

GGR1110H: Issues in Geographic Thought and Practice



Artist: Kader Attia 1970

Born France, works France, Algeria, Germany

Untitled (Ghardaïa) 2009, Cooked couscous on wooden table and digital prints on paper

On the table is a model, made entirely of couscous, of the ancient Algerian city of Ghardaïa. One of the photographs on the wall depicts the Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier, who visited Ghardaïa in 1931 and adapted elements of its buildings into his own designs. Another photograph shows Fernand Pouillon one of Le Corbusier's followers, who drew upon these ideas to design the social housing project in suburban Paris where Attia grew up, as the child of Algerian parents. The artist's own history, and the wider post-colonial relationship between Algeria and France, are therefore expressed through this work.

Photo Credit: R. Buliung, Living Cities Exhibit, Tate Modern, London, Spring 2017

Instructor: Ron Buliung

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Seminar Time/Location: Fridays 12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m., SS5017A

Office Locations: SS5014, UTM Davis 3272

Office Hours: TBD

Course Description (adapted from the Graduate Geography Handbook)

How do geographers go about addressing the challenges and problems of the world? How does the wider context (social, institutional, environmental...geographical!) shape the kinds of issues geographers examine, how these issues are framed, and how they are addressed? How do broad intellectual currents influence the work that is done in geography (and vice versa), and how do we understand the relationships between the broad intellectual currents and the “world out there”? Consistent with current emphasis in critical geography, all geographers, whether explicit or not, are using both theory and so politics in their work, along with some implicit or explicit problem statement in framing what they look at and what are they trying to explain. Even the choice of phenomena to examine is a political choice. Thinking carefully about these issues helps to understand the relationship between scholarship (geographical or otherwise) and the “real world”, while at the same time facilitating reflexive and careful consideration of research topics and approaches. This is, in our view, preferable to relying uncritically on policy or academic discourses and their prevailing theories, debates, questions, and approaches.

This course emphasizes critical reading and thinking drawing on contemporary texts by or relevant to geographers, discussion of readings and the role of theory and evidence in explanation, and perhaps also paying explicit attention to different types of academic writing.

I have organized this year's course to focus on a few fundamental questions; namely,

1. What is human geography?
2. What theories and texts do we draw upon individually and collectively as human geographers?
3. What do you see foresee as the future of the discipline(s)?

We will work through these questions using the work of our colleagues in this department, and texts that they have identified as being foundational to their work. We will engage with these questions through in-class discussion, the writing of weekly reflections, and through the development of a short literature review. The literature review will allow you to explore recent work related to your primary research interest(s) and to situate this knowledge within human geography.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will be able to:

1. Construct research questions;
2. Conduct literature searches using search queries applied to literature databases;
3. Use logical operators to develop sophisticated search queries of literature databases;
4. Produce an annotated bibliography;
5. Summarize, synthesize, and critique findings from academic articles through the writing of a short original literature review;
6. Work in small groups to develop individual and joint knowledge about human geography;
7. Understand and communicate theory and applied research findings from the research in human geography;

8. Communicate their own position in relation to course materials using language that is inclusive, respectful, and constructive;
9. Situate their research interests within the context of theory and applied research in human geography;
10. Understand some of the breadth and depth of research conducted in human geography at the University of Toronto;
11. Quickly develop and deliver short presentations about research in human geography;
12. Describe their experience(s) with active learning strategies in a seminar setting;
13. Use Quercus effectively as a student user.

Course Organization

We will meet once per week, using up to 3 hours of in-class time to engage in a range of activities. We will not observe any of the fall reading week periods, and will continue to meet during those weeks. Course activities will include: guest speaker presentations, use of active learning strategies to engage with course materials, work sessions directed at locating texts, delivery of short presentations individually or as a small group. Students are expected to have completed assigned readings ahead of each seminar, and come prepared for discussion. Written assignments will include: weekly reflections, development of an annotated bibliography, draft literature review, and submission of a final literature review.

Course Text

I have drawn upon the work of my colleagues, and work that they view as foundational to their individual academic practices. While developing this course, I asked my colleagues to respond to two requests:

1. Please let me know how you describe yourself as a geographer, a short bio of 3 sentences will suffice, but even simply identifying your sub-discipline would be very helpful.
2. Send me a list of 3 papers*, 2 that have been foundational or transformative in shaping your academic practice, and 1 of your favourite (or most impactful) pieces that you have published - something connected to the foundational pieces you have identified would be helpful.

* I indicated that book chapters, and non-traditional forms of academic output (video, blog entries, grey-lit) would also be of interest.

This exercise produced a fascinating collection of materials that we will spend time with during this semester. Our reading list truly spans the breadth of human geography, it is diverse, powerful, and incredibly engaging.

Most readings will be available through the UofT library, or through links that I will include in weekly course modules here on Q.

(reading list will be posted prior to the start of the course)

Assessment

Assignment Description	Weight	Due Date
Participation, including contributions to discussion, presentations	20%	Term
Weekly Reflections	10@2% = 20%	Beginning September 28
Research question and annotated bibliography	10%	October 12 th
Draft Literature Review	20%	November 2 nd
Final Literature Review	30%	November 30 th

Late or Missed Submissions

Re-weighting or re-assignment of grades across assignments is not permitted. Late assignments will be assigned a penalty of 10% per day. Assignments will not be accepted more than one week past the due date. If you need to submit something late, you must inform the instructor immediately, with some details regarding the reason for late submission.

Accessibility

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/as> (<http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>)

Academic Integrity

Not all graduate students may be aware of the meaning of plagiarism, hence including a statement on plagiarism in your outline is strongly encouraged. Something along the following lines covers the main points:

Plagiarism is an academic offense at the University of Toronto. Plagiarism is quoting (or paraphrasing) the work of an author (including the work of fellow students) without proper use of citation (and quotations marks when using an author's words). Students also should not be submitting any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought, without first discussing with the instructor. Please consult the SGS policy on Academic Integrity (<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/facultyandstaff/Pages/Academic-Integrity.aspx>) (<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/facultyandstaff/Pages/Academic-Integrity.aspx>) for further information and check the 'How not to plagiarize' website at: <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize/> (<http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize/>).

For further advice and suggestions for instructors around issues of academic integrity see <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/facultyandstaff/prevention> (<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/facultyandstaff/prevention>) or (<http://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/strategies/a-i/>) <http://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/strategies/a-i/> (<http://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/strategies/a-i/>)

Audio and Video (<http://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/strategies/a-i/>) Recording of Classroom Activities

To respect the privacy of your classmates, and the course professor, video recording of seminars is prohibited. If a student wishes to audio record any lecture presentations or other similar materials provided by the instructor, the instructor's written consent must be obtained beforehand. Otherwise, all such reproduction is infringement of copyright and prohibited. In the case of private use by students with disabilities, the instructor's consent shall not be unreasonably withheld.

Weekly Schedule of Readings and Other Course Materials

Links to weekly course modules will be available shortly

