

Development of Geographic Thought

GEOG 612-001 (CRN: 54022), Fall 2016 (8/23-12/16)

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Course Description: A review of the development of the discipline of geography & major approaches to geographic research.

Course Purpose: *Geography* is an interdisciplinary field of study straddling nature and society. It integrates and synthesizes a whole range of academic disciplines and intellectual approaches to investigate nature and society through a variety of theories, philosophies, methodologies, and techniques. *GEOG 612* is a Core Course Requirement in the geography graduate program at ISU. The course presents a review of the history of geography and the development of major approaches to geographic research. The textbook uses examples drawn from both physical geography and human geography. The course involves a series of in-depth readings, writings, and discussions.

Course Organization: The course is organized more like a graduate seminar requiring class members' individual participation and contribution. The reading, writing, and discussion assignments will be focused on the identification, articulation, and debate of: (1) the evolving content or subject matter of geography, (2) the changing theories, philosophies, methodologies, and techniques, (3) the complex sociopolitical and geopolitical context, (4) the major geographers of the time and their contributions, (5) the connections between geography and other disciplines or intellectual traditions, and (6) the relevance of all the above to the student's own graduate program, research interest, and career.

Course Requirements: Class members are responsible for all announcements made in class or by email and are required to (1) attend all scheduled class meetings, (2) complete the assigned readings before the scheduled meetings, (3) turn in assignments on time, and (4) actively participate in discussions through pertinent and thoughtful contributions. **Class members will be given a weekly reading assignment about which they will write a one-page/single-spaced essay (1) summarizing, synthesizing, and highlighting the main points of the reading and (2) critically reacting to them in light of one or more of the 6 points listed under Course Organization.** The peer-reviewer and grader will use his/her own judgment to assess the extent to which each class member was successful at identifying, articulating, and debating one or more the 6 points listed under Course Organization. Hopefully, (1) writing a thoughtful summary about each reading will enhance your geography learning, (2) providing a critique will sharpen your intellectual acumen, (3) assigning a grade will improve your cognitive judgment, and (4) leading a class discussion will professionalize your teamwork and communication skills.

Course Grading: Grades are based on the *level* and *quality* of individual participation and contribution of class members through their reading, writing, grading, discussion, and attendance. Grading involves some peer-review grading. Any late or non-discussed or non-peer-reviewed essay will incur a grade penalty of 2 points (2% of the final grade). Since attendance and active participation are required and are at the core of graduate seminar work (where the sum should be greater than its parts), any absence (with or without valid excuse) will incur a grade penalty of 5 points (5% of the final grade). The weekly essays are worth 65 points or 65 percent of the final grade (each is worth 5 points). Pertinent and thoughtful contributions to the weekly discussions are worth 35 points or 35 percent of the final grade (each is worth 2 points; the last essay/class presentation is worth 16 points). Grades are assigned according to the following scale: A (96 to 100%), A- (90 to 95%), B+ (86 to 89%), B (83-85%), B- (80 to 82%), C+ (76 to 79%), C (73 to 75%), C- (70 to 72%), D+ (66 to 69%), D (63 to 65%), D- (60 to 62%), and F (below 60%).

Course Integrity: Any confirmed offense against academic integrity will be considered a misconduct activity under the Code of Student Conduct: <http://www.indstate.edu/sci/docs/CodeConduct.pdf>. It will subject its author(s) to failure in the course and could lead to further disciplinary action. Academic dishonesty is the cardinal sin in academia & includes plagiarism, cheating, fraud, using another person's material as one's own, knowingly allowing another person to use one's work as his/her own.

Required Course Readings:

“*The Nature of an Academic Discipline*” (R. J. Johnston, *Geography and Geographers: Anglo-American Human Geography since 1945*, New York, Arnold, 1997, pages 1-37). This reading could be provided by the instructor.

“*Histories of Geography*” (by Mike Heffernan), https://www.corwin.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/9555_019254ch1.pdf

Pauline Couper, *A Student's Introduction to Geographical Thought: Theories, Philosophies, Methodologies* (Sage, London, 2015). USNB 978-1-4462-8296-0 (pbk). (ISU Bookstore).

“*Getting Started in Geographical Research*” (Nicholas Clifford and Gill Valentine, eds., *Key Methods in Geography* (London: Sage Publications, 2003, pages 1-16). This reading could be provided by the instructor.

Course Calendar:

Week 1 (8/25): SKIM through these two introductory readings: “The Nature of an Academic Discipline” (R. J. Johnston, *Geography and Geographers: Anglo-American Human Geography since 1945*, New York, Arnold, 1997, pages 1-37) and Chapter 1 of the textbook: “Introduction: Geographers at the Beach.”

Week 2 (9/1): Is there a single history of geography? Read carefully: “Histories of Geography,” https://www.corwin.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/9555_019254ch1.pdf . Write a one-page/single-spaced essay (1) summarizing, synthesizing, and highlighting the main points of the “Histories of Geography” and (2) critically reacting to them in light of one or more of the 6 points listed under Course Organization. Essay 1 is due on 9/1/16

Week 3 (9/8): Chapter 2: “Positivism: OR, Roughly, What You See Is the Knowledge You Get.” Do as in Essay 1. **Essay 2**

Week 4 (9/15): Chapter 3: “Critical Rationalism: Learning from our Mistakes.” **Essay 3**

Week 5 (9/22): Chapter 4: “Marxism and Critical Realism: Seeking what Lies Beneath.” **Essay 4**

Week 6 (9/29): Chapter 5: “Phenomenology and Post-Phenomenology: The Essence of Experience, OR, Seeing a Shark is Different from Seeing a Dolphin.” **Essay 5**

Week 7 (10/6): Chapter 6: “Social Constructionism and Feminism: It’s All Down To Us.” **Essay 6**

Week 8 (10/13): Chapter 7: “Structuralism, Poststructuralism and Postmodernism: Life at the Surface.” **Essay 7**

Week 9 (10/20): Chapter 8: “Complexity Theory: from Butterfly Wings to Fairy Rings.” **Essay 8**

Week 10 (10/27): Chapter 9: “Moral Philosophy and Ethics: Right and Wrong in Geography.” **Essay 9**

Week 11 (11/3): Chapter 10: “Thinking, Doing, Constructing Geography.” **Essay 10**

Week 12 (11/10): Summary and critique of a 2016 journal article selected from one of the four major areas of research (“Environmental Sciences;” “Methods, Models, and Geographic Information Sciences;” “Nature and Society;” and “People, Place, and Region”) of the *Annals of American Association of Geographers*. **Essay 11**

Week 13 (11/17): Review and presentation of the *American Association of Geographers* (as presented in its website: <http://www.aag.org>) as (a) an academic community, (b) a professional annual conference, (c) a publisher of the “flagship” academic journal of geography, and (d) a designer of the four broad research areas in geography today: (1) Environmental Science; (2) Methods, Models, and Geographic Information Science; (3) Nature and Society; and (4) People, Place, and Region. **Essay 12**

Thanksgiving Break (11/21-25): No classes

Week 14 (12/1): A one-page/single-spaced outline of what would/could be your thesis or dissertation proposal. It should involve synthesis and should constitute a vivid application of geographic thought to the student’s research interest. The outline should (1) identify a research problem, (2) articulate a research question, (3) highlight its significance, (3) point out the literature gap that needs to be addressed, (4) reflect the use of some theoretical or analytical frameworks, (5) discuss a specific methodology in terms of the techniques of collection and analysis of original evidence or data, and (6) list the top three or four sources or references used in the preparation of the outline proposal. Read “Getting Started in Geographical Research” (Nicholas Clifford and Gill Valentine, eds., *Key Methods in Geography*, London: Sage Publications, 2003, pp. 1-16). **Essay 13**

Week 15 (12/8): **Essay 13 due**

Week 16 (12/13-15): No Final examinations