

GEOG 398 - FALL 2022
FIELD STUDIES IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY
COURSE OUTLINE

Field (Mt. St. Hilaire): August 20-28, 2022

Class: Thursdays, Sept 8 - October 27

Time: 4:05-5:25pm

Location: Burnside Hall Rm 511

INSTRUCTORS:

Prof. Oliver Coomes (course coordinator), BH Rm 415, oliver.coomes@mcgill.ca

Prof. Brian Robinson, BH Rm 432, brian.e.robinson@mcgill.ca

Prof. Graham MacDonald, BH Rm 627, graham.macdonald@mcgill.ca

Office hours: By appointment

TEACHING ASSISTANT:

TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Field research is a primary means of acquiring data and information needed to better understand the world around us. A wide array of methods and techniques are available in human geography to acquire both quantitative and qualitative data in the field, ranging from social surveys and interviews to oral histories, participant observation and unobtrusive methods. The primary aim of this course is to introduce students in human geography to field methods, observational techniques, and data collection, processing and analysis. Students will gain hands-on experience in applying a range of field techniques and an appreciation of the practical and ethical challenges in gathering data used in social science research. Students will be taught to apply methods and techniques related to human geography, such as social survey design, interviewing (focus groups, structured interviews, oral histories), participant observation, community profiling, land use/cover mapping and assessment, social network analysis, ecosystem service valuation, and impact valuation, among others. A secondary aim of the course is foster an understanding of the trade-offs that arise in and around protected nature reserves between nature conservation and other societal demands like nature-based tourism and recreation. These will be accomplished through exercises and a research project to be conducted out of the Gault Nature Reserve near Mt. St. Hilaire, Quebec. Students will spend 9 days at the Reserve learning and applying field techniques, and then participate in once per week classroom activities (both structured and unstructured) at McGill during September and October as part of the research project.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

After completing this course, you will:

- Be familiar with a broad range of field techniques from human geography
- Understand how various techniques can come together to answer more holistic research questions
- Have hands-on and in-depth experience with at least one particular field method
- Have a deepened understanding of applied human geography
- Gain experience working with and synthesizing both primary and secondary data as part of a research project
- Understand how field research can inform important societal questions

PREREQUISITES:

GEOG 290 or by permission of the instructor.

COURSE STRUCTURE:

This field course will have two parts:

1. *FIELD*: The primary activities for this course will take place over a 9-day period at McGill's Gault Nature reserve, where all participants will stay. Residence at Gault is mandatory (i.e., no commuting back and forth from Montreal) since some activities may take place during off-hours. This portion of the class will take place the week before the start of the term – in 2022, this will be August 20-28th.
2. *CLASSROOM*: After the field portion of the course, we will meet several times in class at McGill to discuss, synthesize, and/or analyze data in a classroom setting to complete the research project. These meetings will be held once per week throughout September and October. In 2022, we will meet on Thursdays, from 4:05-5:25pm, in BH Rm 308. The first meeting will be on September 8th, 2022. These meetings may include structured activities/tutorials, unstructured project worktime, and individual research team-professor 'check-in' meetings, which will be announced each week. Participation in these class meetings is an important component of the course.

COURSE EVALUATION:

Exercises	50%
Group research project:	35%
Written policy brief	15%
Poster presentation	20%
Field notebook:	10%
<u>Class participation</u>	<u>5%</u>
Total:	100%

Exercises:

During the stay at the Gault Reserve, students will undertake a series of field exercises, informed by lectures at the Gault Reserve and involving field-based data gathering and analysis. Although the fieldwork associated with assignments will be undertaken in groups, each student will write up the assignments independently. Generally, lectures and workshops will be given in the mornings, and assignments undertaken in the afternoons. The assignments will focus on the application of field methods and techniques taught during the mornings. Completed assignments will be due at various times during the stay at the Gault Reserve.

Research project:

Students working in groups of 3-4 per group will design a small research project related to the course theme of conservation trade-offs in and around protected areas, using the Gault Nature Reserve as a case study. The project should be feasibly completed within the time available at the Gault Reserve and at McGill, and is subject to approval by the instructors. Students will present a short proposal before starting the project to the class in a roundtable format. Data and other information will be available from the field exercises, research personnel or administrative staff at Gault, government officials and civic organizations, and the public in the region. Students will have 3 days during the last part of the field program to gather and compile their field data. When back at McGill, students will have access to on-line sources to supplement the data gathered, and conduct their analysis of data, write up their 'policy brief' report, and prepare a poster highlighting their primary findings. On Thursday, October 27th, during class time, students will present their final research projects and posters to the class.

Field notebook:

Students will submit a field notebook on the final day of the course (October 27th). The notebook should contain all notes taken in the field for the exercises as well as observations and reflections relevant to the research project, which may include those from class and associated discussions (e.g., about data and analysis steps). As a field diary, the field book should be brought up to date every evening.

PROGRAM IN THE FIELD: August 20-29th

We will hold an orientation meeting by Zoom on Monday August 15th (time and link TBA). The instructors will introduce the course, course requirements and activities, cover health and safety issues including allergies, and answer any questions about logistics. On Saturday, August 20th we will leave from McGill Roddick Gates at 1pm to go by bus to Mont Saint-Hilaire. We will stay in the dormitory at the Gault Nature Reserve Center from Saturday, August 20th until Sunday, August 29th. All meals will be provided. Each morning after breakfast, we will have an introductory lecture after which undertake a series of structured exercises & field demonstrations. Wireless internet is available at Gault and you should bring your laptop computer or tablet for course work. We expect to arrive back at McGill by bus on August 29th by 4pm.

PROGRAM AT MCGILL: September 8th – October 27th

Class will be held on Thursdays, from 4:05-5:25pm in Burnside Hall, Rm 308. The first class will be held on Thursday, September 8th. The purpose of in-class time is twofold: (1) to provide students training in techniques that require access to more specialized software, knowledge, or data (e.g., for examining satellite imagery or accessing census data); and, (2) to “check-in” so as to receive advice and feedback from the instructors on their research project, including working with field and other data, and communicating findings. The class will conclude with a final meeting on October 27th, including the submission of the policy brief and presentation of the accompanying poster.

WHAT TO BRING:

Clothing:

Temperatures may range from ~10° C in the evenings to +30°C on hot sunny days, with some days bringing rainy weather. Clothing and footwear should cover the range of possible weather, and conditions ranging from walking along forest trails to meeting with officials in their offices. Recommended clothing includes:

- work/hiking boots
- day pack and lunch bag
- running shoes
- rain gear (coat, pants)
- hat
- sweater
- anorak or wind breaker
- shorts, T shirts, etc. ‘cabin wear’ for evenings ...

Study and work materials:

- pencils, ruler, protractor
- colored pencils
- clipboard
- laptop computer or tablet
- camera (on phone or otherwise)
- any personal needs, medication, sunscreen, bug repellent, sun glasses.
- we will provide a field notebook

COST:

There is an additional cost of \$975.00 course fee for 2022 to cover costs for travel, meals and accommodation. This fee will be added to your fee account and is not refundable.

READINGS:

Assigned readings may be from journal articles, book chapters, informal 'guides' prepared by the instructors, or online resources. These readings will be given as printed handouts or posted/linked to from myCourses in a timely manner that allows for preparation and review by students.

ALSO OF NOTE:

Policies governing academic issues which affect students can be found in the Handbook on Student Rights and Responsibilities, Charter of Students' Rights (online at <http://www.mcgill.ca/files/secretariat/greenbookenglish.pdf>).

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/integrity/ for more information)." "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."

Student Support: As the instructors of this course, we endeavour to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with us and the Office for Students with Disabilities, at 514-398-6009 or online at <http://www.mcgill.ca/osd>.

Course Communication: Communication to students will be via email sent to the student's official McGill email account and not through MyCourses. The university and instructors cannot guarantee that course emails will be successfully forwarded to external email accounts (e.g., Hotmail or Gmail accounts).

Changes to evaluation scheme: In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the evaluation scheme in a course is subject to change, provided that there be timely communications to the students regarding the change.

Copyright: Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. This includes note-sharing websites. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

Dialogue: In a course involving discussions around present-day issues among people from multiple backgrounds, you may at some point be confronted with ideas, words, or opinions that make you uncomfortable. These might come from your peers, the instructor, or a guest speaker. If such a situation arises, you are encouraged to bring it up with the person at the origin of the discomfort and/or with the instructor or the TA. Opening dialogue can help clarify positions, dispel misunderstandings, and sometimes help the person at the origin of the discomfort see realities they weren't aware of. This helps foster a learning culture of respect, openness, and care in academia.

Etiquette and "netiquette": Please use appropriate and respectful language with each other and with the instructor, whether in person, online or by email.

Late policy: Work submitted late will be subject to a penalty of 10% per day. Exceptions will be made for exceptional cases, with the professor's prior agreement. Extensions will not be granted on the day an assignment is due, except in case of medical or family emergency, accompanied by appropriate documentation.

Mutual respect is expected at all times among instructors, teaching assistants, support staff and students at McGill University. Students are referred to the webpage of Student Rights and Responsibilities <https://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/>. Aggressive behavior, whether overt or passive, will not be tolerated.

Finally: Please inform the instructor in writing before starting the course of any medical conditions, allergies or food preferences that could jeopardize your health or limit your ability to work in a field setting.

June 3, 2022