

Geography G460: Geographic Theory and Research

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Course Description and Objectives

This is the boring old required theory and research survey, in which students are forced to ponder conceptual abstractions that have nothing to do with why they chose geography as their major and construct research projects that are completely useless when it comes time to graduate and move on...

NEVER! This class will be a valiant attempt to make geographic theory not only interesting but also useful for students in designing research proposals in geography.

You will develop your research expertise and acumen, so you can begin to develop the necessary capabilities to design, organize, and produce a theoretically interesting and competent empirical research project. Doing good geographical research is the objective, regardless of the sub-field(s) of geography, theoretical base, related cognate disciplines, methodological sophistication, relevance, or value to society.

Organization

This class has two parts, the first being theoretical exploration. Class meetings will be conducted in a seminar format, in which **everyone** will be expected to read, understand, and discuss the diverse research traditions of geography. Readings will be assigned to the class as a whole and to individuals for their particular leadership in classroom discussion.

Each student will be responsible for understanding the required readings and being able to discuss the main ideas therein. Your grasp of this material will be assessed by your offerings to the classroom discussion as well as your writings the essay exams.

The second part of this class is research design. Using the theoretical knowledge you will gain from the required readings, each student will develop a research project of their own. Each student will submit his/her research proposal to the class in both written and (PowerPoint) presentation form. In addition, each student will provide constructive peer criticism as well.

Textbook Readings

Required textbook available at the campus bookstore/online booksellers/etc. are:

Holt-Jensen, A. (1999). *Geography, history and concepts: A student's guide* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.

Readings for a particular day must be completed before you come to class. In doing this, you will have the essential background knowledge to fully understand that day's lecture and participate in classroom discussion. The readings *supplement* the class content, neither is a *substitute* for the other.

Where topical or contemporary events arise, which help illuminate class issues, there may be additional assigned readings drawn from journals or other texts. These additional readings will be posted online.

Requirements

First Exam	15 points	Scale	
Second Exam	20 points	100-97	A+
		96-94	A
Discussion Leader	10 points	93-90	A-
Class Participation	15 points	89-87	B+
		86-84	B
Executive Summary	5 points	83-80	B-
Research Proposal	10 points	79-77	C+
Proposal Presentation	15 points	76-74	C
Research Proposal (Revised)	10 points	73-70	C-
		69-67	D+
Total	100 points	66-64	D
		63-60	D-
		59-0	F

There is no extra credit. Also, I do not curve the grades. No exceptions. Honest.

Exams

There will be two essay exams administered in this course. For students to succeed on exams they must know the material as well as how to express their ideas in a coherent manner using formal, academic English. A successful student will write legibly, spell words correctly, and use proper syntax on written responses.

Attendance on exam dates is mandatory. If you miss an exam, you will receive a zero on that exam unless you have had an emergency documented by a dated doctor's note or accident report attesting to your inability to make it to the exam.

Discussion Leading and Class Participation

Students who want full credit for participation will **attend class all class meetings, actively pay attention, take complete notes, contribute to the discussion, and ask intelligent questions.** In addition, each student will be assigned one chapter on which they will expertly lead a rich 30-minute discussion. You must complete all reading assignments before the class in which they are scheduled for discussion. Even as I lecture and we discuss, you are encouraged to interrupt with questions, demurrals, denunciations, and maybe even cheers of approval.

It goes without saying that model students will also refrain from walking in late/leaving early, talking at inappropriate times, reading the newspaper, cramming for another test, using a mobile phone, and generally annoying their fellow classmates and professor.

Research Proposal

Each student will write an original research proposal on a topic approved by the professor. An executive summary or abstract of the proposed work will be turned in for approval. The paper should meet the necessary grammatical requirements expected of a social and behavioral science paper, be correctly referenced, and typed. Finished proposals will be approximately 3,500 words long. Further information on proposal requirements will be forthcoming.

Late Assignment Policy

Students who want an opportunity to earn full credit for their work will turn these materials in on time. Any assignments turned in after the due date will be penalized 10% for each day late. Assignments turned in more than 3 days late will be scored a 0. **Students are encouraged to turn in assignments early. Remember, the due date is the last possible day something may be turned in; you can certainly turn your work in early.**

Communications

I reserve the right to send official communications to students by email with the full expectation that students will receive e-mail and read these e-mails in a timely fashion. Class communications will be sent to students' official college email addresses. Students are expected to check their e-mail on a frequent and consistent basis in order to stay current with class-related communications.

Students who choose to have their email forwarded from their official college email address to another address do so at their own risk. The college is not responsible for any difficulties that may occur in the proper or timely transmission or access to email forwarded to any other address, and any such problems will not absolve students of their responsibility to know and comply with the content of official communications sent to their official college email addresses.

Academic Integrity

Each must student do his/her own quality work to receive credit. The minimum penalty for academic misconduct is a zero credit for the entire work. Any academic misconduct will be dealt with in accordance with college policy, whose penalties for academic misconduct include failure of the course and/or expulsion from the college.

Schedule

Week 1	1/21 Course Introduction
Week 2	1/28 Before class, read Chapter 1: What is Geography?
Week 3	2/4 Before class, read Chapter 2: The Foundation of Geography
Week 4	2/11 Before class, read Chapter 3: Paradigms and Revolutions
Week 5	2/18 First Exam
Week 6	2/25 Executive Summary Due
Week 7	3/4 Before class, read Chapter 4: Positivism and Its Critics
Week 8	3/11 No class – Spring Break
Week 9	3/18 Before class, read Chapter 5: Processes in Space and Place
Week 10	3/25 No class - Association of American Geographers Conference
Week 11	4/1 Second Exam
Week 12	4/8 Research Proposal Due
Week 13	4/15 Proposal Presentations
Week 14	4/22 Proposal Presentations
Week 15	4/29 Research Proposal (Revised) Due
Finals Week	Course wrap-up

I reserve the right to change the syllabus. If changes are necessary, a new syllabus will be issued to the students to reflect these changes.

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