McGill University, Department of Geography.

GEOG 381
GEOGRAPHIC THOUGHT & PRACTICE

Winter 2019
Tuesdays and Thursdays 4.05-5.25pm, Burnside 308

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Tuesdays 5:30-6:30
[for Part 1; Part 2 by appt]
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course has two principal objectives. The first is to develop a critical perspective on the nature and practice of geography. We will trace the history of the discipline and consider different paradigms and theoretical approaches that have been influential in its development. The second is to focus on the process of conducting geographical research in preparation for GEOG 491/492 (Honours Thesis Research). We will explore the practical and conceptual aspects of project design, examine a range of methods, and debate ethical and reflective concerns.

When it comes time to design your Honours thesis, the expectation is that the first part of this course will provide you with the foundations to create the conceptual framework that will guide your thesis. The second part will provide the information you need to help design the structure of your project and consider which are the most appropriate methods to choose, taking all relevant considerations into account. How you take this information and develop your thesis will vary according to your topic and thesis supervisor; but this course will create the solid foundation on which to build your thesis programme.

READINGS
Each week there are 2-4 readings to be completed. These are mandatory and are posted on MyCourses. The other readings listed at the end of the Course Outline are additional, optional suggestions or/and those that might be of use for your Honours thesis.

EVALUATION

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take home exam (covers material from first half of course)</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Distributed 12th February (in class)</td>
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<td>Due 21st February, 5 pm</td>
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<td>Email to Prof. Oswin (cc yourself)</td>
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<td>Participation, weekly reading questions &amp; brief presentations</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Ongoing. Includes -</td>
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<td>- Weekly reading questions</td>
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<td>- Participation in class</td>
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<td>- Brief methods presentation (classes 19-21)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honours proposal and annotated bibliography</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Tuesday 16 April 5 pm.</td>
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<td>Email to Prof Turner (cc yourself).</td>
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**Take home exam 35%**

**Distributed Tuesday 12th February; due Thursday 21st February, 5pm.**

The take home exam will cover material from the first half of the course (with Prof Oswin). It will comprise several questions from which you will be required to answer two by drawing on class readings, lectures and discussions. The word limit for each answer is 1250.

Your Take Home exam will be assessed in terms of:
- A grasp of the nuances and subtleties of the topic covered.
- Logical organisation of material covered.
- Effective and thoughtful incorporation of readings into your analyses.
- Evidence of attention to details, care in preparation and accurate referencing (including keeping to word limit).

**Participation, weekly reading questions & brief presentations 30%**

This course is organised in part to build skills in seminar discussions, spoken critical reflection, and team work. You are expected to complete the assigned readings in advance of class meetings, to attend the class, to stay for the full duration, and to participate fully. There will be occasional brief lectures but much class time will be spent discussing the weekly topics and assigned readings as a group.

Your participation will be assessed in terms of:
- overall commitment to participating in class discussions, with evidence of critical reading
- a display of excellent listening skills
- being able to respond in a constructive way to what others have said
- consistently contributing to and facilitating group discussion on the topic at hand
- preparation of relevant and logical questions for weekly readings
- brief, well-prepared presentations (Part 2)

Note that active participation and facilitation includes *giving space for all to respond and talk* – everyone needs to be careful not to dominate each conversation.

Your participation in weekly seminar classes is essential for the completion of this course. If you are going to miss a class, please inform the Prof in advance.

**Weekly Reading Questions:**

For each *class* in Part I, prepare two (2) questions that come to mind as you do the readings (2 questions per class, not per reading). These must be emailed to Prof. Oswin by 5 pm on the day before class (i.e. by 5 pm Monday or 5 pm Wednesday).

For each *week* in Part 2, prepare three (3) questions that come to mind as you do the readings (3 questions per week, not per reading). These must be emailed to Prof. Turner by 5pm on Monday for the week’s readings. You should submit at least one (1) question pertaining to each class (e.g. 1 for Tuesday’s class; 2 for Thursday’s class or vice versa; NOT 3 all for Tuesday’s class).
The questions will (usually) be used in class and are mandatory. These form part of your participation grade.

Email these in the body of the email (not as an attachment) in this format:

*Your question (followed by your name in brackets at end of question).*

*E.g.*: In the reading by Smith (2010) he notes X. Although I thought this was an important statement I wondered why he didn’t discuss Y too, since that would also seem relevant for Z? (Bob)

**Methods Presentations (Part 2)**

You will present a brief presentation/overview of one method/reading during the second half. Presentations will be 10 minutes long (concise!) plus time for a brief discussion. Your presentation should be oral (notes allowed), but should *not* use PowerPoint. The aim is for you to succinctly summarise the main points concerning an individual method while showing a understanding of key points; outline the method’s strengths and weaknesses; briefly critique the article itself (e.g. would you recommend it; why? Why not?). Your methods presentation forms part of your participation grade. More information in class.

Note: at the end of Part 1, you will receive informal (emailed) feedback about your participation to date. This will NOT be a set grade, but will give you an understanding of where ‘you’re at’ in relation to expectations.

**Brief proposal and annotated bibliography 35%**

**Due Tuesday April 16 5pm. Submit by email to Prof Turner, cc yourself.**

This assignment is intended to help you begin to design your honours thesis research project. It comprises two parts:

1) **Brief proposal**

This comprises four sections:

1. Overview/Introduction
2. Research aim and questions
3. Conceptual framework (diagram and summary of core ideas)
4. Methodology (including brief statements on possible *analysis* approaches and *positionality*).

The word limit for this part of the assignment is **2500 words**.

2) **Annotated Bibliography**

- Provide a selected bibliography of scholarly literature relevant to your potential honours thesis topic. Bibliography should list twelve (12) refereed journal articles and/or book chapters minimum.
- Annotate six (6) of the key references from your list. These annotations should include a summary and critical engagement with the text. Each annotation should be no longer than 200-250 words. These six (6) references should be on your topic, not methods.
- The word limit for this section of the assignment (the annotated bibliography, not the full reference list) is **1500 words** (*excluding* the 6 reference citations themselves).
More details will be provided in the tutorial class on the proposal.

Your ‘Brief proposal and annotated bibliography’ will be assessed in terms of:

- Four clear sections in the proposal that are detailed, yet succinct, and include the required information detailed above and outlined in the tutorial.
- Six clearly written and well-structured annotated bibliography references, showing evidence of engagement with the relevant academic themes.
- A grasp of the nuances and subtleties of the topic covered.
- Logical organisation of material covered – including the full bibliography list.
- Evidence of attention to details, care in preparation and accurate referencing.

**Important information for all assessment and the course as a whole**

- **Ten percent (10%)** will be deducted for every 24 hours past the deadline a piece of work is late. (Note: ½ hour late on the due date is considered part of the first 24 hours late).

- No supplemental work is allowed to improve grades.

- In accordance with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

- If you have a disability please contact either Prof to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at 514-398-6009 before you do this.

- In extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control (or ours!), the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

- Plagiarism will not be tolerated within the University system and is dealt with seriously at all levels of learning. *Please make sure you source your ideas and direct quotes clearly.*

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information).

Note that if the Profs suspect plagiarism or cheating it is immediately out of our control and the case goes directly to the Associate Dean, Student Affairs. If you are unclear, in any way, as to what might constitute plagiarism or cheating, please talk about this with us during office hours.

- No lecture notes will be available on MyCourses (although interesting diagrams, information, news etc. will be). It is a student’s responsibility to gain notes from class members if they miss a class.

- This is a small seminar based class. In class, you are expected to be active participants. Disruptive activities such as excessive talking unrelated to class content, web surfing, emailing, newspaper reading, and the like will not be tolerated. People trying to multi-task and read email, Facebook, etc. when we are actively working in class will be asked to leave. Best option – turn the Wi-Fi and cellphone off unless we are doing a group activity with the internet.
Mutual respect is expected at all times among instructors, teaching assistants, support staff and students at McGill University. Students are referred to the Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities (the ‘Green Book’) for McGill’s policies on Code of Conduct and to www.mcgill.ca/dpcio/epolicies for McGill’s E-policies.

Sexual Assault Survivor Support and Allyship:
Should you or someone you know need support as a survivor of sexual assault, harassment and/or discrimination on campus, please contact McGill’s Sexual Violence Response Advisor, Émilie Marcotte, at 514-398-4486 or by email at: osvrse@mcgill.ca, situated in the Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support and Education (located at 550 Sherbrooke, suite 585) for assistance. They also offer drop-in hours during the school year (the schedule is online). For more information on their office, sexual violence support and reporting options visit: https://www.mcgill.ca/osvrse/
The Sexual Assault Centre of the McGill Student’s Society (SACOMSS) offers peer counseling and support to students who have experienced sexual violence and their allies, as well as outreach and education. You can find out more about them at http://www.sacomss.org/wp/ Their hotline number is: (514) 398-8500 and they offer drop-in hours as well (the schedule is online).

Running late?
Submit late work by email to the relevant Prof: take home to Prof Oswin; proposal and annotated bib to Prof Turner.

Do not hand in work at the Department Office.

Students can make a formal request for special consideration for an extension to one of the Profs only with one of the following documents in hand:

(i) a Medical Doctor’s note which specifically states that you were unable to attend the test or hand in your annotated assignment by the due date because of a medical emergency (note that getting the flu or food poisoning the day before an assignment is due doesn’t work- don’t leave things to the last minute for an Honours class), or

(ii) a bereavement notice from a newspaper or other legitimate documentation in the case of a family death or emergency.

It is appreciated if you know you will miss a deadline because of a bereavement or illness that you let us know as soon as possible.

Poor organisation is not a valid reason for an extension of due dates.
We believe in strictly enforcing due dates for equity amongst your class peers.
MyCourses
The course outline and any other relevant information, including readings, will be posted on MyCourses. Full lecture notes will not be posted to MyCourses.

Editing Support
If you feel that your work would benefit from editing help or help with English grammar, check out these resources:

http://www.mcgill.ca/tutoring/
Advanced, experienced tutors will proofread your work for you, for $15 an hour.

There also free tutoring (and proof-reading) available for science undergraduates at: http://peertutors.sus.mcgill.ca/ (other faculties have similar services; go to the tutoring page above).

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Part 1: Geographic Thought (Prof Oswin)

Readings marked with an asterisk are required, the rest are optional

Class 1. Tues Jan 8   Introduction to the course

This class will include an information session on the Honours Thesis Programme – make sure you attend.

2. Thurs Jan 10   What is theory?


3. Tues Jan 15       **Historical roots**


4. Thurs Jan 17     **Spatial Science**


5. Tues Jan 22        **Humanism and Behavioural Geography**

*Golledge, RG, LA Brown, Frank Williamson (1972) Behavioral approaches in geography: An overview. *Australian Geographer*


6. Thurs Jan 24  Marxism and Radical Geography


7. Tues Jan 29  The Cultural Turn


8. Thurs Jan 31  Postcolonial Geography


Blunt, Alison and Jane Wills (2000) Decolonising geography: postcolonial perspectives, in their *Dissident geographies: an introduction to radical ideas and practice*, Ch. 5

9. Tues Feb 5  Feminist and Queer Geographies


10. Thurs Feb 7  Critical Race Theory


11. Tues Feb 12  **Space/ Place/ Landscape**


***Take home exam distributed***

12. Thurs Feb 14  No class: work on take home test (Prof Oswin away)

13. Tues Feb 19  **First half wrap up and review**

14. Thurs Feb 21  No class: finalise take home test responses

*** Take home exam due ***

**Part 2: Research Design and Practice (Prof Turner)**

15. Tues Feb 26  **Thinking about research and rigour**


Optional reading (no need to prepare questions on this, but if you are in Urban Studies I think it’d be worthwhile reading this too) –


16. Thurs Feb 28  Reflexivity and subjectivity – what are they and why should we care?


READING WEEK, March 4-8

17. Tues March 12  Ethics – what is an REB? And more...


NOTE: in class we’ll decide and confirm reading for the following weeks’ presentations. Readings are available on MyCourses for you to choose from. You can also find a completely new one and send it to me for approval. I’m open to other materials – and methods – being presented.

18. Thurs March 14  Getting the thesis started - aim/objective and conceptual framework

  [this is a long piece I know; so focus on: pp39-41; 44-48 (and realise that this is about subjectivity); 48-53 and 62-68 re exercise 3.1 and pilot studies –focus here on Fig 3.1 and 3.2]

The concept maps here are a little vague perhaps in design for a conceptual framework per se, but think of them as the first step towards creating a conceptual framework – we will discuss these in class; for now work on getting the general ‘gist’ of the reading.
19. Tues March 19  **Methods I**

During one of the next 2 or 3 classes each student is to prepare a 10 minute overview on 1 different method. Each presentation will be followed by a 10 minute discussion. See list of readings below. If there is a method that you are interested in presenting that is not mentioned, or a different article/chapter you’d like to present, contact Prof Turner and we can see if it will work.

*For the classes that you are NOT presenting, you are to read TWO (2) of the articles/chapters being presented and prepare 1 question on each by the usual 5pm Monday deadline in advance (details given in class).*

1. Semi-structured & conversational interviewing
2. Email interviews
3. Oral histories
4. Focus groups
5. Mental mapping/Cognitive mapping
6. Photovoice
7. Overt participant observation
8. Covert participant observation
9. Walk-along/Go-along interviews
10. Storytelling, narratives
11. Poetry as method
12. Solicited diaries
13. Discourse analysis (e.g. Fairclough’s textual analysis with discursive and social practice)
14. Questionnaire survey
15. Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)
16. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)
17. Participatory Action Research
18. Participatory GIS
19. Archival research

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20. Thurs March 21  **Methods II**

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21. Tues March 26  **Methods III**
22. Thurs March 28  **Unpacking the proposal – tutorial & exercise**


- Hay, I. and P. Giles (2012) Writing an annotated bibliography, summary or review, in *Communicating in Geography and the Environmental Sciences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Ch. 3 (*specifically, read first 3 pages on preparing an annotated bibliography*).

23. Tues April 2  **Fieldwork practicalities – what if it turns to custard?**


24. Thurs April 4  **New tricks to finding the background stuff.**

  McLennan Library eClassroom – Ms Emily Kingsland.

- *No reading – prepare Tuesday’s readings.*

25. Tues April 9  **What to do with the data? Focus on qualitative analysis.**


26. Thurs April 11  **Second half wrap up: Honours posters and moving on with Honours.**

*Research Proposal due Tuesday 16th April 5pm*
Note: if you are curious to see previous year’s Department of Geography Honours theses (which we strongly recommend that you do!), there is a good selection online in the University Library as eTheses (you will submit yours here too). Go to:

http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/
Then select collection: ‘Undergraduate research’. Then for a word or phrase, add ‘geography’

Sources that may be useful in preparation of your brief proposal and annotated bibliography, and for your Honours Thesis. These are on Course Reserve at the Social Science library.


Suggestions for Methods Presentations.

You can choose one of these OR find one another and consult Prof Turner about using it. Take note of all of these that might be of use to your future thesis!

1. *Semi-structured and conversational interviews*
   

2. *Email interviews*
   

3. *Oral histories*
   

4. *Focus groups*
   

5. *Mental mapping/Cognitive mapping*
   

6. *Photovoice*
   


7. *Overt participant observation*
   

8. *Covert participant observation*
   
9. Walk-along/Go-along interviews


10. Storytelling, narratives


11. Poetry as method


12. Diaries/solicited journals


Also see: [http://benjaminhughes.net/index.php?title=Diaries_in_social_science_and_health_research](http://benjaminhughes.net/index.php?title=Diaries_in_social_science_and_health_research)

13. Discourse analysis


14. Questionnaire survey


15. Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)


16. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)


17. Participatory Action Research

18. **Participatory GIS**


19. **Archival research**


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**Key geography journals relevant to this course**

- *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*
- *Antipode: A Journal of Radical Geography*
- *Area* (often has short articles on innovative methods in geography)
- *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe Canadien*
- *Cultural Geographies* (Previously *Ecumene*)
- *Environment and Planning A*
- *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*
- *Gender, Place and Culture*
- *Geofoorum*
- *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*
- *Professional Geographer*
- *Progress in Human Geography*
- *Progress in Physical Geography*
- *Urban Geography*

**General reference (and should become your best friend- seriously):**

Derek Gregory, Ron Johnston, Geraldine Pratt, Michael J. Watts, and Sarah Whatmore 2009: *Dictionary of Human Geography*. Blackwell Publishers. This edition is available online via McGill (you’ll need to be on VPN or on campus etc) [http://site.ebrary.com/lib/mcgill/detail.action?docID=10308208](http://site.ebrary.com/lib/mcgill/detail.action?docID=10308208) [if this link doesn’t work for you, just put the title into the catalogue].

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*There are numerous texts that could have been put in each category that follows. Instead, these suggestions are limited to some key texts that Prof Turner suggests you become familiar with or at least ‘flick through’. See those on library reserve above too.*

**Research design:**


Methods:


Reflexivity and subjectivity:


Ethics:


Fieldwork practicalities:


*There are numerous handbooks and texts on this topic, but some that I specifically like/appreciate are:*


And how can we not suggest this one? ☺