

GEOG 494: Urban Field Studies
May 2015
May 4-25, Burnside 426 and in the field

Instructor:

Dr. Sarah Moser

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays: noon-1pm

Teaching Assistants

1. Geoffrey Battista

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2. Blánaid Donnelly

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T.A. Office Hours: by appointment

Course meeting times: Mondays, Wednesday, Fridays May 4 – 25 1:05-4:55 p.m.

Course Description

This course introduces students to human geography fieldwork in an urban setting. Using Montreal as our laboratory, we will explore current issues in social and cultural geography, urban studies and planning. This is a hands-on course – you will learn by experience and trial and error.

We will focus on understanding the urban environment through field visits, active observation, and field journaling. We will also look at various techniques: questionnaires, interviews, mapping, GIS and photography. Much of our class time will be spent in the field, putting these techniques into practice.

Course Goals

- To draw upon students' general (geographic) knowledge.
- To gain skills and confidence in the use of geographic field methods, such as observation, questionnaires, mapping, and interviewing.
- To encourage students to become independent researchers.
- To appreciate the economic, social, and cultural processes that shape Montreal.
- To appreciate how knowledge is generated in human geography.
- To understand how to devise a research question, select appropriate methods to answer that question, and to understand the limitations of each method.
- To develop team-working, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills.

Texts

You must purchase a notebook for use as your field journal. A spiral-bound, plain paper notebook of A5 or similar size is the most appropriate. You'll need space to sketch maps as well as write notes. A map of Montreal will also help – the free bus map (from a tourist office or STM, Société de transport de Montréal) is a good option. All required readings will be either in the Ward text and posted on *myCourses*. Copies are also available on reserve in the Social Science and Humanities Library.

Required:

Ward, Kevin (Ed.) (2014) *Researching the City*. London: Sage.

Supplemental:

Flowerdew, Robin and David Martin. (Eds.) (2005) *Methods in Human Geography*. 2nd edition. Harlow: Prentice Hall.

Northey, Margot, David Knight and Dianne Draper. (2012) *Making Sense – A Student's Guide to Research and Writing. Geography and Environmental Sciences*. 5th edition. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Assessment

Ethnography paper	20%	Due: start of class, May 11
Group GIS exercise	20%	Due: start of class, May 18
Field journal	20%	Due: May 27, Geog office mail slot, 7 th floor – before noon
Final Quiz	20%	In class, May 25
Group presentation	20%	In class, 18-minutes max, May 25

Ethnography and positionality paper

Due: Start of class, May 11

Word limit: 1,500 words (approx. 5 pages)

Students will conduct several hours of research in a setting with which they are familiar and ideally have personal connections. (see separate assignment sheet)

Group GIS exercise

Due: Start of class, May 18

Your group will work together using available data to analyze a social aspect about the city of Montreal.

See the separate assignment sheet posted on MyCourses. Groups must meet with Geoff Battista (T.A.) at least once for guidance.

Field Journal

Due: Monday, May 27 in the slot in the door of the main Geography office on the 7th floor

The field journal is your record of thoughts, sketches, questions and ideas. You should use it to respond to the assignments for each excursion, as well as for additional thoughts and ideas that you come up with during the excursions.

Your field journal must be legible. However, do not attempt to make it a polished piece of work! Notes rather than complete sentences are fine. Half-finished ideas, rough sketches, musings and questions that you pose but do not answer fully are all part of the fieldwork process, and your journal is the place for them.

If you miss a class, you will need to make up the in-class field assignment in your own time.

For ideas on what a field journal should include, see the following (either in the required Ward text or posted on *myCourses*):

- Chapter 8, 'Using diaries to study urban worlds'. In Ward, Kevin. (Ed.) (2014) *Researching the City: A Guide for Students*. London: Sage.

- Northey, Margot, David Knight and Dianne Draper, 2012, “Doing Field Work and Writing About It,” in *Making Sense – A Student's Guide to Research and Writing. Geography and Environmental Sciences*. 5th edition. Don Mills, ON, Oxford University Press. Chapter 11, pp 171-184.

Final exam

May 25, in class

The exam is worth 20% of your grade and focuses on the various methods we have learned for conducting urban field studies and the strengths and limitations of each approach.

Class Schedule

On many days, we will spend at least part of the class in the field – sun, rain or snow. You must come appropriately dressed, including comfortable footwear and waterproof clothing if necessary. You will need a pass or money for the Metro/bus/train, and on Day 1, money for the café.

Team Formation

You will form groups of 6 for the purposes of taking field trips together, mutual support and for the GIS group assignment. Teams will be formed during the first class.

Safety

Safety is the most important priority. Do not take any risks to collect data, whether during class time or for your own projects. In particular:

- ALWAYS work with a partner or in your team when in the field. This includes the in-class assignments.
- If asked to leave by a business owner, do so immediately and without protest.
- Carry a mobile phone when in the field. If you do not have one, talk to the professor or the TA.
- For real emergencies contact the SPVM (514) 393-1133 or call 9-1-1. My phone number (emergencies only please) is (514)266-9908.

Equipment

The Department of Geography has equipment that may be useful for your group project, including clipboards, clicker-counters, GPS receivers and florescent vests. Contact Paula Kestelman (paulak@geog.mcgill.ca or in Burnside 613). You can borrow digital cameras and recorders from Audiovisual (<https://home.mcgill.ca/collaboration/aa/>).

Think also about how your group will collaborate and share drafts, data, etc. Dropbox (www.dropbox.com) is a useful, free service that synchronizes files between different users.

Late Submission of Assignments

Students can make a formal request to the professor for special consideration for an extension to an assignment due date with one of the following documents in hand:

- A Medical Doctor's note which specifically states that you were unable to hand in an assignment by the due date because of a medical emergency, or
- A bereavement notice from a newspaper or other legitimate documentation in the case of a family or close friend's death.

In the case of a group assignment, the request should be made by the affected student.

Ten percent will be deducted for every 24-hour period a piece of assessment is late. The first 24-hour period starts at the time the piece was due (e.g. if you submit something at 5.30pm when it was due at

10am, that equates to a 10% deduction). *Due at the start of class means 10:00am. Poor organisation is not a valid reason for an extension of the due date.*

Important Notes

- As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and/or the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.
- End-of-course evaluations are one of the ways that McGill works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. You will be notified by e-mail when the evaluations are available on Mercury, the online course evaluation system. Please note that a minimum number of responses must be received for results to be available to students.
- 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.
- 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/ for more information).

Class Schedule:

Date	Location	Topic	Activity	Required Readings (posted on <i>myCourses</i>)
May 4	BH 426	Introduction. Why Fieldwork? Journaling Research Ethics	Excursion 1: Gentrification on the Plateau, café culture on St-Laurent!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ward, Chapter 1 (Introduction) • Ward, Chapter 8 (Using diaries to study urban worlds)
May 6	BH 426	Identifying a Research Problem Research Design Gentrification Positionality	Excursion 2: Plateau! Mile End!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ward, Chapter 2 (Designing a research project) • Ward, Chapter 10 (Worlds through glass: Photography and video as geographic method) • Moser, Sarah. (2008) Personality: A new positionality? <i>Area</i> 40 (3): 383-392. • Moos, M. (2014). "Generated" space: Societal restructuring and young adults' changing residential location patterns. <i>The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien</i>, 58(1), 11-33.
May 8	BH 426	Changing landscapes Plural geographies Photovoice	Excursion 3: Public art swing set! Little Burgundy!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ray, "Plural Geographies in Canadian Cities" • Ellis et al., "Immigrant Space and Assimilation" • Deverteuil, "Changing Landscapes of SW Montreal" • Burke, K. J., Greene, S., & McKenna, M. K. (2014). A Critical Geographic Approach to Youth Civic Engagement Reframing Educational Opportunity Zones and the Use of Public Spaces. <i>Urban Education</i>
May 11	GIC	GIS – Geoff Immigrant Spaces, Social Equity	Excursion 4: Parc-Extension!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ward, Chapter 9 (GIS: A method and practice) • Schuurman, Nadine. (2008) Database Ethnographies Using Social Science Methodologies to Enhance Data

Date	Location	Topic	Activity	Required Readings (posted on <i>myCourses</i>)
				Analysis and Interpretation, <i>Geography Compass</i>
May 13	BH 426	Quantitative methods – surveys, sampling	In class survey activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ward, Chapter 6 (Questionnaires)
May 15	BH 426	Discourse Analysis	Excursion 5: Gay Village!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ward, Chapter 11 (Writing up) “Montreal's Gay Village: The Story of a Unique Urban Neighbourhood” Podmore, “Gone Underground?” Ward, Chapter 7 (Discourse and linguistic analysis)
May 18		*no class! (national holiday)		
May 20	BH 426	Qualitative methods – interviews, participant observation Photography Archival Methods Photo Voice	Excursion 6: Jean Talon!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ward, Chapter 3 (Archival Research) Flowerdew and Martin Ch. 13 Ward, Chapter 4 (Interviews) Ward, Chapter 5 (Urban Ethnographic Research)
May 22	BH 426	Mixed methods	Excursion 7: Old Port <ul style="list-style-type: none"> create research questions relating to the old port what prompted you to come up with those questions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brown, “The Indoor City”
May 25	BH 426		Exam! Presentations!	

Please note that readings are subject to change. All required (and optional) readings will be placed on the course myCourses page.