

Foundations of Geographical Thought

aka 'Development of Geographic Thought'

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This seminar is devoted to excavating and defining the foundations of contemporary geographical thought. We ask: what does it mean to think geographically? What constitutes geographical thought? How can we define geographical thought when its practitioners think and do such diverse things? How do we locate truth geographically?

To answer these questions our seminar will undertake a critical and historical analysis of core geographical concepts: space, spatiality, place, science, discourse, difference, capital, empire, and climate change. We begin by reading a trio of philosophical accounts of space and place – by Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel – and then consider how these were reworked in the formation of the modern discipline. We then put contemporary geographical texts in conversation with ‘canonical’ texts by reading pairwise, e.g., Gramsci and Harvey on science, Butler and Nagar on difference, and Said and Gregory on imperialism. We conclude by examining two contemporary debates about geographical thought: one concerning the role of the military in geographical research; another on the relevance of geography in an era of anthropogenic climate change.

Our reading plan is outlined on page two; details on each week’s readings will be clarified at the end of each seminar meeting.

Course requirements

Your grade will be comprised of the following:

Attendance and participation	25 %
In-class presentations (2 x 12.5%)	25 %
Papers (2 x 25%)	50 %

As an advanced reading seminar we will read 100-200 pages of challenging material each week. Our success is dependent upon careful and thorough reading, so come to class prepared. Attendance and participation are required and will be graded.

Participation is principally measured by the quality of your contributions to our discussions. (If you cannot attend class because of illness, you must bring a signed note from a doctor excusing you from class.)

Apart from the readings, there are two assignments: (1) a pair of seminar presentations, to be arranged at the end of the first class meeting; (2) a pair of short papers, due March 10 and April 29. (Further details on these assignments will be provided in class.)

Our reading plan

Part 1: before Spring break

#	Date	Topic	canonical texts	contemporary readings	<i>Geography & geographers chapters</i>	<i>Dictionary of Human Geography concepts</i>
1	13-Jan	seminar introduction				
2	20-Jan	what is 'geographic thought'?			Pref & 1	geographical imaginary, geography, geography history of, human geography, methodology, philosophy
3	27-Jan	humans, nature, and geography	Hartshorne, Sauer, Bowman		2	Berkeley school, cultural landscape, landscape, Landschaft, nature, possibilism, region
4	3-Feb	philosophy of space 1	Aristotle, Kant, Hegel			epistemology, idealism, Kantianism, materialism, ontology, space, spatiality
5	10-Feb	philosophy of space 2	Aristotle, Kant	Massey		
6	17-Feb	spatial/quantitation revolution	Taafe	Harvey (1969) selection	3 & 4	central place theory, distance decay, location theory, positivism, quantitative revolution, spatial analysis, spatial science
7	24-Feb	science	Gramsci	Harvey (1972)		falsification, laboratory, law (scientific), paradigm, science, situated knowledge
8	3-Mar	difference	Butler	Nagar	[7, 8]	difference, essentialism, Other, post-colonialism, post-structuralism, subject, text, feminist geographies, positionality
9	10-Mar	scale [paper 1 due]		[see handout]		scale, modifiable areal unit problem (MAUP), ecological fallacy, social construction, and production of space

Our reading plan

Part 2: after Spring break

#	Date	Topic	canonical texts	contemporary readings	<i>Geography & geographers chapters</i>	<i>Dictionary of Human Geography concepts</i>
	17-Mar	Spring break: no class				
10	24-Mar	capital	Marx		6	accumulation, capital, capitalism, class, commodity, labor process, labor theory of value, Marxist geography
11	31-Mar	empire [guest participant: Dr Lisa Bhungalia]	Said	Belcher		colonialism, contrapuntal geog, empire, hegemony, imaginative geographies, imperialism, occupation military
12	7-Apr	military/state and geography	Bowman, Smith	Dobson, Wainwright		American empire, disciplinary power, empiricism, exploration, fieldwork, geographical imagination, Pax Americana
13	14-Apr	the Anthropocene, climate change, & 'relevance'		<i>Annals</i> 2015 issue 1	9	environmental security, oil, petro-capitalism, political ecology, possibilism, posthumanism, production of nature
	21-Apr	AAG meetings: no class				
	29-Apr	[paper 2 due: 2 pm on Wednesday, April 29]				

Seminar presentations

Each week our discussion will begin with one or two presentations on the assigned texts. Each student will give two such presentations. Your presentations should do three things:

1. situate our readings by offering a brief ‘abstract’ of the texts we have read;
2. present us with your *critical reflections* on the texts;
3. offer ~3 questions to structure our seminar discussion (please bring copies of your questions for the other seminar participants).

Presentations should last about ten minutes. I encourage you to take this opportunity to practice formal presentation of ideas by writing out your remarks in advance.

Short papers

You will write two critical reflection essays. These papers (~ 6 pages or ~ 2,000 words) should discuss one or two of the texts and concepts that we have studied in the seminar. Each essay must provide a *concise analytic summary* of any text you discuss, as well as your own *critical analysis* of the central argument of the given text. Critical analysis requires thoughtful reflection. A strong essay is well-written (and therefore entertaining) and provides ‘constructive criticism’, i.e., a critical analysis of the argument. Your essays should use formal presentation (double-spaced, 12 point font). When you refer to a text, be sure to cite it properly. Your papers may be turned in – paper copies only, please – at any time before the due date.

‘Fine print’: turning in work, plagiarism, and so on

Because many of us are easily distracted by the use of cell phones, computers, recording devices, and the like, such equipment should be turned off and put away during class.

Late work loses ten percentage points per day. For instance, a paper that is turned in six days late but would have otherwise received a score of 90/100 would be worth 30/100.

Grading options for the course are A,A-,B+,B-,C+,C-,D+,D, E. An ‘I’, or Incomplete, will only be given under special circumstances and where the instructor has made an arrangement with the student *before* the end of the final week of the quarter. If you wish to request an ‘I’, be prepared to explain (a) why an Incomplete is an appropriate grade option under the circumstances, and (b) how and when you will complete the incomplete.

Any academic misconduct, such as plagiarizing, will be reported to Ohio State’s Office of Academic Affairs, Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM). They have prepared the following statement on academic integrity (see below). Please read it carefully.

Accommodation will be made for any student with special needs based on the impact of a disability. Please contact the instructor and also the Office for Disability Services at 292-3307 (150 Pomerene).

Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity

Ohio State Office of Academic Affairs, Committee on Academic Misconduct

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, students are expected to complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. The following suggestions will help you preserve academic integrity[...].

1. **ACKNOWLEDGE THE SOURCES THAT YOU USE WHEN COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS:** If you use another person's thoughts, ideas, or words in your work, you must acknowledge this fact. This applies regardless of whose thoughts, ideas, or words you use as well as the source of the information. If you do not acknowledge the work of others, you are implying that another person's work is your own, and such actions constitute plagiarism. Plagiarism is the theft of another's intellectual property [...].

2. **AVOID SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR:** Do not put yourself in a position where an instructor might suspect that you are cheating or that you have cheated. Even if you have not cheated, the mere suspicion of dishonesty might undermine an instructor's confidence in your work. Avoiding some of the most common types of suspicious behavior is simple. Before an examination, check your surroundings carefully and make sure that all of your notes are put away and your books are closed. An errant page of notes on the floor or an open book could be construed as a 'cheat sheet'. Keep your eyes on your own work. [...]

3. **DO NOT FABRICATE INFORMATION:** Never make-up data, literature citations, experimental results, or any other type of information that is used in an academic or scholarly assignment.

4. **DO NOT FALSIFY ANY TYPE OF RECORD:** Do not alter, misuse, produce, or reproduce any University form or document or other type of form or document. Do not sign another person's name to any form or record (University or otherwise), and do not sign your name to any form or record that contains inaccurate or fraudulent information. Once an assignment has been graded and returned to you, do not alter it and ask that it be graded again. [...]

5. **DO NOT GIVE IN TO PEER PRESSURE:** Friends can be a tremendous help to one another when studying for exams or completing course assignments. However, don't let your friendships with others jeopardize your college career. Before lending or giving any type of information to a friend or acquaintance, consider carefully what you are lending (giving), what your friend might do with it, and what the consequences might be if your friend misuses it. [...]

6. **DO NOT SUBMIT THE SAME WORK FOR CREDIT IN TWO COURSES:** Instructors do not give grades in a course, rather students earn their grades. Thus, instructors expect that students will earn their grades by completing all course requirements (assignments) while they are actually enrolled in the course. If a student uses his/her work from one course to satisfy the requirements of a different course, that student is not only violating the spirit of the assignment, but he/she is also putting other students in the course at a disadvantage. Even though it might be your own work, you are not permitted to turn in the same work to meet the requirements of more than one course. [...]

7. **DO YOUR OWN WORK:** When you turn in an assignment with only your name on it, then the work on that assignment should be yours and yours alone. This means that you should not copy any work done by or work together with another student (or other person). [...]

8. **MANAGE YOUR TIME:** Do not put off your assignments until the last minute. If you do, you might put yourself in a position where your only options are to turn in an incomplete (or no) assignment or to cheat. [...]

9. **PROTECT YOUR WORK AND THE WORK OF OTHERS:** The assignments that you complete as a student are your "intellectual property," and you should protect your intellectual property just as you would any of your other property.[...]

10. **READ THE COURSE SYLLABUS AND ASK QUESTIONS:** Many instructors prepare and distribute (or make available on a web site) a course syllabus. Read the course syllabus for every course you take!