Contemporary Cultural Geography

GRG 336; Unique #37560
(also URB 354; Unique# 37915)

Syllabus for Fall Semester, 2014

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Classroom: CLA 2.606
Class Hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 11.00-12.15
Office Hours: Thursday, 1.00-3.00 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. We will use national and international examples. 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

Mobility (2)
Walking
Migration
Pilgrimage
Issues of Access
Slave Trade, Sex Trade

Public Places (2)
Airports
Baseball Parks
Museums
Sacred places
The bar, the pub

Cultural Landscapes (2)
Vernacular
Monuments
New Towns (if we have time)

Representing Geographies (3)
Cinema
Photography, music, the novel, etc.

Knowing Geographies (if we have time)
Meso-scale (Lynch et al.)
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, MLA or any other of your choice. But once you have chosen one, be consistent! 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, December 4 at the beginning of class (11.00am), hardcopy, please, but be prepared to provide me an e-copy if asked. 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. You will likely be reading the equivalent of one or two articles per class. 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, then read again for emphasis**

1) This course will be taught in a seminar format, and so everyone is expected to participate fully. This means that all written work and preparation (readings, etc.) must be done on time, that you participate in our conversations, 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. As with all your classes, take attendance seriously.
3) Do NOT ask for my notes or assignments if you miss a lecture. Get to know your colleagues; share. The good news is that this is not a zero-sum game, so cooperation is cool. Of course, I’m always available to talk about ideas—new ideas—as well as to clarify concepts, but I do not repeat.
4) Late assignments are not accepted. Plan ahead!!!
5) All written assignments must be typed and proofed for spelling, typographical errors and major grammatical mistakes.
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, no side conversations (chit-chat), and no chewing gum during class. Sorry, but the noise of gum chewing is a pet peeve, while gum popping is grounds for expulsion from the university and exile to College Station. Drinks that are capped are OK. We can’t have spillage in this nice room!
8) Cell phones are NEVER to be used in this classroom. Of course, this includes texting. This is a cell phone-free zone, so turn those puppies OFF and put them away BEFORE class. IT. CAN. WAIT!!!!
9) Laptops are NOT to be used during class. Lecture outlines will be provided, but notes should be taken by hand. Please let me know early on if you have a specific condition that requires you to use a laptop. And yep, new studies show you remember more by handwriting your notes! Work with me on this one. 😊

10) I expect everyone to use e-mail as a form of communication for this class. I communicate regularly by that medium and I expect you to do the same. Normally, I will respond to queries and comments well within 24 hours.

11) Please take advantage of Office Hours. If the posted numbers don’t work, we can easily make arrangements. Talk to me, talk to me. 😊

12) Some very important ‘housekeeping’ points:

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/ssl/.

B. By UT Austin policy, “Religious holy days. A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence.” Also, if there are to be issues for missing class for military service, sports or other university obligations, please see me before the obligation absence occurs.

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.”

1) There are many important issues that are implicit here, including matters of respect on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, gender preferences, etc.—geez, you should know the drill by now! And this day and age with all the hyper-noise about politics, social issues, and more, we need to practice tolerance for the views of one another. I understand that it’s not always easy, but it is a must!!!

2) A related subject is sexual harassment, 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. http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sh/. Let’s discuss this for a moment. It is a personal peeve, because, in essence, it is a form of power abuse, and Leo does not like bullies.

3) Another essential matter here is plagiarism. What does it mean? Please read the following carefully: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis_plagiarism.php. There should be no room for misunderstanding here, so if you have any questions about your work (paraphrasing, etc.), let’s chat.

4) And finally—PLEASE—No whining. This is a whine free zone. 😊
D. Syllabus Statements for Flagged Courses (from the uni): “All courses carrying the skills and experience flags should include a statement in the syllabus to alert students to these important parts of the course.” We suggest the following, but please feel free to modify the language.”

**Cultural Diversity in the United States.** This course carries the flag for Cultural Diversity in the United States. Cultural Diversity courses are designed to increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one U.S. cultural group that has experienced persistent marginalization.

**Independent Inquiry.** “This course carries the Independent Inquiry flag. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage you in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing you with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to your major. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from the independent investigation and presentation of your own work.

**Writing.** “This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers’ work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.”

I hope you all have a wonderful semester!!!!