GEO 603
Development of Geographic Thought
Fall 2020

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Monday, 2:15-5:00pm
Eggers 155

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Overview
This graduate seminar examines the development of geographic thought and changes in the discipline of geography from the early twentieth century to the present. It focuses on continuities in geographic thought over that time—the reoccurring debates and issues that geographers have wrestled with for decades. But the seminar also addresses discontinuities—the profound methodological and conceptual changes throughout the discipline’s twentieth and twenty-first century histories. As David Livingstone wrote, geography has always been a contested enterprise. This seminar will help you better understand what ideas geographers contested and what was at stake in past and current debates.

While this class will give you a firmer conceptual grounding for your MA or PhD research in geography and other disciplines, it will also help you better understand the approaches of other geographers. Geography is a broad discipline that includes perspectives from the social sciences, natural sciences, and the humanities. You are probably already developing expertise in one of these three broad areas. In this course, you will need to do your best to understand how geographers using conceptual and methodological approaches far different from your own make sense of the world.

Evaluation
30% Seminar Attendance, Participation, and Leading/Fostering Discussion
20% Response Papers (4)
50% Final Seminar Paper about Sub-Field in Geography

Seminar Attendance, Participation, and Leading Discussion (30%)
Students are expected to attend all classes and come ready to participate in class discussions. I expect students to read the course texts critically, to take notes on the readings, to develop questions and comments based on them, and to be willing to listen to and grapple with other students’ views.

You will also foster and lead discussion during one class. Later in the course, I will distribute a sign-up sheet and provide guidance on how to foster and lead a discussion successfully.
Short Reading Response Papers (20% total)
You will write four 2-3-page reading response papers. Your first two response papers will be for readings assigned during the first half of the course; the other two will be for readings assigned in the second half. These response papers are an inducement to read the assigned material critically and carefully.

At the end of the syllabus, I have included some sample questions about the readings each week. You can use your short paper to answer one of these questions. Or you may write your own analysis. Either way, you need to critically engage with the readings not just summarize their arguments and key points.

Please load your response paper on the course Blackboard page before the class when we discuss those readings. Click on “Response Papers” on the left-hand side of the page then the file for that week’s readings (example: “Feminist Geography”)

Seminar Paper (50%)
The final paper is based on a critical analysis of the development of a subfield related to your research (e.g., fluvial geomorphology, community geography, animal geography, etc.) or the development of a key concept in geography (e.g. landscape, place, etc.). You might also need to narrow your paper’s focus to some sub-set of your chosen field or concept. Research and writing this paper will provide you with a much deeper understanding of the literature directly related to your interests.

You must submit a two-page proposal with a short bibliography (8-10) sources no later than Wednesday, October 21st. Submit the final papers on Blackboard by Friday, December 13th.

Course Readings
The required course readings are available via the course Blackboard web site.

Optional Reading
- This text is optional but highly recommended. It’s much better written than most geography textbooks (this is one for upper-division undergraduate courses or graduate seminars). Cresswell provides superb overviews of many topics we’re studying.

I recommend you read the assigned material in order.

Topics

* Keep this syllabus handy. I might drop or add readings throughout the semester. *

August 25th – Introduction:
A History of the Discipline, a History of Ideas, and Geographical Theory

- 1 - Should the History of Geography be X-Rated?


- Introduction

**September 2nd – Forging a Discipline, Evolution and Geographic Thought, and Environmental Determinism**

The Geographical Experiment: Creating a Discipline in the Late 19th & Early 20th Century


- The Geographical Experiment: Evolution and the Founding of a Discipline
  - Only read p. 177-215.


- 4 - Creating the Science of Geography, 1880-1919

Evolution, Geographic Thought, and Environmental Determinism


**Saturday, September 5th – Regions, Regional Geography, Historical Geography**

* ** Note the day and date. We’re meeting on the weekend (!).*

Challenging Environmental Determinism: Morphology of Landscape and the Regional Concept


- “Historical Particularism and American Geography”
State of Geography ca. 1950s, Regional Geography, Historical Geography


**September 9th – American Geography, Second World War, and the Cold War | Spatial Science and the Quantitative Revolution**

**American Geography, the Second World War, and the Cold War**


**Spatial Science and the Quantitative Revolution**


- 5 – Spatial Science and the Quantitative Revolution


- Sauer, “The Agency of Man on Earth”

- 11 – “Man’s Role in Changing the Face of the Earth”


**September 23rd – Landscape, Cultural-Historical Geography, Humanistic Geography, and GeoHumanities**


**September 30th – Radical/Marxist Geography | Sexual Harassment and Sexism in Geography**


- This article was published decades after the emergence of radical/Marxist geography. I assign it here so you can compare and contrast a Marxist approach to landscape analysis with the approach of humanistic geographer Pierce Lewis.

Read the following articles/chapters in order:

** Lots of articles/chapters here but they’re all short—most are only a few pages long.


- Read the entire article if you have time. But pay close attention to highlighted paragraph p. 219 and the Acknowledgements section.


- Read the entire chapter—it provides an essential perspective on the development of Marxist/radical geography in general and the radical geography journal *Antipode* in particular. Make sure to carefully read the section “Gender, Power, and the Radical Project” (p. 98-106)


**October 7th – Feminist Geography**


Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 2016. “The Urgency of Intersectionality.” TED 2016, December 7. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akOe5-UsQ2o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akOe5-UsQ2o)


**October 14th – Postmodernism and Social Constructivism | Critical Geography**


Critical Geography


- Read p. 314-23.


** You need to have completed two of the reading analyses by the Oct. 7th class. **

October 21st – Physical Geography


Integration? – Among the Natural Sciences and Between Physical & Human Geography

** Again, lots of reading here, but many of the articles/chapters are only a few pages long.


October 28th – GIS and Spatial Science


- Richard White, “Foreword”
- Anne Knowles, “GIS and History”


- Preface
- Historical Geography of the Environment: A Preliminary Literature Review


Environmental Historical Geography, First-World Political Ecology,
Neoliberal Environmental Governance, and Populism-Authoritarianism &
the Environment


  o  Read p. 1-2, 5-17.

Environment and Planning A 34: 1281–1302.


Promises.” In Neoliberal Environments: False Promises and Unnatural Consequences, edited by Nik


301–13.


November 18th – Life Sciences and Human Geography | “Grievance Studies,”
Critical Geography, and Social Theory

Life Sciences and Human Geography
2293–98.

Press.
  •  Prologue, 1 – Disentangling nature and nurture, 2 – How do we know DNA makes us
who we are?, 3 – Nature of nurture.

“Grievance Studies,” Critical Geography, and Social Theory
York Times, Oct. 4


**You need to complete the remaining two reading analyses by the Nov. 8th class.**

**November 24th – No Class. Thanksgiving Break.**

**No class after Thanksgiving Break. Finish final papers. **

**Final Papers Due Friday, December 11th **

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**Response Questions**

The following questions are provided to help you analyze and discuss the course readings. However, you are not required to use these questions. Feel free to raise your own questions and formulate your own arguments about the material.

**Forging of a Discipline and Environmental Determinism,**

How did evolutionary ideas affect the development of professional, academic geography in the late 19th and early 20th centuries?

**Regional Geography**

The conflicts over regional geography and spatial science hinged, in part, on idiographic and nomothetic approaches to research. What do those terms mean? Why does this matter? Do you think these tensions persist in geography, and perhaps, in the academy in general?

**Spatial Science and the Quantitative Revolution**

Schaffner-Hartshorne debate, or more broadly the debate over regional geography and quantitative geography/spatial science, might seem like ancient history. But what was at stake in this dispute? Why might the key points of disagreement still matter today?

**Environment-Society Geography I (1950s-1970s)**
How did geographers’ engagement with environment and society during the 1950s-1970s differ from the way geographers such as Ellen Semple and Ellsworth Huntington saw the relationship between the two in the 1910s and 1920s?

Landscape, Cultural-Historical Geography, Humanistic Geography, and GeoHumanities
How did humanistic geography differ from 1960s and 1970s-era spatial science and quantitative geography? Why were humanistic geographers so critical of those approaches in geography?

Radical/ Marxist Geography | Sexual Harassment and Sexism in Geography
What factors contributed to the rise of radical geography? And relatedly, how was radical geography a product of the New Left?

Should we cite and discuss the work of geographers who are/were sexual harassers or sexists?

Feminist Geography
How did Judith Butler’s ideas about performativity and/or ideas about intersectionality affect and challenge feminist geography?

Postmodernism and Social Constructivism | Critical Geography
What were the points of intersection and difference between postmodernism and feminism? Or, to be more specific, between postmodern geographers and feminist geographers?

Physical Geography
Given geography’s history, how could it contribute to Earth System Science and/or Sustainability Science? Should geographers be part of ESS or SS? What obstacles might make that integration difficult?

Is critical physical geography really something new? If so, what makes it new? What makes it critical?

GIS
Is Geographic Information Science just spatial science 2.0?

There were fierce debates between GIS advocates and human geographers in general and critical geographers in particular during the 1990s. That has subsided since the early 2000s. Why is the situation calmer now?

Environment-Society II (1980s-early 2000s)
Discuss the similarities and differences between two strands of environment-society geography from the 1980s-early 2000s: political ecology, environmental historical geography, animal geography, and Diamond’s approach in Guns, Germs, and Steel.

Jared Diamond’s Guns, Germs, and Steel is the most widely read environment-society book of the past thirty years. Yet many geographers loathe his work. Why do you think this is? Matthew Evenden thinks geographers are mistaken for not engaging with Diamond’s work, and more importantly, for not reflecting on why his books are so popular and why most geographers struggle to find a non-academic audience for their work. Do you agree? Why or why not?
Environment-Society Geography III (early 2000s-present)
What do geographers mean by the neoliberalization of nature and why do they—for the most part—see it as pernicious?

Life Sciences and Human Geography | “Grievance Studies,” Critical Geography, Social Theory
Since the 1930s, human geography has largely divorced itself from the life sciences. Also, most human geographers, certainly critical geographers, see human behaviors and actions as culturally/socially constructed. But as Robert Plomin shows in *Blueprint*, fifty years of behavioral genetics research indicate that all aspects of human behavior, including personality and cognitive ability, are profoundly influenced by DNA.

- How should geographers respond to these insights? *Should* they respond to the findings of behavioral genetics? If the behavioral genetics are correct, do their findings challenge some bedrock assumptions in human geography?

Was the “Grievance Studies” hoax a valid expose of weak standards and poor scholarship in parts of the academy; a vicious attack on race, gender, queer, and fatness studies; or something in between? In your response, cite and discuss some of the assigned readings. You can find additional commentary about the hoax online.

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Stay Safe Pledge

Syracuse University’s Stay Safe Pledge reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on the well-being of our community members. This pledge defines norms for behavior that will promote community health and wellbeing. Classroom expectations include the following: wearing a mask that covers the nose and mouth at all times, maintaining a distance of six feet from others, and staying away from class if you feel unwell. Students who do not follow these norms will not be allowed to continue in face-to-face classes; repeated violations will be treated as violations of the Code of Student Conduct and may result in disciplinary action.

Faith Tradition Services
Syracuse University does not set aside days for any religious holiday. Students must notify instructors by the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes and by the submission deadline for flexibly formatted classes when they will be observing their religious holiday(s). Please remind students in class of their obligations to do so. Students will have access to an online notification form through MySlice for two weeks beginning on the first day of class.

Disability Syllabus Statement
Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in this course. I invite any student to contact me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success and to collaborate with the Center for Disability Resources (CDR) in this process.
Academic Integrity

Syracuse University’s Academic Integrity Policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. Under the policy, students found in violation are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered as described in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. Syracuse University students are required to read an online summary of the University’s academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice.