

GGR1110F: Issues in Geographical Thought and Practice

University of Toronto, Fall 2016
Wednesdays, 1-4pm
Sidney Smith 2124A

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Graduate Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9:30-11:00am (or by appointment)
Course Website: Accessible through <http://portal.utoronto.ca>

Course Description:

GGR 1110 is premised on questions rather than conclusions. What is geographical knowledge? How is it made, and put to work? And how is it political? Even as we read across recent literature by (mostly) geographers, it makes little sense to define a coherent capital-G Geography. Over the last three decades, geographical inquiry has changed dramatically – in ways that are impossible to catalogue in a single course, let alone a page. What is certain about these changes is the prevalence of uncertainty, or at least the destabilization and diversification of foundations.

Perhaps this uncertainty is related to the equivalent challenge of designing ‘core’ courses. There are many models for these courses, and no one variant will satisfy all participants. Still, I have a few basic aims:

- to (begin to) trace an unsystematic survey of recent work in human geography, anchored by ‘big themes’ such as empire, identity and difference, urbanism, security, and so on;
- to choose readings that are accessible, sophisticated, and suited to lively discussion, and to emphasize the work of ‘junior’ scholars;
- to develop critical reading skills in a seminar format, including the ability to read literature outside our particular interests and perspectives;
- to consider the critical, interventionist, worldly role of geographical inquiry;
- and to create community as you start a PhD program.

This means that the course does not extensively address the philosophical underpinnings of geographical thought or geographic methodologies. Still, we will encounter these issues often, and I hope that you will seek out other coursework in response to both your own shifting interests and the inevitable limitations of GGR 1110.

During Weeks 10 and 11, we will also spend time discussing your respective essay projects for the course. And we will (re)turn, in the final week, to the commitments that necessarily accompany geographical thought and practice.

The Course Environment:

You are here for different reasons, and have arrived with different educational training. This course will be one of the broadest you complete as a PhD student. At times this diversity may prove challenging. But over the next several years, you will have plenty of opportunities for more focused inquiries. Since we will be consistently preoccupied with the situated nature of knowledge, your own trajectory and perspective will certainly matter in this course, but so will openness to other ideas and other literatures...ideas and literatures that may well end up informing your future research.

Your primary obligations are to do the reading each week and to foster conversations about this reading during class hours – and perhaps beyond! This is a collective exercise, and as such I welcome your feedback as we proceed; there's no need to doom ourselves to a discouraging term. My responsibility, in turn, will be to broadly set the table in advance of discussion (occasionally, for a maximum of 20 minutes), and to facilitate a stimulating, enjoyable and respectful environment for that discussion.

Evaluation:

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| 1. Participation / leading discussion: | 20% |
| 2. Weekly responses (4 in total): | 20% |
| 3. Essay Proposal (due October 19): | 10% |
| 4. Final Paper (due December 14): | 50% |
1. Each week two students will collaborate to introduce and lead discussion on the readings. Please prepare a set of questions (5-6 is a good target) that are specific to the readings and/or wider attempts at synthesis. Should you wish, you may also choose to briefly contextualize the readings by talking about the author and the background of the work. This responsibility will comprise half of your participation mark, and the other half will reflect your role in discussions throughout the term. Discussion questions should be circulated to the class via the Blackboard Discussion forum by no later than 5pm on Tuesdays.
 2. You must also complete a number of writing assignments. First, you will be required to submit four short response pieces throughout the term. These should be no more than two double-spaced pages, and should reflect a constructively critical engagement with some or all of a particular week's readings. Your responses will be useful pivots during discussion; for that reason, I will be grateful if you post them on the Blackboard Discussion forum on the day before the class in question. At least two of these responses should be submitted by October 26. I will comment on, but will not formally grade your responses.
 3. In advance of your final paper, please prepare a proposal of about two pages in length. The first half should take the rough form of a journal or conference abstract. It should set out a distinct research question; provide some sense of how you will address that question; and situate this inquiry within a scholarly field (which should be at least partially geographic). The second half of the proposal should consist of a preliminary bibliography of primary and/or secondary materials. These proposals are due on October 19; I will return them to you, with comments, on October 26.
 4. Your course paper should be roughly 18-20 pages in length. It should build on your proposal and must address the influence of 'theory' on geographical scholarship in some way. This might consist of a historical discussion of changing approaches within a sub-field, or a theoretical engagement

with a particular geographic theme (say, ‘the body’, or ‘migration’). The paper should obviously move beyond course content. Essays will be assessed with respect to the clarity of your argument and analysis, depth of reading and research, and style. They are due on December 14 – and this is a fixed deadline.

On November 23 and 30, we will spend the first half of each class discussing your essay projects. You will each be allotted 10 minutes; be prepared to summarize your project for 2-3 minutes, and questions/conversation will follow.

Readings:

In the first few weeks of the course we will drop into debates on the histories and politics of ‘doing’ geography. This is a vast area, and our initial focus will be on an important period (essentially, the late 1980s and 1990s) when geographic scholarship became more reflexive and self-critical. The turn is embodied in two now-classic articles on, respectively, the long associations between geography/geographers and imperialism, and the place of geographical knowledge itself. The subsequent week is organized around pieces that update, expand, or challenge the earlier turn. We will then spend four weeks reading recent scholarship on four crucial geographic topics.

The readings are mostly academic journal articles and book chapters. **Copies of or links to all of these will be available on the course Blackboard site** (click on the ‘Course Reserves’ tab on your Portal home page). But in the second half of the course we will work through two full books (one of which is a series of lectures!): one from ‘inside’ (but certainly not limited to) geography, the other from ‘outside’ (but written by the AAG’s 2016 Honorary Geographer). Choosing these texts was a vexed task, but I hope that they will in different ways draw together our discussions and offer openings for future inquiries. The timing means that you should be able to acquire copies of both books, in the manner of your choosing; both have been placed on reserve at Robarts Library.

Schedule:

Week 1 (September 14): Introduction

- Mona Domosh, “How We Hurt Each Other Every Day, and What We Might Do About It,” *AAG Newsletter* May 2015 (<http://news.aag.org/2015/05/how-we-hurt-each-other-every-day/>).
- Mona Domosh, “Why is our Geography Curriculum so White?” *AAG Newsletter* June 2015 (<http://news.aag.org/2015/06/why-is-our-geography-curriculum-so-white/>).

[Tuesday September 20, 3-5pm: Professional Development workshop #1, on funding your research]

Part I

Week 2 (September 21): Geographies of Geographical Knowledge, I / Research Grant Discussion

Bring a one-page synopsis of a research proposal (for, say, SSHRC) to class...and feel free to draw from an existing document!

- Felix Driver, “Geography’s Empire: Histories of Geographical Knowledge,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10 (1992), 23-40.
- Derek Gregory, “Geography,” *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th Ed. (2009), 287-295. *[Posted on Blackboard]*

- Gillian Rose, “Situating Knowledges: Positionality, Reflexivities and Other Tactics,” *Progress in Human Geography* 21.3 (1997), 305-320.

Week 3 (September 28): Geographies of Geographical Knowledge, II

- Sarah Hunt, “Ontologies of Indigeneity: The Politics of Embodying a Concept,” *Cultural Geographies* 21.1 (2014), 27-32.
- Tariq Jazeel, “Between Area and Discipline: Progress, Knowledge Production, and the Geographies of Geography,” *Progress in Human Geography* (in press, available through the journal’s OnlineFirst page; doi:10.1177/0309132515609713).
- Special issue on “Race, Racism and Geography,” *The Professional Geographer* 54.1 (2002), 1-66.

Part II

Week 4 (October 5): (Canada as) Land

- Emilie Cameron, “Copper Stories: Imaginative Geographies and Material Orderings of the Central Canadian Arctic,” in *Rethinking the Great White North: Race, Nature, and the Historical Geographies of Whiteness in Canada* (2011), 169-190.
- Shiri Pasternak, “How Capitalism Will Save Colonialism: The Privatization of Reserve Lands in Canada,” *Antipode* 47.1 (2015), 179-196.
- Leanne Simpson, “Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation,” *Decolonization* 3.3 (2014), 1-25.

Week 5 (October 12): ‘Living for the City’

- Jordan T. Camp, “Blues Geographies and the Security Turn: Interpreting the Housing Crisis in Los Angeles,” *American Quarterly* 64.3 (2012), 543-570.
- Katherine McKittrick, “Plantation Futures,” *Small Axe* 17.3 (2013), 1-15.
- Alexander Vasudevan, “The Makeshift City: Towards a Global Geography of Squatting,” *Progress in Human Geography* 39.3 (2015), 338-359.

Week 6 (October 19): Boundaries, Bodies, Exceptions

ESSAY PROPOSALS DUE TODAY

- Linda McDowell, “Roepke Lecture in Economic Geography – The Lives of Others: Body Work, the Production of Difference, and Labor Geographies,” *Economic Geography* 91.1 (2015), 1-23.
- Alison Mountz, “The Enforcement Archipelago: Detention, Haunting, and Asylum on Islands,” *Political Geography* 30 (2011), 118-128.
- Natalie Oswin, “Queer Time in Global City Singapore: Neoliberal Futures and the ‘freedom to love’,” *Sexualities* 17.4 (2014), 412-433.

Week 7 (October 26): ‘Planetary Crisis’

- Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009), 197-222.
- Elizabeth Johnson et al, “After the Anthropocene: Politics and Geographic Inquiry for a New Epoch,” *Progress in Human Geography* 28.3 (2014), 439-456.

- Joseph Masco, “The Age of Fallout,” *History of the Present* 5.2 (2015), 137-168.

Part III

Week 8 (November 2): Loyd, Part I

- Jenna Loyd, *Health Rights are Civil Rights: Peace and Justice Activism in Los Angeles, 1963-1978* (2014), Introduction to end of Chapter 4.

Week 9 (November 9): Loyd, Part II

- Jenna Loyd, *Health Rights are Civil Rights: Peace and Justice Activism in Los Angeles, 1963-1978* (2014), Chapter 5 to end of book.

Week 10 (November 16): Butler, Part I / Essay Discussions, Part I

- Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015), 1-122.

Week 11 (November 23): Butler, Part II / Essay Discussions, Part II

- Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015), 123-219.

Week 12 (November 30): Critique and Responsibility

- Kiese Laymon, “My Vassar College Faculty ID Makes Everything OK,” *Gawker* 29 November 2014 (<http://gawker.com/my-vassar-college-faculty-id-makes-everything-ok-1664133077>)
- Katharyne Mitchell, “Writing from Left Field,” *Antipode* 38.2 (2006), 205-212.
- Kate Parizeau et al, “Breaking the Silence: A Feminist Call to Action,” *The Canadian Geographer* 60.2 (2016), 192-204.

ESSAYS DUE DECEMBER 14