

# GGR421H1F: Histories of Geographical Thought

Department of Geography & Planning  
University of Toronto, Fall 2020  
Thursdays, 10:00am to 12:00pm (Toronto/Eastern time)  
Online, via Zoom

## Course Information

Instructor: Dr. Matthew Farish (he/him)  
Email: [farish@geog.utoronto.ca](mailto:farish@geog.utoronto.ca)

Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:30 to 11:00am; Fridays, 2:30 to 4:00pm; or by appointment; all on Zoom (link sent in Quercus Announcements)

Course Website: [On Quercus](#)

## Course Description

In one sense, geography, or ‘earth-writing’, to invoke its etymological roots, is as old as humanity. But what has been understood to count as geographical thought and practice, particularly in the era of discrete academic disciplines, is a more limited and more charged question, reminding us that it is now common to speak of knowledge as situated: always partial, never pure, and from somewhere. At every step in this seminar, it will be crucial to place theories, debates, institutions and individuals on a larger canvas, one particularly concerned with the operation of power.

Given the limitations of a single term, and our emphasis on English-language texts (or texts translated into English), in this course we will focus on the period from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the present, and on significant and often troubling relationships between geography and modernity. In our reading and conversations, we will regularly juxtapose ‘period’ or primary sources (particularly maps and written texts) with more recent scholarship, some now classic in its own right. You will follow a similar model in your major writing for the course.

Extensive knowledge of global history is not a requirement for this course, but historical curiosity is. So too is an interest in intellectual history, because geographic inquiry is really only discrete in an institutional sense (and recently so), and it shares much with fields from biology to economics to literature. These three examples have been chosen because at times affinities have been claimed – and continue to be claimed – between geography and the sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. As we will see, this diversity has been a source of anxiety for geographers and some of their critics, but it may also turn out to be an indicator of the world’s complexity.

## Learning Outcomes

1. Develop a greater understanding of (some) histories of geographic thought and practice, particularly their significance and their limits 'in the world'.
2. Gain greater familiarity with scholarly literature on these histories, and perform close, critical readings of this literature.
3. Demonstrate a deeper understanding of the philosophical and political motivations for different versions of geographic thought and practice.
4. Undertake a significant, scaffolded writing project, based on clear research design, based on original research in and synthesis of secondary sources, and including careful revision to a first draft.

## Course Format and Expectations

### Online Meetings

Each week, at the appointed time, we will meet on Zoom. A stable link for our Thursday meetings has been sent via a Quercus Announcement at the beginning of the term. Although you should not feel compelled to turn your camera on, I will be grateful if you display at least your first name (or the name you would like the class to use). We will spend part of this class time in a large-format discussion, and another part in smaller break-out groups.

As indicated on the course schedule, starting with Class 3, the last 40 minutes of our time will be reserved for either tutorial-style conversations (3-4 students and the instructor) or essay roundtables. Polls for (1) tutorial sign-up, (2) discussion questions, and (3) essay roundtables have been distributed via the Quercus Calendar. Please sign up once for each of these three activities. (2 and 3 are discussed in more detail below.)

If you do not have access to a stable internet connection and a safe and comfortable workspace, please let me know.

### The Course Environment

Your primary obligations are to read the specified materials for a particular day; to show up for our online class time ready to ask questions and foster dialogue about those readings and the related lecture content; and to contribute to respectful conversations. I am responsible for facilitating an enjoyable, open, and safe environment, but that responsibility is ultimately collective. In particular, given the online format, please strive to avoid talking over people or interrupting. Violent or discriminatory language will not be tolerated, in our conversations and in your writing; for a start, I will remove you from the Zoom 'classroom'.

Children of all ages are welcome to sit in on our class time. If this is the case, though, it may help to keep your microphone muted until you wish to speak. Please turn your cellphones to silent during

our online time. Taking photos, filming, or recording our online classes is not permitted. I will not record our Thursday discussions or my office hours.

Our subject material can be unsettling and upsetting, but it is also important that we confront it through discussion and debate. Do not hesitate to speak to me if you have concerns about our environment.

## Quercus

As the course schedule indicates, links to short ‘table-setting’ lectures (15-20 minutes), hosted on the University’s MyMedia service, will be posted on Quercus by 5pm on Tuesdays. In addition to completing the week’s assigned readings, please view these lectures before class on Thursdays.

In the Discussion Board, alongside threads for weekly discussion questions, I have established a general thread for comments, queries and interventions pertaining to the course (including questions that you generate or address in your reading responses), and another thread for our optional posting of intriguing links (see below, in the Class Schedule).

## Course Materials

There is no textbook that adequately addresses the range of topics covered in this course. Instead, the reading list is drawn from three sources: academic journal articles, book chapters, and web-based material. While you can access journal articles through the Library’s E-journals search option, and online material through the URLs linked below, all of the materials have also been gathered by the Library’s Syllabus Service and are accessible through Quercus.

## Submitting Coursework

Your Reading Responses and the three pieces of your ‘capstone’ essay project will be uploaded to Quercus, under different Assignment tabs.

## Assignments and Evaluation

### Key Dates

Participation:	20%	
Reading Responses (3):	15%	(At least 2/3 must be submitted by Nov. 19)
Interpretative Essay – Proposal:	10%	October 2 (11:59pm, Toronto/Eastern time)
Interpretative Essay:	35%	November 6 (11:59pm, Toronto/Eastern time)
Interpretative Essay – Revised:	20%	December 9 (11:59pm, Toronto/Eastern time)

## Participation (20%)

This will be a discussion-intensive course. Our conversations should challenge you to think about what is involved in ‘doing’ geography and to form a critical appreciation of the ideas that some geographers have committed to print.

I understand ‘participation’ to include your various contributions to our general, break-out, and tutorial conversations, including the provision of discussion questions (once) and our essay roundtables.

I strongly encourage you to visit during my online office hours in the first few weeks of the course. A brief chat will help me to learn about your academic background and interests, and this in turn should improve our class time. As indicated above, office hours will be held on Zoom; I will send a link via a Quercus announcement in the first week of term. If I am chatting with someone else; you will be placed in the Zoom ‘waiting room’, and I will aim to keep individual conversations to 10-15 minutes.

Aside from Week 2, where I will lead the general discussion, each week two or three individuals will submit 3-4 questions on Quercus pertaining to the relevant assigned readings, linking these readings to broader course themes. I will compile these questions, and they will be the focus of our Thursday large-group and/or break-out conversations. If you are scheduled to submit discussion questions, please post them on the Discussion Board, in the thread for the relevant class number, by Wednesday at noon. Ask questions about compelling themes, but also about confusing ones! As noted above, a poll for discussion question sign-up has now been distributed.

## Reading Responses (15%)

I would like you to submit three short response pieces (no more than two pages, double-spaced) on Quercus across the term. At least two of these responses must be submitted by November 13. You are welcome to submit more than three; each will receive a letter-grade and I will use the best three grades in my calculation of your final course mark.

Responses typically address the readings for the week in question, but you are welcome to carefully cut across weeks, and/or to reach back to previous weeks. Whether you write them immediately after you complete the readings or wait a day or two to reflect on the texts, responses should contain two elements: a brief (2-3 sentence) summary of one or more readings, followed by your own engagement with the readings. This engagement should move beyond a description of content to compare, contrast, and critique the readings, noting an author’s significant contributions but also points where you disagree or are left puzzled. An ideal response is both analytical and intertextual, identifying particular themes and tracking them across multiple readings.

Responses should include clear references to the text(s) under consideration (with page numbers where appropriate), and they should be based on close reading rather than general impressions. As always, spelling, grammar, and sentence structure are crucial – particularly here, because you are trying to convince the reader.

## The Interpretative Essay (in three parts) (10%, 35%, and 20%)

Choose a theme from the list below and write an essay of 10-12 double-spaced pages (12-point font) documenting the ways in which geographers (understood broadly) have considered this topic over a specified period of time.

Given word limitations, the aim is not to be comprehensive, but to highlight a specific era (in many cases, a decade or less) that you believe to be important, to illustrate precisely the approach to your theme at that 'moment', and to stress the connections between geographical scholarship and the wider world. This paper will require you to conduct (online) library research. Be sure to use six or more scholarly sources (not including sources from the course reading list, which you are free to use as well). These should be both serious books and journal articles.

Select one of the following themes:

1. Class
2. Culture
3. Gender
4. Imperialism
5. Modernism
6. Nature
7. Race
8. Science
9. Sexuality
10. War

Part One: Start with a 2-3 page proposal that includes three components: a research question indicating how you intend to specifically approach your chosen theme; a tentative structure for your paper (a numbered list is fine, but so is a paragraph-length abstract); and annotated bibliographic entries for five relevant sources that you have identified. Your proposal is due at the end of the day on October 2, in in DOC, DOCX, or RTF form via Quercus (specific instructions to follow). If submitted on time, it will be returned with comments by October 9. Without an extension arranged through Accessibility Services, there will be a 5% deduction for each day that an essay is late (including weekend days).

Part Two: I will provide more information on the Essay in the early weeks of term. To receive feedback on this assignment, please submit it by the end of the day on November 6. It will be returned within two weeks. Complete citations and a bibliography are required. Without an extension arranged through Accessibility Services, there will be a 5% deduction for each day that an essay is late (including weekend days), and I will not accept essays after November 13.

On October 22, 29 and November 5, we will hold three Essay Roundtables, limited to a maximum of nine students each week. These roundtables will last 45-60 minutes. If you have signed up to 'present' (via the Quercus Calendar), you will be expected to speak for no more than two minutes on your essay, drawing from your proposal, my comments on that proposal, and your thoughts and work to date on your essay. Explain your research questions, the literature you will use to address them, and any lingering questions or concerns about your paper. (Have a look at examples and

advice pertaining to the global [3 Minute Thesis](#) competition for some interesting if slightly daunting guidance.) Your two minutes – timed, unfortunately – will be followed by questions from your peers, which I will moderate.

Part Three: Finally, you must submit a revised essay that responds to my comments and suggestions on the first version. Your revisions will probably lengthen the original essay, but likely only by a few pages. You must use the ‘track changes’ function in Word or a similar program so that your edits are visible. Again, complete citations and a bibliography are required. When reading your revised essays, I will be looking for additional material and sources, but also for the reorganization and reshaping of your original arguments. This revision stage is a crucial element of academic writing, and many other types of writing as well! To receive feedback on your revised essay, please submit it by the end of the day on December 9. Aside from extensions arranged through Accessibility Services, I will not accept these assignments after December 16. There is no late penalty.

For all assignments: University policy specifies that requests for re-marking should be submitted to the instructor no later than two weeks after the work has been returned.

## Class Schedule and Required Readings

Class 1 (September 10): Introductions  
(No reading)

Class 2 (September 17): Definitions and Contested ‘Traditions’  
(Lecture posted by 5pm on September 15)

Derek Gregory, “Geography,” in D. Gregory et al eds., *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th Ed. (2009), 287-295.

Rebecca Lave et al, “Intervention: Critical Physical Geography,” *The Canadian Geographer* 58.1 (2014), 1-10.

Charles W. J. Withers, “Geography’s Narratives and Intellectual History,” in J. Agnew and D. Livingstone, eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Geographical Knowledge* (2012), 39-50.

Class 3 (September 24): The Earth in Focus  
(Lecture posted by 5pm on September 22)  
Tutorial Group 1

Denis Cosgrove, “Imperial and Poetic Globe,” in *Apollo’s Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (2001), 1-28.

Marina Warner, [“Here Be Monsters.”](#) *The New York Review of Books* 19 December 2013. Look at Ortelius’s *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* ([here](#) and at other sites).

Optional: On the Quercus Discussion board (“Weekly links” thread), post and briefly annotate a link to one non-European ‘world map’ from before 1600 (include two-three sentences explaining why you chose this image).

#### Class 4 (October 1): Geography and 'Modernity'

(Lecture posted by 5pm on September 29)

Tutorial Group 2

Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Introduction: The Idea of Provincializing Europe," in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (2000), 3-26.

Miles Ogborn, "Historical Geographies of Globalisation, c. 1500-1800," in B. Graham and C. Nash, eds., *Modern Historical Geographies* (2000), 43-69.

ESSAY PROPOSAL DUE October 2

#### Class 5 (October 8): Geography's Empires

(Lecture posted by 5pm on October 6)

Tutorial Group 3

Felix Driver, "Geography's Empire: Histories of Geographical Knowledge," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10 (1992), 23-40.

Lisa Lowe, "The Intimacies of Four Continents," in A.L. Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (2006), 191-212.

Optional: On the Quercus Discussion board, post and briefly annotate a link to a visual example (map, painting, photograph, etc.) illustrating geography's role 'in the service of empire'.

ESSAY PROPOSALS RETURNED October 9

#### Class 6 (October 15): Darwinism and Disciplinarity

(Lecture posted by 5pm on October 13)

Tutorial Group 4

Janet Browne, "Biogeography and Empire," in N. Jardine, J. Secord, and E. Spary, eds., *Cultures of Natural History* (1996), 305-321.

Dorinda Outram, "On Being Perseus: New Knowledge, Dislocation, and Enlightenment Exploration," in D. Livingstone and C. Withers, eds., *Geography and Enlightenment* (1999), 281-294.

#### Class 7 (October 22): Nationalism, Geopolitics, and Regionalism

(Lecture posted by 5pm on October 20)

Essay Roundtable 1

Michael Heffernan, "Fin de siècle, fin du monde? On the Origins of European Geopolitics, 1890-1920," in K. Dodds and D. Atkinson eds., *Geopolitical Traditions: A Century of Geopolitical Thought* (2000), 27-51.

Peter Kropotkin, "What Geography Ought to Be" (1885) ([here](#) and at other sites)

Halford Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *The Geographical Journal* 23.4 (1904), 421-437.

Optional: On the Quercus Discussion board, post and briefly annotate a link to a nationalist geographical image from the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## Class 8 (October 29): Militant Technoscience

(Lecture posted by 5pm on October 27)

Essay Roundtable 2

Trevor J. Barnes, "Geography's Underworld: The Military-Industrial Complex, Mathematical Modelling and the Quantitative Revolution," *Geoforum* 39 (2008), 3-16.

Daniel Clayton, "Militant Tropicality: War, Revolutions, and the Reconfiguration of 'the Tropics', c. 1940-c. 1975," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38.1 (2013), 180-192.

Optional: On the Quercus Discussion board, post and briefly annotate a link to a visual example illustrating geography's close relationship with the Cold War

## Class 9 (November 5): Radical Geographies of Social Justice

(Lecture posted by 5pm on November 3)

Essay Roundtable 3

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography," *The Professional Geographer* 54.1 (2002), 15-24.

Hugh Prince and David M. Smith, "Questions of Social Relevance" and "Radical Geography – the Next Revolution?" *Area* 3.3 (1971), 150-157 (two short commentaries).

ESSAYS DUE November 6 (returned by November 20)

NO CLASS November 12 (Fall Reading Week)

## Class 10 (November 19): Humanism and the 'Cultural Turn'

(Lecture posted by 5pm on November 17)

Tutorial Group 5

Denis Cosgrove and Peter Jackson, "New Directions in Cultural Geography," *Area* 19.2 (1987), 95-101.

Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," *Media, Culture and Society* 2.1 (1980), 57-72.

Yi-Fu Tuan, "Humanistic Geography," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 66 (1976), 266-276.

## Class 11 (November 26): Genealogies of Gender and Sexuality

(Lecture posted by 5pm on November 24)

Tutorial Group 6

Mona Domosh, "Towards a Feminist Historiography of Geography," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16 (1991), 95-104.

Janice Monk and Susan Hanson, "On Not Excluding the Half of the Human in Human Geography," *The Professional Geographer* 34.1 (1982), 11-23.

Natalie Oswin, "Critical Geographies and the Uses of Sexuality: Deconstructing Queer Space," *Progress in Human Geography* 32.1 (2008), 89-103.

Class 12 (December 3): Post-Colonial, Anti-Colonial, & De-Colonial Geographies  
(Lecture posted by 5pm on December 1)  
Tutorial Group 7

Sarah Hunt, "Ontologies of Indigeneity: The Politics of Embodying a Concept," *Cultural Geographies* 21.1 (2014), 27-32.

Tariq Jazeel, "A Brief History of Postcolonial Geography," in *Postcolonialism* (2019), 2-38.

REVISED ESSAYS DUE December 9

## Course Administration

I will reply to e-mail messages within 24 hours, excluding weekends and holidays. Messages sent after 5pm will likely receive a reply the following day.

The University is temporarily suspending the need for a doctor's note or medical certificate for absences from academic participation. Please use the [Absence Declaration tool on ACORN](#) to declare an absence if you require consideration for missed academic work. You are responsible for contacting your instructors to request the academic consideration you are seeking. Record each day of your absence as soon as it begins, up until the day before you return to classes or other academic activities.

Please consult with [Accessibility Services](#) (AS) if you require accommodations, are experiencing circumstances that prevent you from completing your course work, or if you have any accessibility concerns about the course.

For matters related to mental health, please contact university's [Health and Wellness Centre](#). Your College can also be an important source of support, and if I can be of assistance, please let me know. You are not obligated to disclose anything to instructors.

You are certainly encouraged to discuss lecture content and readings with classmates. However, plagiarism and submitting an assignment under your name that you have not completed are offences under university policy. Plagiarism is quoting (or paraphrasing!) the work of an author without a proper citation or citing an author without enclosing copied words in quotation marks. It is also an offense to submit academic work for which you have already obtained (or are concurrently seeking) credit. Please consult the university's resources on [Academic Integrity](#) for further information (including the Faculty's [Student Academic Integrity](#) office), and have a look at this document on ["How Not to Plagiarize"](#).

For more material on academic writing at U of T, see [this site](#), which include links to the university's writing centres. Material on the Faculty of Arts and Science's English Language Learning program (ELL) is [here](#).