

GGR254H1S – Geography USA

Summer 2014

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6:00pm – 8:00pm
Sidney Smith Hall, Room 1073

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Course Description

The United States of America covers a vast geographical area and is made up of diverse cultures, places, regions, and ethnicities. While America's diverse places and cultures can be studied from numerous geographical perspectives, this course will introduce you to America's geography using key concepts from cultural geography, a subfield within human geography. Broadly speaking, cultural geography focuses on how humans create, experience, and represent places, landscapes, and regions through cultural practices. Such practices range from farming, land surveying, and town settlement to photography, painting, and literature. We will consider an equally wide range of practices in this course to understand America's cultural geography.

One of the key concepts in both older and newer forms of cultural geography is 'landscape'. In this course we will use the concept of landscape, along with 'place' and 'region', to guide our thinking about America's geographical evolution. We will explore a series of landscapes that have shaped how Americans relate to particular regions and the nation as a whole. In so doing, we will consider the following key questions and themes:

- What is New England? What role did colonial settlement and later representations of the colonial era have in the development of New England's landscapes?
- How did the American West come to have such importance for America's cultural geography and Americans' understanding of themselves? How was the West settled and urbanized, and how has it been represented in art, literature, and popular culture?
- How did plantation slavery shape the landscapes of the American South? What significance do plantation landscapes have for contemporary Southerners?
- What was the 'regionalist' movement, and what did it say about the importance of regions for Americans in the 1920s and 1930s? How was this movement related to broader changes in American landscapes during the Great Depression?
- What is the Middle West? How did its landscapes come to be defined as 'America's heartland'? What are its defining landscapes, and how have they changed over time?

- How did suburbanization alter the form of American landscapes? How is suburbanization linked to idealized and symbolic landscapes? What do suburbs reveal about the cultural geography of the US?
- How has immigration shaped the border Southwest and its landscapes? What role have Hispanic cultures had in the making of such landscapes?
- What is the Intermountain West? How do recent changes in the Intermountain West (e.g. rural gentrification) relate to narratives about the American West and its symbolic landscapes?

The course will not proceed in a strictly chronological fashion. Rather, we will move back and forth in time to understand the historical origins and contemporary significance of American landscapes and regional identities.

Course Aims

- To introduce you to America's complex cultural and historical geography
- To introduce you to key concepts in cultural geography and their significance for understanding America's geographical evolution
- To explore what it means to think geographically
- To develop the ability to interpret and 'read' landscapes

Course Materials and Readings

Readings for the course are available online, either through Robarts or Blackboard. I expect you to do the assigned readings *before* each class. There is no required textbook for this course.

Course Evaluation and Key Dates

Quiz 1	10%	July 10
Paper proposal	10%	July 17
Quiz 2	10%	July 24
Landscape assignment	35%	August 12
Final exam	35%	TBD

Course Assignments

1. Quizzes

To give you extra incentive to keep up with the readings, you will have two short quizzes at the beginning of our third and seventh meetings (July 10 and July 24). The first quiz covers the readings for July 8 and July 10, while the second covers the readings for July 17 - 24. If you have done the assigned readings, you will find the quizzes straightforward.

2. Final Exam

The final exam will take place between the 13th and 19th of August (the precise date will be announced in late July). The final will ask you to answer short answer and essay questions. It will cover material from the lectures and readings from the entire course. We will spend part of the last class reviewing for the final.

3. American Landscape Assignment

For the paper, you will be required to do the following:

1. Choose a photograph, painting, or postcard that depicts an American landscape covered in the course (e.g. colonial, rural, suburban, desert).
2. Critically interpret the image using the concepts of landscape, place, and culture region. In so doing, you should consider questions such as: What is the image's historical context? What does the image try to convey about the nature and significance of the depicted landscape? How does the image fit into larger narratives concerning particular American landscapes and regions?

Given the short length of this assignment, you need to convey your argument in a concise manner. Your paper should include a short introduction that explicitly states your argument, as well as a short conclusion that clearly restates your argument. While the paper is fairly short, I expect you to thoughtfully engage with the course material, your image, and outside (i.e. non-course) scholarly sources. Moreover, rather than speaking in vague terms about the 'American spirit' or 'American culture', you should present an argument and supporting examples that reveal something about the complex, historically layered, and dynamic nature of American landscapes and regions.

Referencing and sources: In addition to choosing a painting, photograph, or postcard, you need to find **at least three** scholarly sources to help you interpret your image (course readings do not count towards this total, though you need to draw on relevant course readings and lecture material in your paper as well). Scholarly sources include *peer-reviewed journal articles* and *academic books*. **Do not** use online sources such as Wikipedia. And, as this is a geography course, I encourage you to rely on articles and books by geographers. You must properly cite all sources you draw on in your paper. This means you must include **footnotes** or **in-text citations** and a **complete bibliography**. Please use the system of referencing outlined in the *Chicago Manual of Style*. See the "Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide" at http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/tools_citationguide.html or you can access the full *Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edition at: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/16/contents.html>

Paper length and format: Your paper should be **1000-1250 words** (approximately 4-5 double-spaced pages, 12-point font), *excluding* your bibliography and image. Please include a title page with your name, student number, paper title, and word count.

4. Proposal for Landscape Assignment

To help ensure you are on the right track with your paper, you will submit a **250-500 word proposal** (1-2 double-spaced pages, 12 point font) at the beginning of class on **Tuesday, July 22**.

In the proposal you should:

1. Briefly outline a tentative argument for your paper;
2. Identify the image you have selected (though you need not include the image itself);
3. List **at least three** scholarly secondary sources you plan to draw on and provide a brief explanation (1-2 sentences) for why each source will help you make an argument about the landscape you have chosen. While you should integrate course readings into your final assignment, you should only include non-course readings in your proposal.

Course Policies

1. Late Penalties, Late Assignments, and Assignment Submission

Papers handed in after the beginning of class will be marked down by 3% per day, including weekends. Assignments received seven days after the deadline will not be accepted, unless you provide proper documentation. Please contact me as soon as possible if you know your assignment will be more than seven days late.

Only **paper copies** of assignments will be accepted. If you are unable to bring your assignment to class, you need to put the assignment in the drop box in the Geography Main Office. Please note that the Main Office closes at 4:30pm sharp in the summer.

2. Missed Exams and Medical Notes

If you miss a quiz or exam, contact me as soon as possible (no later than one-week after the original quiz/exam date). For medical exemptions, I will only accept an official U of T form, which you can obtain from <http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca/>. Please consult your college registrar if you are having difficulties during the term that prevent you from completing your course work. For non-medical emergencies, they may be able to provide a letter documenting your situation. Be aware that the University considers submitting a note that has been altered or obtained under false pretences a very serious offence.

3. Marking Policy

My TA or myself will mark all assignments fairly and carefully. If you would like an assignment to be re-marked, you must first wait **24 hours** before contacting me. If after 24 hours you still believe your assignment deserves to be reevaluated, you must provide me with a one-page

statement that specifies why you think your grade fails to accurately reflect the quality of your work. Please note that if your assignment is remarked, your grade can go up or down.

4. Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. The work you submit must be your own. Also, it should be clear that copying someone else's work verbatim without attribution is not the only form of plagiarism. In fact, paraphrasing a source without attribution or proper references also constitutes plagiarism (later in the course I will distribute a handout that provides examples of how to avoid plagiarism of the latter sort). Submitting assignments you have received credit for in other courses also constitutes plagiarism.

The Department and University treat plagiarism cases as serious offenses and sanctions are severe. You should be familiar with the university's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (see <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). Students are expected to abide by this code.

5. Instructor and TA Contact

Please use email for **short queries only**. If you have more involved questions, please talk with me during my regular office hours or make an appointment. To ensure your privacy, please use a **University of Toronto email account** for all correspondence.

6. Accessibility

If you require particular accommodation or have any accessibility concerns about the course, classroom, or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or www.accessibility.utoronto.ca.

7. Course Etiquette: Phone and Computer Use

All mobile phones and other communications devices should be turned off or set to silent mode. Do not answer your phone or text message during class. If you take notes with a laptop, please do so in a way that does not disturb other students or the instructor (i.e., type quietly, do not use computer for non-class related activities, turn off the internet function).

8. Recording Devices

Taking photos and video recordings are not permitted. If you wish to record lectures, you must ask the instructor for permission in advance.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (July 3). Introduction to the Course and Key Concepts in Cultural Geography

*No readings

Week 2 (July 8). Colonial Landscapes: Settlement Ideals and Invented Traditions

Required Reading:

Joseph S. Wood, "Build, Therefore, Your Own World: The New England Village as a Settlement Ideal," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81 (1991): 32-50.

Week 3 (July 10). Frontier Landscapes: Jeffersonian Geography and Westward Expansion

****Quiz 1 in class****

Required Reading:

Gareth E. John, "Cultural Nationalism, Westward Expansion and the Production of Imperial Landscape: George Catlin's Native American West," *Cultural Geographies* 8, no. 2 (2001): 175-203.

Week 4 (July 15). Southern Landscapes: Plantations, Slavery, and their Legacies

Required Reading:

Charles S. Aiken, "Transforming the Southern Plantation," in *Making the American Landscape*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael P. Conzen (New York: Routledge, 2010), 115-41.

Week 5 (July 17). Rural Landscapes I: The New Deal and Regionalism

****Proposal due in class****

Required Reading:

Michael Steiner, "Regionalism in the Great Depression," *Geographical Review* 73, no. 4 (1983): 430-446.

Week 6 (July 22). Rural Landscapes II: America's Heartland in the Twentieth Century

Required Readings:

James R. Shortridge, *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1989), Chapters 3-4.

Week 7 (July 24). Suburban Landscapes: Aesthetics, Privilege, and Colonial Era Icons

****Quiz 2 in class****

Required Reading:

Nancy G. Duncan and James S. Duncan, "Anxious Pleasures: Place-Based Identity and the Look of the Land," Ch. 4 in Duncan and Duncan, *Landscapes of Privilege: The Politics of the Aesthetic in an American Suburb* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 59-84.

Week 8 (July 29). West Coast Landscapes: California Dreaming in Silicon Valley

Required Reading:

John M. Findlay, "Stanford Industrial Park: Downtown for Silicon Valley," Ch. 3 in Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture after 1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 117-59.

Week 9 (July 31). Desert Landscapes: Urban Growth and Ethnic Homelands in the Southwest

Daniel D. Arreola, "The Texas-Mexican Homeland," *The Journal of Cultural Geography* 13, no. 2 (1993): 61-74.

Alex P. Oberle and Daniel D. Arreola, "Resurgent Mexican Phoenix," *Geographical Review* 98, no. 2 (2008): 171-96.

Week 10 (August 5). Securitized Landscapes: Immigration and the US-Mexico Border

Required Reading:

Michael Dear, "Third Nation of the Mind" (Ch. 6) and "Fortress USA" (Ch. 7), in Dear, *Why Walls Don't Work: Repairing the US-Mexico Divide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 85-125.

Week 11 (August 7). Mountain Landscapes: Tourism, Rural Gentrification, and the Intermountain West

Required Readings:

Rina Ghose, "Big Sky or Big Sprawl? Rural Gentrification and the Changing Cultural Landscape of Missoula, Montana," *Urban Geography* 25, no. 6 (2004): 528-49.

Week 12 (August 12). Revisiting American Cultural Landscapes

****Landscape assignment due at the beginning of class****

*Course review and summary, no readings