

# GEOG 381: GEOGRAPHIC THOUGHT AND PRACTICE

Winter 2023

Tuesdays 8:35-11:35 a.m., Burnside 308

Prof. Benjamin Forest

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Office Hours: Wednesday 10-11 a.m. and by appointment

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**Course description:** This course has two principal aims. First, the class focuses on the process of conducting geographical research in preparation for GEOG 491/492 (Honours Thesis Research). To that end, students will write a research proposal, and will conduct practical research exercises using a variety of methods and perspectives. Second, the class introduces the nature and practice of geography as a scholarly discipline through readings, discussion, and research exercises.

**Readings:** All readings are available through myCourses and/or the McGill Library system. In addition, there are several recommended books and resources listed below.

**Evaluation:** *Information on university and department policies concerning student assessment can be found at the following website: [www.mcgill.ca/geography/studentassessment](http://www.mcgill.ca/geography/studentassessment)*

Requirement	Value	Date
Discussion participation <i>Includes written responses</i>	15%	Various <i>Written responses via myCourses</i>
Research practice	15%	Various
Draft research proposal	10%	March 14, in class and via myCourses
Proposal presentation	10%	April 11, in class
Research proposal and bibliography	25%	April 13, 11:30 p.m., via myCourses
Final exam/report (take-home)	25%	April 28, 11:30 p.m. via myCourses

**Note:** In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control (*e.g.*, more pandemics, major political crisis, Calamity Ganon, etc.), the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Some class meetings will be devoted to a single activity, but most will include a mix of lecture, discussion, and/or practice. Classes with **Discussion-** and **Practice-**based assessments are

indicated on the schedule below. *For all class meetings, students are expected to attend, to stay for the full duration, and to participate fully in that day's activities.*

### *Discussion Participation*

There are two elements to discussion participation. **First**, students should complete the assigned readings in advance and prepare a **written** response to the set text(s). These must be submitted before class via myCourses and students should bring a **printed** copy to class. **Second**, students should contribute comments and questions to the **oral discussion** during class. The written responses are meant to form the basis of your comments.

### *Research Practice*

A portion of the semester will be devoted to research activities. Days devoted to planning and conducting research are labeled **Practice**.

### *Research proposal and bibliography*

The research proposal provides a plan for your honours thesis research, and should be written in consultation with your (prospective) honours supervisor. The proposal text should be no longer than six pages, not including your bibliography, and should cite a minimum of 10 scholarly books and/or journal articles.

I will distribute a list of potential research topics/projects from faculty members early in the semester.

### *Take-home final exam*

The “final exam” is a 10-page research report based on original data collected by students this semester and in prior years. You will receive more information about this project during the semester. I have structured the paper as a take-home final exam so that the Exam Office will take it into account while scheduling your other final exams. It is due April 28, but students are welcome to submit it before that date.

**University policy statements:** McGill University policy requires or recommends the inclusion and wording of the following statements on all syllabi.

**Language:** Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.

In accord 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.

**Academic Integrity:** 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/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe

par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/)).

**Indigenous Land Statement:** McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

L'Université McGill est sur un emplacement qui a longtemps servi de lieu de rencontre et d'échange entre les peuples autochtones, y compris les nations Haudenosaunee et Anishinabeg. Nous reconnaissons et remercions les divers peuples autochtones dont les pas ont marqué ce territoire sur lequel les peuples du monde entier se réunissent maintenant.

**Recommended Readings:** The following are recommended books that will be helpful both for your assignments this semester and as you write your thesis next year. Note that some are only available as printed books.

For general advice on writing well, see the course writing guide. For more detailed discussions:

[Billig, Michael \(2013\) \*Learn to Write Badly: How to Succeed in the Social Sciences\*. New York: Cambridge University Press.](#)

Graff, Gerald, Cathy Birkenstein, Russel K Durst, and Laura J. Panning Davies (2021) *"They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing with Readings*. Fifth ed. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

[Lamott, Anne \(2007\) \*Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life\*. New York: Anchor Books](#)

[Schimmel, Joshua \(2012\) \*Writing Science: How to Write Papers that Get Cited and Proposals that Get Funded\*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.](#)

For guidance on presenting and writing about quantitative data in particular:

Miller, J. E. (2004) *The Chicago guide to writing about numbers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tufte, E. R. (1997) *Visual explanations: Images and quantities, evidence and narrative*. Cheshire, Conn: Graphics Press.

**Class schedule and readings:**

1. January 10	Introduction	Orwell, George. (1946) "Politics and the English language" <i>Horizon</i> .
2. January 17	<b>Discussion:</b> What is Geography?	Tuan, Yi-Fu. (1991) "A view of geography" <i>Geographical Review</i> 81: 99-107.  Matthews, John A, and David T. Herbert. (2008) "Geography: the world is our stage" (Chapter 1), in <i>Geography: A Very Short Introduction</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press.  Cutter, Susan. L., Reginald Golledge, and William Graf (2002) "The big questions in geography." <i>Professional Geographer</i> 54: 305-317.
3. January 24	<b>Lecture:</b> Scholarship, scholarly literature, and research questions	Billig, Michael (2013) "Mass publication and academic life" (Chapter 2) in <i>Learn to write badly: How to succeed in the social sciences</i> . New York: Cambridge University Press: 12-39.  <a href="#">Literature Reviews (website of Raul Pacheco-Vega)</a> Read the links listed on myCourses.  Review recent articles in these journals:  <i>Dialogues in Human Geography</i> <i>Geography Compass</i> <i>Progress in Human Geography</i>
4. January 31	<b>Lecture:</b> Theory and Methodology	6, Perri and Christine Bellamy (2012) "Methodology and Social Science Knowledge" in <i>Principles of methodology: Research design in social science</i> . London: SAGE Publications Ltd: 1-16.  Richardson, Douglas, et al, eds. 2017. <i>The International Encyclopedia of Geography: People, the Earth, Environment, and Technology</i> . Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons. (Entries on <i>Feminist Methodologies</i> , <i>Quantitative Methodologies</i> , and <i>Mixed-Method Approaches</i> .)

5. February 7	<b>Practice:</b> Gender and scholarly publishing	<p>Key, Ellen M, and Jane Lawrence Sumner (2019) “You Research Like a Girl: Gendered Research Agendas and Their Implications.” <i>PS: Political Science &amp; Politics</i> 52 (4): 663–68.</p> <p>Lundine, Jamie, et al (2019) “‘I Don’t See Gender’: Conceptualizing a Gendered System of Academic Publishing.” <i>Social Science &amp; Medicine</i> 235: 1-9.</p> <p>Roper, Rachel L. (2019) “Does Gender Bias Still Affect Women in Science?” <i>Microbiology and Molecular Biology Reviews</i> 83 (3): 1-9.</p>
6. February 14	<b>Lecture:</b> Research design and research proposals	6, Perri and Christine Bellamy (2012) “Types of Research Design” in <i>Principles of methodology: Research design in social science</i> . London: SAGE Publications Ltd: 1-19.
7. February 21	<b>Practice:</b> Research Ethics Approval	<p>McGill University. (2012) <i>Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Subjects</i>. <a href="https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/D07-55-Policy-on-the-Ethical-Conduct-of-Research-Revisions.pdf">https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/D07-55-Policy-on-the-Ethical-Conduct-of-Research-Revisions.pdf</a></p> <p>Online TCPS2 Course on Research Ethics (CORE): <a href="https://www.tcps2core.ca/welcome">https://www.tcps2core.ca/welcome</a></p>
Winter Break		
8. March 7	<b>Discussion:</b> Ethical Research	<p>Smith, Susan J. (1993) “Bounding the borders: Claiming space and making place in rural Scotland” <i>Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers</i> 18 (3): 291-308.</p> <p>Biagioli, Mario, Martin Kenney, Ben R Martin, and John P Walsh (2019) “Academic misconduct, misrepresentation and gaming: A reassessment” <i>Research Policy</i> 48 (2): 401-413.</p> <p>Nevins, Joseph (2014) “Academic jet-setting in a time of climate destabilization: Ecological privilege and professional geographic travel” <i>Professional Geographer</i> 66 (2): 298-310.</p>

9. March 14 <b>Proposal draft due</b>	<b>Practice:</b> Writing Workshop	Schimel, Joshua (2012) “Putting it All Together: Real Editing” (Chapter 17) in <i>Writing Science: How to Write Papers that Get Cited and Proposals that Get Funded</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press: 174-178.
10. March 21	<b>Practice:</b> Focus Groups	Nyumba, Tobias (2018) “The use of focus group discussion methodology: Insights from two decades of application in conservation” <i>Methods in Ecology and Evolution</i> 9 (1): 20-32.
11. March 28	<b>Discussion:</b> Fieldwork	Livingstone, David. N. (2003) “Site: Venues of science” (pp. 17-48 only), in <i>Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press.  Atchison, Christina J. (2021). “Challenges of fieldwork for LGBTQ+ scientists” <i>Nature Human Behaviour</i> 5: 1462-1462.  Chiswell, Hannah and Rebecca Wheeler (2016). ““As long as you’re easy on the eye’: reflecting on issues of positionality and researcher safety during farmer interviews” <i>Area</i> 48: 229-235.  Ross, Karen (2015) “No sir, she was not a fool in the field”: Gendered risks and sexual violence in immersed cross-cultural fieldwork” <i>Professional Geographer</i> 67: 180-186.  Bohannon, John (2013) “Survey of Peers in Fieldwork Highlights an Unspoken Risk” <i>Science</i> 340: 265-265.
12. April 4	Topic TBD	Readings TBD
13. April 11	Proposal Presentations	No readings