

INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

Instructor: Bridget Martin
Course level: lower division

Translated from Greek, the word “geography” means “earth-writing.” There are many ways to write the earth because there are many ways to know and live with the earth and, of course, there are a lot of places to write about. In this class, we engage different approaches in the study of place, emphasizing how different earth-writers see their role and how they view their projects in wider political contexts. We make no attempt to study everything that has ever happened on the surface of the earth. Readings for this course are instead organized as a series of provocations and openings for how different earth-writers encounter and understand the world, emphasizing questions of power and possibility in place and engaging the themes of empire, race, nature, the city, and uneven development. We will read about luxury housing in Seoul, taxidermy in New York, the performances of a group of French weirdos, and a maple syrup fable from which all knowledge could, in a sense, be said to spring. Students should dwell in these different textual spaces from week to week and come to their own conclusions about what Geography means for the study of power and possibility. Most, but not all, of the readings are drawn from a North American context. The course sessions will be organized around short instructor lectures, discussions, freewriting sessions, and student sharing of writings.

Course Objectives

The first aim of the class is to introduce students to key themes in contemporary Human Geography. Geography is a global discipline with a diverse set of practitioners around the planet. In this class, critical engagement with contemporary and emerging debates are privileged over a full review of the scope of the discipline. What all authors on the syllabus have in common is that they take the socio-material world as their starting point. They try to see things and know things differently than they have been seen and known by others.

The second aim of this course is for students to cultivate their own geographical sensibility within the broader set of conversations now occurring in the discipline. This means engaging in substantial creative writing exercises, including freewriting and field assignments, and developing a final paper topic appropriate to their interests, talents, and social positioning. We will use the discussion time to work through methodological questions, including how to take fieldnotes, how to be cultivate a reflexive researcher identity, and how to ask good questions.

Required Texts

There are no required texts to purchase. Please prepare a journal and pen. Laptop usage for freewriting exercises is strongly discouraged, except on submission days.

Assessment

- 20% Participation
- 30% Freewriting exercises (3 x 10%) (300 – 500 words)
- 5% Field Assignment #1 (100 – 200 words)
- 15% Field Assignment #2 (500 – 500 words)
- 30% Final Paper, or Field Assignment #3 (2,000 – 3,000 words)

There are no exams or quizzes in this course.

Successful **participation** in this class means regular attendance (no more than one absence) and regular verbal participation, including sharing freewriting responses. Exceptional students receive the full twenty participation points.

Two non-traditional elements of this class are meant to help students cultivate a geographical sensibility. The first is sustained, collective **freewriting**, which we will do together *once a week*. Please prepare a notebook and a pen for use only in this class. No one will see what you write in your notebook, but there will be plenty of opportunities to share. Further, every third or fourth round of writing, you will need to submit a semi-polished, typed-up piece to the group online forum. Serious engagement with the course materials, discussions, and other aspects of the course will make your writing flow easily. If you are absent for a session, you will miss a freewriting opportunity. If you are absent on a submission day, you must make clear arrangements with the instructor as soon as possible to submit your semi-polished piece in a timely manner.

You will also do two short **field assignments**. These involve visiting a place of your choice, spending some time observing the place, thinking about it, and making jottings, and then submitting a response to the prompts, which are listed in the syllabus. Field assignment submissions are short pieces of writing, but they should be polished. They should cite readings when appropriate, but they should privilege observations and interpretations of your field site.

The **final paper** for this course will be an expanded field assignment to be carried out in the place of your choice. The aim of the final paper will be to come up with an interesting, answerable question (or questions) about your place, and to frame this question within an appropriate set of academic readings. The goal of the final paper will *not* be to make a complete academic argument. It is not a full research paper. It is an opportunity for you to demonstrate that you have begun to develop your own sensibility in geographical inquiry. The paper should be polished, and it should lean heavily on your observations and interpretations of a particular place. The paper should cite at least 4 - 6 academic texts and be between 2,000 and 3,000 words in length. A short presentation will also be required. We will discuss methodologies and paper expectations at length before the submission deadline.

Class Schedule

1. Introductions: Geography as a Discipline and Notes on Method

No reading. Be prepared to write.

2. Space, Scale, and the Global (England/North America/Global)

Massey, Doreen (1994) "A Global Sense of Place," in *Space, Place, and Gender*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (10 pages)

Barnes, Trevor, and Christophers, Brett (2018) "Globalization and Uneven Development," in *Economic Geography: A Critical Introduction*. London: Wiley-Blackwell. (25 pages)

Listen: "Mr. Daisy and the Apple Factory," *This American Life*, 2012 (podcast, 55 minutes).

- ⇒ **Field Assignment**: Pick any interesting place and spend at least ten minutes there making observations. Make jottings. What can you see, hear, smell, and touch? What dimensions of it seem "global" or "local" to you, and why? Note down any distinctions between your direct observations and the interpretive work you find yourself making. **Submission**: 100 – 200 words describing your place, answering the questions in the prompt, and mentioning anything else you notice. (5% of grade)

3. The Production of Space (France)

Lefebvre, Henri (1991 [1974]) *The Production of Space*, Oxford: Blackwell. (10 pages)

Merrifield, Andy (2006) "Space" in *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (12 pages)

Watch: *Situationist International*, 1968 (documentary film, 20 minutes)

4. Postcolonial Modernity (Korea)

Hong, Kal (2011) "Flowing Back to the Future: The Cheonggye Stream Restoration and the Remaking of Seoul," *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 9(27). (17 pages)

Michael, Chris (2019) "I'm Panicking: Seoul Rips Out its Manufacturing Heart," *The Guardian*. (2 pages)

Finn, Pat (2019) “The Architecture of Inequality: On Bong Joon-ho’s ‘Parasite,’” *Architizer.com*. (2 pages)

Watch: *Parasite*, 2019 (feature film, 2 hours)

⇒ **Submission:** First freewriting exercise due. This is a fourth revision/addition to the piece of writing you started the first session. We will do this together *in class* so there is *no extra homework for freewriting*. (10% of grade)

5. Indigenous Futurities (North America/Global)

Simpson, Leanne (2017) “Land as Pedagogy” in *As We Have Always Done*, Minneapolis: University Press. (25 pages)

Bandhar, Brenna (2018) “Conclusion: Life Beyond the Boundary,” in *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership*. Durham: Duke University Press. (19 pages)

Watch: “Mni Wiconi: The Stand at Standing Rock,” 2016. (documentary film, 8 minutes)

6. Abolition Geographies (North America/Portugal)

Heynan, Nik (2021) “A Plantation can be a Commons: Re-Earthing Salepo Island through Abolition Ecologies,” *Antipode* 53(1): 95 – 114. (20 pages)

Gilmore, Ruth Wilson (2022) Selections from *Abolition Geography: Essays toward Liberation*. London: Verso Press. (approx. 20 pages)

Watch: “Geographies of Racial Capitalism with Ruth Wilson Gilmore – an Antipode Foundation Film” (16 minutes) (Note her comments on *method* in Geography.)

7. Space, Race, and Nature I (North America)

Haraway, Donna (1984) “Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936,” *Social Text* 11: 20-64.

Jacoby, Karl (2003) *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (selections, approx. 20 pages)

- ⇒ **Field Assignment:** Spend at least thirty minutes in one place, however you define “place.” Observe and jot down or draw whatever catches your eye. If you run out of things to note, keep going. Notice things you have not yet noticed. Who or what seems “in” place to you? Who or what seems “out” of place? Why? How is power working in this place? How is your place shaped by race or by other markers of difference? How is it shaped various forms of alternative place-making (making-futures-by-making-place)? Can you “see” a settled Indigenous landscape? How? **Submission:** A photo image of your jottings (just one page is fine – we just want to see your working style), and 500 – 800 words on your place, with a description that links to your interpretation, and answering one or more questions in the prompt (you don’t need to answer every question) and mentioning anything else you think is important. (15%)

8. Space, Race, and Nature II (North America)

Finney, Carolyn (2014) “Bamboozled,” in *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. (20 pages)

Passidomo, Catarina (2014) “Whose Right to (Farm) the City? Race and Food Justice Activism in Post-Katrina New Orleans,” *Agriculture and Human Values* 31(3): 385-396. (10 pages)

Listen: “Being Outdoorsy When You’re Black or Brown,” *Code Switch*, 2016 (podcast, 20 minutes)

- ⇒ **Freewriting #2 Submission:** This is a fourth revision/addition to the piece of writing you started earlier. We will do this together *in class* so there is *no extra homework for freewriting*. (10% of grade)

9. Cities and Urbanization (North America/Global)

Barnes, Trevor (2015) “Cities and Urbanization” in *Economic Geography: A Critical Introduction*. (25 pages)

Pardo, Italo and Prato, Giuliana B. (2018) “Introduction: Urban Ethnography Matters: Analytical Strength, Theoretical Value, and Significance to Society,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Urban Ethnography*. (15 pages)

Watch: “David Harvey and the City – An Antipode Foundation Film” (documentary film, 12 minutes)

- ⇒ **Project Proposal Assignment:** Choose a final paper topic. Articulate your question(s) and suggest 4 – 6 key readings from this course and/or from outside the course you want

to engage in your final paper. Try to locate your question within the readings. (Grade included in participation grade)

10. Migrations (Europe/Africa/Global)

Mountz, Allison (2011) "The Enforcement Archipelago: Detention, Haunting, and Asylum on Islands," *Political Geography* 30(3): 118-128. (10 pages)

Abel, Guy J. et al. (2019) "Climate, Conflict, and Forced Migration," *Global Environmental Change* 54: 239-249. (10 pages)

Watch: "Italy is Paying Libya to Intercept Migrants on the Mediterranean," (documentary film, 9 minutes)

11. Planning and Design

Readings TDB depending on needs of students.

Watch: "When Memory is not Enough: Walter Hood's Senior Loeb Scholar Lecture," 2021. (lecture, 50 minutes; Q&A optional)

12. Project Presentations

Please read the project proposals of other students in your group and prepare feedback. No additional reading is required.

13. Collective Reflections on Method in Human Geography

Readings TDB depending on needs of students.

- ⇒ **Freewriting #3 Submission:** Only three chances to write this time. We will do this together *in class* so there is *no extra homework for freewriting*. (10% of grade)
- ⇒ If we have time, we will share our writing.