

Geography 601: Geographic Perspectives, Fall 2007

Meetings: Lucy Stone Hall, Room B-120 (Tuesday 4:00 – 7:00)

Instructor: Dr. Kevin St. Martin

The course web site is located on Rutgers Sakai

General Information and Policies

This course is required of all geography graduate students and is meant to be an upper-level introduction to the field of geography, its history, and contemporary theoretical development. The course will also give students an opportunity to contextualize their own interests in terms of the topical and theoretical traditions of this discipline. This course is designed as the first of two sequential courses (601, 602); students will begin with a topical and theoretical contextualization of their interests in 601 and then proceed to the building of an individual research program in 602.

Course Objectives:

There are three main objectives of this course: to critically explore the history of geography, develop an appreciation of the various theoretical traditions that inform contemporary geography, and to facilitate an intellectual community amongst geography graduate students at Rutgers.

A contextual approach to the history of geography will be the focus of the first quarter of the course. The history read and discussed will be limited to European and Anglo-American geography from the fifteenth century to the present. This history, while exclusive of many other geographic traditions (e.g. Islamic), is an important narrative and starting point for understanding contemporary approaches within geography. The contextual approach lends itself to multiple and often critical readings of geography's past and this course will explore these alternative interpretations.

The remainder of the course will explore the rich diversity of geography and will focus on work done since the mid-twentieth century. The theoretical developments and topical foci that have shaped geography during this time will be reviewed and discussed with special attention being paid to those topics and theories that best match the interests of students participating in the course. That is, while the schedule (see attached) for the course includes several major trends in geographic thought (e.g. Marxism and feminism) there is room for expanding on topics and ideas of interest to students (e.g. climatology or political ecology). The aim is to engage students in the exploration and exchange of ideas and topics that constitute the diversity of geography.

Topics and theories will be introduced using seminal and review articles from geography journals. Each will be followed by a contemporary "case study" that demonstrates the application of a given theory and its associated methods. As possible, guests from the graduate faculty will be invited to participate in the discussion of particular case studies. Also, an effort will be made to synchronize course topics with presentations in the Geography Speaker Series.

Finally, the course will focus upon and work to develop the skills graduate students will need to contribute to a vibrant academic community. These include writing, discussion, and presentation skills. Students will be expected to write, discuss, and present professionally and in a style appropriate for an advanced academic audience.

Policies and Expectations:

Assignments can be found on the course web site along with assignment due-dates. Assignments and due-date information may not be distributed in class and it is expected that students will frequently check the course web site for such details.

Incompletes will not be granted except in the case of documented illness or documented family or personal emergency.

Plagiarism or other academic misconduct will not be tolerated and is sufficient basis for a failing grade in this course. Plagiarism will be reported to the Geography Department Chairperson, the Graduate School Dean, and the Rutgers Judiciary Affairs.

Course Format

The format for the course is a seminar that meets once per week to discuss readings, make presentations, and generally learn from each other. The importance of participation cannot be stressed enough given the diversity of sub-fields and interests within geography and within geography at Rutgers. Regular attendance is essential given the nature of the topics and the importance of discussion and the sharing of insights, opinions, references, etc.

Common Readings

There will be weekly readings that will be common to all students. These are designed to anchor classroom discussions but they will not limit possible discussion topics.

Independent Research and Readings

In addition to common readings, students will be expected to do independent research and contribute readings from their individual sub-fields as they relate to geography and personal research interests.

Discussion Teams

Each week students will present summaries of readings and points for discussion. Students are expected to produce short but professional presentations based on the week's readings. Presentations may incorporate a variety of media and students are encouraged to experiment (e.g. try MS Powerpoint, use maps and graphics, etc.).

Reaction/reflection papers

1-2 page reaction papers will be required each week by those students who are not presenting that week. Reaction papers should also be professional but concise. They must be type written, double spaced, and 12pt font.

Class Discussion

Each week students will be required to come to class with questions from the readings. These questions will be listed on the board and we will discuss each in turn. Questions and discussion should touch upon and summarize the major themes from the readings.

Midterm assignment and Final assignment

By midterm students will produce a short paper (4-6 pages) and an annotated bibliography that summarizes their independent research and findings. The final assignment will be an update and extension of the midterm assignment. The paper should be revised and new insights added and the annotated bibliography should be considerably longer. Ideally, this material, by the semester end, will be a solid working foundation for each student's interests in geography.

Your independent research could focus upon the historical context of your interests/sub-field:

- From which traditions does your sub-field/research interest emerge?
- How has your sub-field/research interest traditionally contributed to society? To academia?
- How has it evolved over time in terms of applications, methods, or theories?
- What is the social context of your sub-field/interest historically and currently?
- How is it geography/not-geography and how might that matter?

It could also focus on a theoretical perspective embedded within or relevant to your interests/sub-field:

- What are the theoretical traditions of your particular subfield/interest?
- How is it different from other theoretical positions/approaches in geography?
- Why might it be important to have a theoretical dialogue with other possible approaches?
- What are the effects of your and other theoretical approaches within a wider social context?

Consultation with the instructor concerning your midterm and final assignments well before you start writing/researching is both assumed and encouraged.

Student Assessment

Students will be assessed according to the following scheme:

Reaction papers/group presentations	35%
Mid-term assignment	15%
Final assignment	25%
Classroom participation	25%
Total	100%

Readings

At least 5 required books are available through the Livingston Campus bookstore (or go to www.efollet.com). The additional three books are not required but are highly recommended.

Required:

- *Geography militant : cultures of exploration and empire* by Felix Driver. Oxford, UK ; Malden, Mass. : Blackwell Publishers, 2001.
- *The geographical imagination in America, 1880-1950* by Susan Schulten. Chicago ; London : University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- *In the space of theory : postfoundational geographies of the nation-state* by Matthew Sparke. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- *Lawn People: How Grasses, Weeds, and Chemicals Make Us Who We Are* by Paul Robbins. Temple University Press, 2007.
- *The Urban Revolution* (Paperback) by Henri Lefebvre. University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Recommended:

- Livingstone, David N. 1992. *The Geographical Tradition* . Blackwell Publishers.
- Peet, R. 1998. *Modern geographical Thought*. Blackwell Publishers.
- Johnston, R. J., Derek Gregory, Geraldine Pratt, and Michael Watts. 2000. *The Dictionary of Human Geography*. Fourth Edition. Blackwell Publishers.

Additional readings may include other books or articles to be distributed to students and/or found on reserve at Kilmer Library. Check the course schedule for weekly reading assignments.

Contact Information

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