GEOG 701, Section 001  
Geographic Thought and Theory  
Fall 2012  
Class meets Wednesdays from 5:35 – 8:15 in HN 1004  
Instructor: Christian Siener  
csiener@gc.cuny.edu  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:30 – 5:30 in Room XXXX

Course Overview

This course examines the intellectual history and the diverse theoretical perspectives that constitute the field of American geography today. Given the breadth of the discipline, we will focus primarily on key later developments, from positivism to post-positivism, Marxism, feminism, and post-structuralism, while paying attention to the many contemporary theoretical intersections. We will read foundational texts illustrating these perspectives and engage with recent articles and books. We will discuss how these works employ key geographic concepts, such as place, space, territory, and time to understand the processes of class, race, gender and sexuality and uses of nature. By reading the literature, students will learn to differentiate between theoretical frameworks and to theoretically locate their own research. Students will lead discussions, compose weekly reaction papers, write a midterm paper and a final term paper, and present their term paper to the class.

Course Requirements

The class meets once per week, and sessions will consist of a short lecture on the weekly material as well as student presentations of the assigned readings. Each week, a different student will be responsible for presenting the readings and composing three discussion questions. Depending on the number of students enrolled in the course, each student may have to present more than once. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to read the assigned literature and post the reaction paper. Weekly topics and readings are listed beginning on page 3. Required readings are listed first. The section titled “Further Reading” in some weeks is not required, but is recommended for those who are more interested in that week’s theoretical and epistemological framework.

This syllabus and weekly assignments are posted on Blackboard. If you do not have access to Blackboard yet, please let me know immediately. I will communicate any scheduling or syllabus changes through Blackboard. Please make sure that the email listed for you in Blackboard is current and that you change your personal settings so that you receive an email when a notification is posted. Many of the weekly readings have been placed on an eRes site at the Hunter library. Readings that are not posted on the eRes site are available through the digital journal subscriptions at the Hunter library and students will be responsible for obtaining these readings on their own. Hunter College journal subscriptions can be found by clicking on the “List of Journals / Magazines” link at: library.hunter.cuny.edu.

Reaction Papers and class participation: Each student must post a reaction paper on Blackboard by 9pm on the Tuesday evening before our weekly class. Reaction papers should be between 400 and 500 words, and consist of an analysis and discussion of the arguments and implications of each text. Reaction papers that merely summarize the readings will receive a lower grade. All papers must be proofread and clearly written. Reaction papers will assure that students have thought about each text and are prepared for weekly class
discussions initiated by student presenters. Reaction papers will answer questions such as: What are the main arguments of the text? What methods does the researcher use? How does the researcher present evidence to support the main argument? How is the combination of evidence and methodology either sufficient or insufficient in answering the primary research questions? The questions listed here do not exhaust the analytical questions that students can ask of each text. They should be seen as examples for students to follow in composing their own creative questions. Reaction papers will be graded according to the following system: 0 points – no paper posted; 1 point – rushed, unclear papers, or summaries of the texts; 2 points – good papers, 3 points – excellent papers.

**Midterm paper:** The midterm paper is due in the middle of the semester and is a short 7 page paper in which students will analyze weekly class readings to date. Midterm paper questions and requirements will be posted on Blackboard on Wednesday, October 24. The paper is due in class (in print, please do not submit electronically) two weeks later on Wednesday, November 7.

**Final paper:** This paper is to help you think about your research in relation to the many theoretical, philosophical, and epistemological perspectives in today’s geography. It will include a deeper analysis of the course readings as well as a literature review in your research area. Requirements for the final paper will be posted on Blackboard. The final paper is due in my mailbox in the Geography main office (in print please, not electronically) by 5pm on Monday, December 17.

**Evaluation:** Grades will be calculated according to the following weights for each class requirement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class requirement</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation, presentations, and reaction papers</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final term paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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**Important Course Dates:**
- Wednesday, August 29: First class meeting.
- Wednesday, September 26: No class.
- Wednesday, October 10: No class.
- Wednesday, October 24: Midterm guidelines posted on Blackboard.
- Wednesday, November 7: Midterm papers due in class. Please do not submit electronically.
- Wednesday, December 12: Final paper presentations in class.
- Monday, December 17: Final papers due by 5pm in my mailbox. Please do not submit electronically.

**Expected Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this course, students will be able to trace the development of geography, particularly in the latter half of the 20th century, through its primary intellectual currents and shifts. They will be able to define, compare, and contrast the various ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies of coexisting research paradigms within geography in particular and the social sciences in general. They will be able to explain where the various paradigms overlap and how they are at odds. They will have gained the skills to identify and situate academic articles within particular research paradigms, the reading proficiency to recognize the structure and main arguments of academic papers, books, and other texts, the ability to research a literature review for a thesis project, and facility leading classroom discussions and analysis. Finally, they will be able to situate their own academic interests within particular traditions of inquiry, looking toward the goal of completing the Master’s thesis or final project.
Hunter College Policy on Academic Integrity

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

ADA Policy

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY, located in Room E1214B, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call: (212) 772-4857 or (212) 650-3230.
Weekly Reading Assignments:

Week 1 – August 29: No readings.
Course overview. Scope of the course, organization, expectations, and assignment of discussion leaders. Paradigms and theories.

Week 2 – September 5: Paradigm shifts in human geography


Further Reading:


Week 3 – September 12: Geography, Enlightenment, and Empire


**Further Reading:**


**Week 4 – September 19: Spatial Science and post-positivist geography**


**SEPTEMBER 26 – NO CLASS**

**Week 5 – October 3: Marxist Geography**

Friedman, Milton Capitalism and freedom. Introduction.

Milton Friedman is one of the intellectual founders (along with Hayek and Schumpeter) of the contemporary neoliberalism rooted in neo-classical economics. Naomi Klein’s book on disaster capitalism examines in detail Friedman’s impact on our day neoliberal economic policies worldwide. This is from the original Milton’s writing that brought him to fame.


Gordon, David M. Capitalist development and the history of the US cities.


Further Reading:


**OCTOBER 10 – NO CLASS**

**Week 6 – October 17: Humanistic Geography**


Cloke et al. 2004, Doing ethnography in Practising Human Geography. Discussion of methodology – how it is different from the previous paradigms.


Johnsen, Sarah; Cloke, Paul; May, Jon. “Day centres for homeless people: spaces of care or fear?” Social & Cultural Geography, Dec 2005, Vol. 6 Issue 6, p787-811, 25p, 1 graph; DOI: 10.1080/14649360500353004; (AN 19235664)

Jones, Phil. “Performing the city: a body and a bicycle take on Birmingham, UK.” Social & Cultural Geography, Dec 2005, Vol. 6 Issue 6, p813-830, 18p, 1 map, 5bw; DOI: 10.1080/14649360500353046; (AN 19235667)

Further Reading:


**Week 7 – October 24: Feminist Geography**

Midterm Questions will be posted today on Blackboard. Completed Midterm papers are due in print in class on November 7.


Further Reading:


**Week 8 – October 31: Post-Structuralist Geography**


Harvey 1989 Excerpt from *The Condition of post-modernity*


**Further Reading:**

Rabinow Introduction from *Critical Foucault reader*.


Week 9 – November 7: Geospatial Technologies and the production of knowledge

Midterm Papers are due today in class. Please give me a hard copy and not a digital copy.


Smith 1992 History and philosophy of geography: Real wars, theory wars.


St.Martin and Wing 2007 The discipline of GIS.


Phil Jones and James Evans, 2011 “The spatial transcript: analysing mobilities through qualitative GIS,” Area (n.d.),

Graves 2003 Landscapes of predation.

Further Reading:


Crampton 2008 Cartography Map 2.0


**Week 10 – November 14: Space, Time and Scale**


Neil Smith Contours of a Spatialized Politics: Homeless Vehicles and the Production of Geographical Scale. Social Text, No. 33 (1992), pp. 54-81


**Week 11 – November 21: Nature and Society**


Gerda Roelvink, JK Gibson-Graham. An Economic Ethics for the Anthropocene.

Also watch the presentation of this paper at AAG 2011

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5luck_gYMk.

Hoeschele, W., 2010. Preface and Ch.1 “The paradox of our times” In The Economics of Abundance, Gower.

**Further Reading:**

Hoeschele, W., 2010 Ch.9 “Reclaiming self-reliance and cooperation” In The Economics of Abundance, Gower. and the entire book.


**Week 12 – November 28: Post-Colonial Geographies**


**Further Reading:**


**Week 13 – December 5: Traveling Methodologies**


**Further Reading:**


**Week 14 – December 12:** No readings.

**Paper Presentations**