

SYLLABUS

Issues in Geography

(GRG 390K)

Unique 37290

Fall 2010

Meets W 7-10 pm in room GRG 408 (Geography Building)

Gregory Knapp

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Course Goals and Objectives:

This course, required of all new graduate students in the Geography program, situates geography as a pluralistic discipline within the history of thought and experience about the earth surface as the human home. It will introduce the various constituent fields of geography, explore the challenges of defining significant actors and drivers in geographical space (ontology), and provide a basis for further work in the second course in the sequence, "Research in Geography" (390L). This second course will focus on epistemology, research design, and the philosophy of science in terms of defining a research project.

Course Characteristics:

Course materials and grades will be posted on Blackboard. Students are required to consult this website frequently. Every week students will email a written commentary on an assigned topic related to the readings to the professor. This may be shared with other students for peer review and discussion. Every week (except for the first week) will be proctored by students who will, at the beginning of class, provide a critical assessment of

the readings in a 15-20 minute overview. There will be a break halfway through the class.

The course is co-taught by Professors Knapp and Batnitzky. This means that one or both faculty may be in attendance and in charge in any given week. However, Professor Knapp will be taking the lead role in organizing the course and students should make sure to include him in any communications.

Prerequisites:

Graduate standing in Geography and attendance of the Geography Orientation on August 18, 2010 or their equivalent.

Required textbooks:

The following two books will be available at the University Coop. Please wait until after the first class day before attempting to purchase the books from the coop.

G. Martin, *All Possible Worlds*, Oxford 2005

G. Gaile, *Geography in America at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, Oxford 2006

The following books are out of print but available from online vendors:

T. Barnes and D. Gregory, *Reading Human Geography: The Poetics and Politics of Inquiry*, Oxford 1998

K.J. Gregory, *The Changing Nature of Physical Geography*, Hodder Arnold 2000

Required articles:

Additional articles will be assigned in professional journals; these are usually available for free download as pdf files on the UT Library web site. To download journals go to: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/resources/> and click on "Find a Journal." You will be provided choices for accessing various years of the journals, and you will be allowed to download free pdf files of

the desired article. Additional required materials may be provided for download from other sites or the Blackboard page.

Field trip:

Students are required to attend the SWAAG Meetings in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, Wednesday - Sunday, October 13-17, 2010; including paper sessions and field trips. The Department will subsidize lodging and travel.

Summary of Grading:

Grades will be assigned on the plus and minus scale (A-, B+, and so forth). A grade of B or better in this course is required for continuation in the graduate program. Note that, apart from the grades, your oral and written contributions will be assessed as part of long term departmental and institutional evaluation procedures and targets for UT accreditation. This may mean that faculty may visit class or read your assignments for university program evaluation purposes. Such evaluations will not affect your scores or grades in this class, and will protect your privacy.

Attendance and participation 10%. Attendance and constructive participation is expected and required. Contact Greg and Adina well in advance if health or other compelling reasons may require absence from a class.

Weekly written commentaries 20%. Each week, a topic will be assigned for a written commentary. Keep within the assigned word count lengths (usually under 350 words). These must be saved as ".rtf" or ".txt" files and emailed to both Greg and Adina by 5 pm Tuesday prior to the class. Do not include a cover page, but do include your name at the top of the page, and in the file name (e.g. Smith.rtf). Use 12 point Times or Times New Roman, and double space the page. These will be edited and printed out for class, and shared with the weekly proctor (s).

Proctoring 10%. Each student must proctor one or two classes. Make a presentation at the start of each class identifying the authors' thesis statements, providing a brief summary overview of all the readings, present a critical assessment of the authors' success in achieving the major goals, and give a critical assessment of the readings as a whole in relation to the topic and the in relation to previous readings and discussions. Plan for 15 to

20 minutes. Write out notes for your presentation unless you have outstanding presentation skills.

Journal Review due OCTOBER 11 15%. Three pages (1000 words). Each student must pick a top scholarly journal relevant to their topic. (See list of journals to be provided on Blackboard). The paper must include the date and purposes of the journal's founding, how it has changed over the years, and the main goal of the journal today. Provide an overview of some current debates in this journal. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the journal. What is its circulation, international reach, and "impact"?

Book Review due NOVEMBER 15 15%. Three pages (1000 words). Choose and obtain a professor's approval of a top book related to your topic in the last 10 years. Indicate why this is such an important book. The review should include a general overview, assessment of strengths and weaknesses, and how it relates to rest of the literature. What is new and different about this book? How and why is it important to your work?

Final paper and presentation 30%. Presentations due November 15 and 22; Papers due November 29. 10 pages (3500 words) maximum. This project will be picked up at the start of 390L to ensure continuity. Write a brief history of a sub discipline of geography important to your research interests and trace its origin back as far as possible (in most cases you should be able to trace it back for hundreds or thousands of years). Outline important developments over time, and detail some important theoretical debates today. With instructor's permission, you may instead write your paper on a person, important event, or important controversy in your chosen field. Refer to relevant section(s) in *Geography in the Twenty First Century* in your essay.

Classroom Policies

Laptops are NOT allowed except with prior permission. Online materials may not be copied or distributed without prior permission. Students are expected to arrive on time to class exactly at 7 pm as a courtesy to others. No matter how interesting the discussion, classes will terminate by 10 pm in courtesy to those who need to catch a bus.

Accommodations for Special Needs

The University makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

Religious Holidays

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

Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual’s behavior. This service is provided through a

partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Academic Integrity

University of Texas Honor Code

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.

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. Using other person's work without appropriate citation is plagiarism.

SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

NOTE: This schedule is preliminary and will be updated and expanded as the semester proceeds.

Week 1 August 30 Introductions and Overview

No readings or assignments.

Week 2 September 13 Classical and Medieval Geography; Ethnogeographies

Readings: Martin, *All Possible Worlds*, Chapters 1-3

Commentary assignment one, due 5 pm September 12: Briefly answer these two questions (350 words or less total). The word count is important! Observe the formatting instructions in the syllabus, and email to Greg and Paul.

1. How sophisticated were early geographers in understanding the shape and size of the earth and the relative location of places? Give a couple of examples.

2. How sophisticated were early geographers in understanding human-environment relationships? Give an example of a sophisticated perception; OR give an example of a misperception and indicate if this is still a problem in contemporary popular culture.

Week 3 September 20 Geography in the Age of Exploration.

Required readings: Martin, Chapters 4-5: “The Age of Exploration,” “The Impact of Discoveries.” Other readings may be assigned.

Commentary assignment two, due 5 pm September 19. Again, stay within a word count of 350 words.

Discuss a couple of aspects of the impacts of European exploration and cartography on European thought, in geography and beyond.

Thought question (don't write down): think about the drivers of European exploration, and its broader impacts on global societies and cultures.

Specific assignments for the following weeks will be provided as the semester proceeds:

Week 4 September 27 The beginnings of Academic Geography.

Week 5 October 4 Varieties of Modern Geography.

Week 6 October 11 Modern Human Geography in the United States and the United Kingdom. Journal Reviews Due.

SWAAG Meetings October 13-17. Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Required. The Department provides help for transportation (by van or car pool), registration (including lunch and banquet), and rooms at a convention hotel.

Week 7 October 18 (This week's meeting will be cancelled because of the immediately preceding SWAAG meeting)

Week 8 October 25 Geographical Representations and Digital Landscapes.

Week 9 November 1 Physical Geography as environmental science

Week 10 November 8 Cultural and Political Ecology.

Week 11 November 15. Student Presentations. Book Review Due.

Week 12 November 22. Student Presentations.

Week 13 November 29. Final discussion; Papers Due