GEOGRAPHIC THOUGHT AND RESEARCH DESIGN (GEOG 501)
New Mexico State University
Department of Geography

FALL 2016
Tue, 13:00-15:30; Breland Hall 194

Professor: Dr. Michaela Buenemann
Office: Breland Hall #139
☎ (575) 646-6493
✉ elabuen@nmsu.edu

Advising Hours: Tue, 10:15-11:30 & 15:30-17:00; Wed, 10:00-12:00 & 13:00-16:00; Thu, 10:15-11:30 & 14:00-15:00. To ensure my time is all yours when we meet, please sign up for advising hours on the sign-up sheet next to my office door or schedule an appointment with me.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The overall goal of this course is to help you become an educated geographer and scholar by introducing you to contemporary geographic thought and research design. Geographic thought and research design are intricately linked. To properly engage in geographic research, it is critical to address philosophical issues regarding ontology (the nature of reality) and epistemology (how we go about understanding it); to consider the strengths and weaknesses of different paradigms (bodies of theory we subscribe to in our practice); and to make well-informed decisions with respect to research methodology and research methods. As you will learn to appreciate in this course, the intellectual landscape of geography is quite exciting and both vast and fragmented.

Geographers work in different subfields of geography (e.g., human geography, physical geography, and spatial science) and often apply very different philosophical and methodological approaches to geographic research. Thus, even though their research tends to be the most influential when they work together, they are frequently unable to do. Upon successful completion of this course, you will be in the position to counteract this problem. That is, while you will ultimately specialize in a particular aspect of geography, this course will allow you to synthesize information offered by different geographic perspectives and to collaborate with geographers from across the spectrum of the discipline. You will learn to think geographically, critically, and spatially.

You will learn to answer questions like these: How is geography related to other disciplines and how it is different? What key concepts do geographers share? What ontologies and epistemologies do geographers bring to their research? What kinds of questions do geographers ask? What kinds of methods do geographers use in their research? What are the assumptions, strengths, and weaknesses of the different philosophical and methodological approaches geographers use? Where do you fit in, in all this? By the end of this class, answers to these questions will help you develop your own quality geographic research project.
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

1. compare, contrast, and critically evaluate contemporary philosophical and methodological approaches in geography;
2. create diverse scholarly products (e.g., literature review and research proposal); and
3. collaborate with others to facilitate productive discussions of geographic thought.

COURSE STRUCTURE

This is a fast-paced course with a steep learning curve and lots of readings and writing assignments. In order for you to become an educated geographer and scholar as described in the Course Content section above, you need to always keep up with the class and, consequently, manage your time carefully. I will do my very best to FACILITATE LEARNING (i.e., to help you achieve the learning outcomes stated above by structuring the course through readings, raising questions, directing discussions, exchanging ideas, and providing guidance on assignments, for example). YOU are RESPONSIBLE for LEARNING ITSELF.

COURSE MATERIALS

Website. Materials for this course (e.g., lectures, labs, grades) can be found at https://learn.nmsu.edu/. To access course materials, simply log in to your Canvas account and click the link for this course. The website is a key element of this course and you are required to review its contents regularly. If you encounter problems related to the website, please contact us immediately.

Readings. You need to acquire three books for this course and have three options concerning the book itself: you purchase 1) the required books, 2) earlier editions of the books, or 3) comparable books of your own choice. If you choose books other than the required books, you are responsible for correlating the content of your chosen book with the required reading assignments. Note that you may be able to check out the books from a library and that you may be able to purchase the books for discounted prices at used bookstores, thrift stores, or online at amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com, or textbookland.com.

Required


Optional


Additional readings, mostly peer-reviewed journal articles, will be provided to you on the course website.
E-mail. Official NMSU communication to you will come through your NMSU e-mail account. Access your NMSU e-mail frequently, or forward it to your current use address, as your success in college may ride on your ability to respond quickly. To guarantee a response to your emails, always a) begin your emails with a proper greeting that includes the name of the person/s you are emailing; b) conclude with a closing that includes your name; and c) use proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Unless I am away from the office with limited access to email, I will respond to your emails within one business day. Similarly, I expect you to respond to my emails in a timely manner.

**Grading**

Your final course grade is determined by the amount of points you accrue out of a total possible 1000 points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical essays (× 11):</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review (× 1):</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review presentation (× 1):</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research proposal (× 1):</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research proposal presentations (× 1):</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-led discussion (× 2):</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation (× 1):</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Points: 1,000 Points (100%)

Your final course letter grade will be based on the following scale:

- **A (4.0)**: 95-100%
- **B (3.0)**: 84-86%
- **C (2.0)**: 74-76%
- **D (1.0)**: 64-66%
- **B+ (3.3)**: 87-89%
- **C+ (2.3)**: 77-79%
- **D+ (1.0)**: 67-69%
- **F (0)**: < 60%

Individual assignments and tests will not be curved (↑ or ↓). We may make adjustments of the final letter grade after an assessment of the class curve at the end of the term. We consider class participation, attendance, and improvement over the term as justification for discounting a grade that is uncharacteristically lower than others.

An **I (Incomplete)** grade will be assigned only if you are unable to complete the course due to circumstances beyond your control (e.g., documented illness or documented death or crisis in your immediate family) that develop after the last day to withdraw from the course. Job-related circumstances are generally not appropriate grounds for assigning an I grade. An I grade will not be used to avoid assigning of D, F, U, or RR grades for marginal or failing work.

Your final grade in this course will be determined based on seven grade components: critical essays, literature review, literature review presentation, research proposal, research proposal presentation, discussion co-facilitation, and class participation. **Further details regarding each of the grade components will be provided to you in class and on the course website.**

**Learning Outcomes (LOs).** Many LOs (i.e., descriptions of things you should be able to do) could be formulated for each topic, but some are particularly crucial to help you acquire the three big LOs of this course (p. 2). To help you stay focused on the important issues, I will provide you with a set of crucial LOs for each topic. Consider these LOs as your **study guide.**
Students with Disabilities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) covers issues relating to disability and accommodations. If you have questions or need an accommodation in the classroom (all medical information is treated confidentially), contact: Trudy Luken, Director; Student Accessibility Services (SAS) - Corbett Center, Rm. 208; Phone: (575) 646-6840 E-mail: sas@nmsu.edu; Website: http://sas.nmsu.edu/

Non-Discrimination. NMSU policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, retaliation, serious medical condition, sex, sexual orientation, spousal affiliation, and protected veterans status. Furthermore, Title IX prohibits sex discrimination to include sexual misconduct: sexual violence (sexual assault, rape), sexual harassment and retaliation. For more information on discrimination issues, Title IX, Campus SaVE Act, NMSU Policy Chapter 3.25, NMSU's complaint process, or to file a complaint contact: Lauri Millot, Title IX Coordinator; Agustin Diaz, Title IX Deputy Coordinator; Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) - O'Loughlin House, 1130 University Avenue; Phone: (575) 646-3635 E-mail: equity@nmsu.edu; Website: http://www.nmsu.edu/~eeo/

Other NMSU Resources. NMSU Police Department: (575) 646-3311, www.nmsupolice.com; NMSU Police Victim Services: (575) 646-3424; NMSU Counseling Center: (575) 646-2731; NMSU Dean of Students: (575) 646-1722; For Any On-Campus Emergencies: 911

Code of Academic Integrity. Enrollment in this course and acceptance of this syllabus is your contract constituting acceptance of all University policies regarding academic integrity, including but not limited to cheating and plagiarism. You are expected to comply fully with the NMSU Honor Code as presented in the Student Handbook (http://studenthandbook.nmsu.edu/). Students who are judged to be guilty of academic dishonesty (http://studenthandbook.nmsu.edu/student-code-of-conduct/academic-misconduct/) on any graded class component will receive no points for that component, and we reserve the right to consider more severe penalties such as failure of the course and referral to the Dean and Student Judicial Affairs.

Absence Policy. Absences due to University-sanctioned activities, work-related events, holidays or special events observed by organized religions, or illness will be excused, if you provide me with official written documentation explaining your absence. I don’t really have any additional absence policies. Just remember that learning is your responsibility and, if you miss a class meeting, you will have to figure out how to “make it up.”

Withdrawal. Withdrawal from this course is solely your responsibility: I will not drop you from this class under any circumstances. If you no longer wish to be enrolled in this course, you must withdraw from it. If you are still on the class roll at the end of the semester, you will receive a grade based on the work submitted.

What you can expect from me. I will be available in class, during office hours and scheduled appointments, and via email to respond to any questions or concerns you may have. Don’t be shy and contact me as soon as ambiguities, problems, or concerns arise! I will take all of your concerns seriously and respond to you as soon and as specific as possible. I will address any issues that are of importance to all students in class and on Canvas. I will do my very best to
always be prepared for class, grade assignments fairly, and return your work promptly (within one week). I reserve the right to change scheduled class topics and assignments. Any changes made will not adversely affect your workload or grade.

**What I expect from you:** Enrollment in this course and acceptance of this syllabus is your contract constituting acceptance of all New Mexico State University policies and codes as well as all specific policies outlined in this syllabus. We expect you to be on time for all class-related activities, submit all tasks as instructed, and always show “good” behavior toward both your instructor and peers. Have fun!

**TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Home Work Due</th>
<th>In Class Activity</th>
<th>*See Readings Below</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PART I: INTRODUCTION TO GEOGRAPHY, RESEARCH ETHICS, AND WRITING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>08/23</td>
<td>Earning a Master of Applied Geography degree at NMSU</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resources, guidelines, process, etc.</td>
<td>to geography*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>08/30</td>
<td>Research ethics*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Writing*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Critical essay 1, Literature review task 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion of readings &amp; writing &amp; managing references</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and bibliographies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>09/06</td>
<td>Introduction to geographic theory and methodology*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Early geographies and the emergence of modern geography*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Critical essay 2, Literature review task 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion of readings &amp; writing literature reviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PART II: ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY, PARADIGMS, AND METHODOLOGY IN GEOGRAPHY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>09/13</td>
<td>Human geography: humanistic, Marxist, and feminist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>geographies*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Critical essay 3, Literature review task 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion of readings &amp; formatting Microsoft Word</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>documents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>09/20</td>
<td>Human geography: postmodernist, poststructuralist, and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>relational geographies*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Critical essay 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion of readings &amp; creating paper presentations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>09/27</td>
<td>Physical geography: ontology, epistemology, methodology,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>history, status, and trends*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Critical essay 5, Literature review tasks 4 and 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion of readings &amp; critiquing professional journal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10/04</td>
<td>Physical geography: the field, systems, change,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>complexity, and modeling*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Critical essay 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion of readings &amp; writing research proposals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10/11</td>
<td>Regional geography*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Critical essay 7, Literature review tasks 6 and 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10/18</td>
<td><strong>Spatial science and GIScience</strong>*&lt;br&gt;Discussion of readings &amp; preparing for life beyond NMSU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10/25</td>
<td><strong>Human-environment geography</strong>*&lt;br&gt;Critical essay 9&lt;br&gt;Discussion of readings &amp; other topics (tbd)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PART III: GEOGRAPHIC RESEARCH METHODS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11/01</td>
<td><strong>Faculty on parade</strong>*&lt;br&gt;<strong>Spatial thinking</strong>*&lt;br&gt;Critical essay 10, Research proposal task 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11/08</td>
<td><strong>Geographic theory and methodology</strong>*&lt;br&gt;Critical essay 11&lt;br&gt;Discussion of readings &amp; other topics (tbd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>11/15</td>
<td>Collecting and analyzing data in physical geography***&lt;br&gt;Collecting and analyzing data in human geography***&lt;br&gt;Collecting and analyzing data in human-environment geography***&lt;br&gt;Critical essay 12&lt;br&gt;Discussion of readings &amp; other topics (tbd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>11/22</td>
<td><strong>Thanksgiving Break (11/22-11/25)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>11/29</td>
<td>Collecting and analyzing data in spatial science***&lt;br&gt;Representing and analyzing geographic data***&lt;br&gt;Critical essay 13&lt;br&gt;Discussion of readings &amp; other topics (tbd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>12/06</td>
<td><strong>Research proposal tasks 2 and 3</strong>*&lt;br&gt;Discussion of research proposals &amp; other topics (tbd)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
READINGS

Due Week 2 (> Critical Essay 1)

Introduction to Geography

Research Ethics

Writing

Due Week 3 (> Critical Essay 2)

Introduction to Geographic Theory and Methodology

Early Geographies and the Emergence of Modern Geography

Due Week 4 (> Critical Essay 3)

Human Geography: Humanistic Geographies

Human Geography: Marxist Geographies

**Human Geography: Feminist Geographies**


**Due Week 5 (> Critical Essay 4)**

**Human Geography: Postmodernist Geographies**


**Human Geography: Poststructuralist Geographies**


**Human Geography: Relational Geographies**


**Due Week 6 (> Critical Essay 5)**

**Physical Geography: Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology, History, and Trends**


**Miscellaneous**


**Due Week 7 (> Critical Essay 6)**

*Physical Geography: The Field, Systems, Change, Complexity, and Modeling*


**Due Week 8 (> Critical Essay 7)**

*Regional Geography*


**Due Week 9 (> Critical Essay 8)**

*Spatial Science and GIScience*


**Due Week 10 (> Critical Essay 9)**

**Human-Environment Geography**


**Due Week 11 (> Critical Essay 10)**

**Faculty on Parade**

**Geospatial Thinking**


**Due Week 12 (> Critical Essay 11)**

**Geographic Theory and Methodology**


Due Week 13 (> Critical Essay 12)

**Collecting and analyzing data in physical geography**


Due Week 15 (> Critical Essay 13)

**Collecting and analyzing data in spatial science**


**Representing and analyzing geographic data**


