the principles of the field of study discussed in the previous class, and the second half will be an introduction (principles, context) to the next topic. Students therefore make use of the previous class material in developing their presentations for the next class.

The second half of the class before Thanksgiving break will be devoted to general questions about material covered in the course and discussion of the final papers.

EVALUATION AND GRADING

Students are evaluated on the basis of (1) Carmen posts; (2) presentations; (3) short critical reflection on colloquium of your choice; and (4) final paper.

Grading scheme

The final grade will be figured on a 4.0 scale as follows:

Carmen posts	23%
class presentations (8)	32% (4% each)
short reflection essay (colloquium)	10%
final paper	35%

These modes of evaluation are elaborated below.

Carmen posts

Students post on Carmen on the reading in advance of class (time to be determined at the first class); *late carmen posts will not be read or ‘counted,’ unless an arrangement is made in advance* (email me no later than the deadline and let me know that the post will be late and when it will be posted).

Weekly Carmen posts are ‘counted’ towards evaluation on a presence/absence basis but do not receive letter grades individually to avoid possible anxiety on creative thinking in new directions. The entire set of carmen posts receives a letter grade on a presence/absence basis -- e.g. submission of posts for all readings per the instructions receives a letter grade of 'A' that constitutes 20% of your final grade.

The Carmen posts are intended to: ensure active participation by all students; prompt students to think about the big point(s) of an article and its relation to their research field in advance of class; and provide a forum by which students can learn from each other by reading others’ posts. Regarding the last point, posts will be under ‘**Discussions**’ so that students can read each others’ posts before class. Take

advantage of the intellectual diversity in the class: read each other's posts before class and use the forum to develop interdisciplinary sensibilities and to gain insights from one another.

For *each generic reading* on a topic, students post *at least one thoughtful question* about the article; the question(s) should be formulated as if you were asking an exam question and should show a basic understanding of the central points (questions such as 'what does x mean?' are unacceptable for Carmen posts, but are welcome in class). For the *case study readings*, students post (1) a brief statement indicating how each case study exemplifies the points made in the previous class, and (2) a brief statement regarding questions or procedures that one or both case study/ies or the topic overall might prompt in relation to *your* research, or more generally, your research field. Implications of case studies for your research may be ontological or epistemological; especially in the case of material that is far afield your research focus, epistemological issues may be especially useful to think about. The purpose of the second post on the day of case-study readings is to prompt all students to continually situate their research interests in the discipline and to think about ways in which research that might seem disconnected from yours may indeed have pertinence; posts that imagine an interdisciplinary team or that discuss possible extensions of your research are welcome. For the sake of efficiency, please place all your questions/comments for a particular class in one post and separate them out relative to author and type of post.

Students presenting in a particular class are exempt from the Carmen post on case studies.

class presentations

Presentations on case studies are a vehicle for actively and critically engaging course material *collaboratively* to: situate case studies in disciplinary perspectives; provide presentation experience; and provide a mechanism for teamwork with various partners with different perspectives and interests. Each student will have up to 10 minutes and will be evaluated individually, although note that individual presentations in a group presentation must connect and flow from collaborative preparation. Each group presentation (total of 2 in a class) will be followed by around 10 minutes of discussion per questions raised by other students in the class. Each group should prepare a brief outline (*not more than 1 page*) of the presentation to distribute in class. Since we are meeting by zoom, please email the outline to all members of the class just before class. All students will present 8 times over the course of the semester.

Grades for presentations will be posted on Carmen within 24 hours after class. 50% of the grade will be given by your partner regarding your collaboration; each student should email me the 'collaboration grade' (a letter grade) before or after class.

Overall, the presentations should: (1) show how the case study exemplifies the principles discussed in the previous class, and (2) indicate how the case study or general field of study might stimulate complementary questions related to *your* research program or your research field more generally; both these objectives should be developed through discussion with your presentation partner(s). Additionally, as we move through different perspectives, it would be helpful to include in the presentation how the topic of the case study would have been approached from a different field of study/perspective already covered. For presentations on fields of study in human geography (after the first few classes on geographic concepts), presentations should engage the geographic concept(s) used in the case study. The presentation should *not* summarize a case study, which would be boring because everyone in class will have read and posted on the article. Notes are fine at presentations, but presentations should *not* be read.

Students are welcome to request presenting on a particular article and/or topic; please let me know by e-mail at the start or end of class at the beginning of the semester if you have requests (assignments will be made on a first-come, first-serve basis). By the second week of the semester, students will either sign up for presentations or I will assign presentations randomly (we'll decide the process by consensus); prior to

this time, assignments will be decided in class on a volunteer basis. As soon as the assignments are finalized, the presentation roster will be posted on the Carmen page. Students are then welcome to swap presentations if the need arises (due to a difficult schedule in a particular week, changing interests...); justification for swapping is *not* required – the main requirement is that you handle the swap yourselves and let me know so that I can update the online assignment roster.

short critical reflection essay on one colloquium of your choice

The department colloquium series is an important part of your graduate education. Colloquia, irrespective of their ir/relevance to your particular research field, provide an opportunity to learn about different perspectives in Geography (including those you like and dislike), and the Q/A after a colloquium presentation provides much ‘food for thought;’ sometimes the Q/A can be the most valuable part of a colloquium. *Comments about colloquia are welcome as part of class discussion.* One indirect aim of this course to help you feel comfortable participating in colloquia in the Q/A segment, and further, to take discussion about the issues beyond the colloquium period.

With the above in mind, one assignment is a short critical reflection of a colloquium of your choice, including the Q/A segment. The paper should be 3-5 pages double spaced and is ***due by the start of the first class after the colloquium on which you write; please send your reflection essay to me as an email attachment in Word.*** The paper should *briefly* summarize the speaker’s presentation (*no more than a paragraph on summary*); situate the colloquium in a particular field of study and the discipline more generally; and develop a critical commentary, which can engage strengths, limitations, debatable issues, contributions (or lack thereof). There is no ‘blueprint’ for critical commentary; the main task is thoughtful discussion and critical positioning.

final paper (due December 7)

The paper for this course should work for your research program. Students are welcome to discuss their plans for their papers with me, and they are encouraged to discuss their plans with their advisors since the paper should be help you to make progress towards your thesis/dissertation or possibly a paper that you might submit for publication. ***Short proposals for papers (2pp) are due no later than Friday, November 6; please send to me by email as a Word attachment, and I will get back to you with feedback by email as soon as possible.*** There are choices, as indicated below.

(A) Write a paper that positions you to move forward with your literature review for your thesis/dissteration. Situate your research interests in your particular field of study and in the discipline more generally. What questions are you raising, and how do you position them? What is the nature of the contributions you wish to make? What geographic concepts are you using, how, and what insights do they afford? How might you bring Geography to interdisciplinary discussions of the topic on which you are focusing? Length: 10-15 pages.

(B) Develop an interdisciplinary project with one or more of your class members from different field(s) that demonstrates the usefulness of complementary types of questions rooted in different fields of study. The co-authored paper should be a draft that could be submitted to a journal for publication, either as a regular article or a shorter piece for an intervention/commentary.

(C) Write a paper that you could revise and submit to a journal for publication in your field of study. *The paper should be accompanied by a reflection essay (about 3 pages) that connects the paper with course objectives/material – what you’ve learned in the course.*

(D) I am open to alternative proposals as long as they connect with course objectives/material.

READING

E-Reserves (journal articles, book chapters): electronic copies are accessible on the Carmen page for the course under 'Modules.' The articles on Carmen are listed in the order in which you will read them (see Weekly Schedule pp. 9-10 of this syllabus). They are listed on pp. 6-8 in alphabetical order with full bibliographic information, for your information. All reading is required. *Please alert me if you have any problems accessing course material or if you find problems with the pdfs.*

CLASS ATTENDANCE

Regular and punctual attendance in 8100 and in departmental colloquia are required. Students should drop this course if they have commitments that overlap with the class period. **Students should indicate in advance if they cannot be at a particular class on time or have to leave in the middle due to uncontrolled circumstances that can be documented (e.g. a medical appointment).** Students are responsible for any course material and announcements that are missed.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

As a graduate seminar, the course will involve considerable discussion. Basic expectations include mutual respect and interest in learning from each other.

Use of electronic devices in class for any reason other than course engagement is *unacceptable*.

MISCELLANEOUS REGULATIONS

Academic misconduct, including plagiarism, is not tolerated. See the Code of Student Conduct at OSU at http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp.

REQUIRED READING – BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Joshi, S., McCutcheon, P., and Sweet, E. 2015. Visceral geographies of whiteness and invisible microaggressions. *ACME* 14: 298-323.
- (optional) Kershaw, G.G.L., Castleden, H., and Laroque, C.P. 2014. An argument for ethical physical geography research on indigenous landscapes in Canada. *The Canadian Geographer* 58: 393-399.
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WEEKLY SCHEDULE

date	general topic	class discussion	assignments
Aug 25 week 1	introduction to course		
Sept 1 week 2	geographic concepts in human geography	space, place, territory	Massey 1993; Harvey 2006; Klinke
		<i>presentations: space, place, territory</i>	Zhou & Tseng; Jönsson
spatiality		Foucault 1980; Leszczynski	
Sept 8 week 3		<i>presentations: spatiality</i>	Berman; Widmer
		scale	Moore
Sept 15 week 4		<i>presentations: scale</i>	Cobarrubius; Smith & Ley
		fields of study	spatial & GIScience
Sept 22 week 5		<i>presentations: spatial & GIScience</i>	Shelton; McElroy
		Marxism	Massey 1979; Harvey 1996
Sept 29 week 6		<i>presentations: Marxism</i>	Addie; Springer
	political ecology	Robbins; Swyngedoux & Heynan; Sultana	
Oct 6 week 7	<i>presentations: political ecology</i>	Fernando 2020a, 2020b	
	climatology (Steven Quiring)	Mather; Tadaki et al.	
Oct 13 week 8	<i>presentations: climatology</i>	Li et al; Zhang et al.	
	postcolonialism/decoloniality	Young; Said; McEwan	
Oct 20 week 9	<i>presentations: postcolonialism/decoloniality</i>	Madianou; Casilli	
	poststructuralism	Dixon & Jones; Pickett et al.	
Oct 27 week 10	<i>presentations: poststructuralism</i>	Hiemstra; Reeves	
	feminism	Haraway; Peake; <i>optional: Kershaw</i>	
Nov 3 week 11	<i>presentations: feminism</i>	Fluri; Leszczynski & Elwood	
	intersectionality & queer theory	Valentine; Oswin	

Nov 10 week 12	<i>presentations: intersectionality & queer theory</i>	Luft; Moussawi
	critical race theory; racial capitalism; and microaggressions in everyday life	Martinez; Blesdoe & Wright; Joshi et al.
Friday, Nov 13	final paper proposals due	
Nov 17 week 13	<i>presentations: critical race theory</i>	Coates; Mele
	research as a political process	Fraser & Weninger; Kesby
Nov 24 week 14	<i>presentations: research as a political process</i>	Gibson-Graham; Cahill
	discussion (course, final papers)	
Nov 1 week 15	tbd	
M Dec 7	final paper due	