

Contemporary Cultural Geography (GRG 336)

Syllabus for Spring Semester, 2012

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Class Hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 11.00-12.15
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 12.30-1.30 or by appointment

A. Course Objective and Subjects

This course is concerned with the places and spaces of culture that we find in our everyday lives. I can also describe our interests here as being with conventional, or even commonplace geographies of the individual, but perhaps the most apt descriptor is the 'experiences of place'. This notion is far more complex than may first meet the eye, at least partially because it overlaps with and draws from 'cultural geography', 'popular culture', 'The Practices of Everyday Life' (as used by de Certeau), 'identity politics', 'geometries of power', and 'theories of representation' as major examples of ideas that help us understand everyday geographies. We will not be concerned with the theoretical details of these perspectives, although they do inform what we study, and so we will draw ideas from them as we move along. At the same time, the list of subjects concerning the experiences of place is not especially systematic. Quite simply, we will be studying the geographies that interest me; it is a smorgasbord of the experiences of place. The list may look different next year. But you should not minimize what I am doing here: the primary objective of this course is to provide you an eclectic lens through which you might consider geographies of those places and spaces that engage with who you are, what you do, and where you go, whereupon you can then begin to think about the same for your neighbors.

Subject Itinerary (weeks are approximate)

Introduction to Geography, Space, and Place (3 weeks)

Experiences of Place (2)

- Embodiment
- Small-scale perception and behavior
- Home places, home rules
- Homelessness
- Healing places

Public Places (2)

- Airports
- Baseball Parks
- Museums
- Sacred places
- The bar, the pub

Mobility (2)

- Walking
- Migration
- Pilgrimage
- Issues of Access
- Slave Trade, Sex Trade

Cultural landscapes (2)

- Vernacular
- Monuments
- Theme Parks (if we have time)
- New Towns (if we have time)

Representing Geographies (3)

- Photography, music, the novel, etc.
- Cinema

Knowing Geographies (if we have time)

- Meso-scale (Lynch)
- Regional cognitions and preferences

B. Grading

Shorter papers	40 percent of total grade
Final paper	30 percent of total grade
Participation*	20 percent of total grade
Final Examination	10 percent of total grade

*includes attendance

C. Papers

All the issues outlined below will be discussed in detail on several occasions throughout the semester.

All papers should be in 12 font, Times Roman or something similar, standard margins (1"x1 1/2"). Inclusion of photographs and graphics is always encouraged, but these do not count as part of the paper's length. The length will vary according to the particular subject, but they are usually between three to five pages, except the final paper, which is about 10-12 pages.

If references are required, use the format from the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Given our subject matter, you may be using the web. If so, be sure to cite accordingly.

The subject matter for the final paper will be discussed soon, but I assure you, it will be on one of the topics above. The Due Date for the final paper is the last day of class, Thursday, May 3 at 11.00. NO EXCEPTIONS.

D. Readings

You will be assigned articles during the semester; they will be made available to you by a variety of e-methods. There is no textbook. You will also be expected to search for references immediately relevant to your research project.

E. Rules—Please Read VERY Carefully

- 1) This course will be taught in a modified seminar format, and so everyone is expected to participate fully at the appropriate junctures. This means that all written work and preparation (readings, etc.) must be done on time, that you participate in our conversations in a substantive way, and that you attend class regularly.
- 2) Attendance is expected; less than ideal attendance is likely to have a negative impact on your grade. Please be on time. Consistent tardiness will count toward non-attendance.
- 3) Do not ask for my notes or assignments if you miss a lecture. Get to know your colleagues; share. This is not a zero-sum game.
- 4) Late assignments are not accepted. Plan ahead.
- 5) All written assignments must be proofed for spelling, typographical errors and major grammatical mistakes. Needless to say, nothing handwritten will be accepted.
- 6) You are expected to complete the readings by the assigned times. There will be classroom discussions of the contents and implications of all that we read, so be prepared.
- 7) Please, no food, side conversations, or gum popping (argh!!) during class. Cell phones are never to be used in this classroom, including texting. This is a cell phone-free zone, so be sure to turn those puppies off before you enter the room.
- 8) It is appropriate to use laptops in this class. That said, PLEASE, no surfing unrelated to our class, and no emailing, texting, polishing up your Facebook account etc. during class hours.
- 9) I expect everyone to use e-mail as a form of communication. I use this medium regularly and I expect you to do the same. Normally, I will respond to queries and comments within 24 hours. And sorry, the old guy does not text. ☹

10) Some important 'housekeeping':

A. "Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>", and

B. "By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence."

C. Everyone is expected to know, accept, and practice the basics of honesty and integrity in all personal and professional dealings in this class. UT's Honor Code says:

"The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community."

One of the issues here is plagiarism. What does it mean? Please read carefully.

http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis_plagiarism.php

D. We all need to appreciate the concepts and practices of sexual harassment (and discrimination, and misconduct). To make a long story short, the university's standards apply to ALL university participants, from students to the president to staff. Let's discuss this for a moment. <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sh/>

11) This is a Writing Flag Course. Once the semester has begun, I will forward a message from the Writing Center.

12) Finally, this is a 'no whining zone'. Understand this.