Geography 607: Geography, Space, and Social Theory

Midterm Assignment 2019

The Assignment
The Mid-Term assignment is to answer any two of the discussion questions found below. Each answer should be an essay of approximately 5-8 double-spaced pages (roughly 1250-2000 words) in length. In your answer you should refer to the common readings used in the course to date. You may, but are not required to, add supplemental references as needed (e.g. Dictionary of Human Geography, review articles from your field, case study examples).

Essays are due Monday, April 8th via email.

Please select two of the following:

Meta Question
- Using two or more of our theorists of space (Lefebvre, Harvey, Foucault, Latour), compare how power is understood and discuss what might be the relationship between power and space.

The Production of Space
- What does Lefebvre mean by “dominated space” and what are the prospects for re-appropriating space that has been dominated?
- What are Lefebvre’s three modes of the production of space? How do they relate to each other? Give an example to illustrate.
- Is it possible to produce non-exploitative spaces?
- Why does Lefebvre start the conversation about the production of space with a focus on the question of nature?
- How can Lefebvre’s use of the term violence be understood with regards to the production of social space?
- Discuss and utilize Lefebvre's dialectical approach to answer the question: What is Abstract space?
- What are the differences between material, relative, and relational spaces? Are there any overlaps in these space? Give an example to illustrate.

Other Space(s)
- How do Foucault’s three modalities of discipline operate on individuals? On collectives?
- In Foucaultian terms describe the concept of the “milieu.” Why is this notion important when thinking about the “space of security”? Provide an example.
- How do power, knowledge, and spatial practices interact with each other?
• Foucault sees “population” as the outcome of a range of practices. What are those practices? How do they result in “population”? To what end?

• Are Foucault’s concepts of discipline relevant today? How so? Give an example to illustrate.

Assemblage

• Latour challenges us to re-think “local” and “global.” What does the re-thinking look like? Why is it important? What are the implication for how you might do research?

• How does Actor Network Theory think about agency? Who or what is capable of having agency? Of being an actor?

• Actor Network Theory is often criticized for being “a-political.” Latour insists that ANT is deeply political. Explain this discrepancy and demonstrate, using an example, the politics of an ANT research project.

Cartography, Space, and Social Theory

• How can a map be “non-representational”? What is the advantage to thinking about maps in this way? How might it be useful in a research or activist project?

• In Bouquey et al.’s paper data portals (and the maps embedded within them) are “performatives”. How are maps performative? In what sense and to what effect? What is gained by thinking about data portals as performatives?

• What is the relationship between “the map” and “the territory”? Do maps reflect the world? Is the world constituted by maps? What work do maps do?