GEOG 701, Section 001
Geographic Thought and Theory, Fall 2013
Class meets Wednesdays from 5:35 – 8:15 in HN 1004
Instructor: Christian Siener
csiener@gc.cuny.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays 4:30 – 5:30

Course Overview

This course examines the intellectual history and the diverse theoretical perspectives that constitute the field of geography today. Given the breadth of the discipline, we will focus primarily on key later developments 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, and territory 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, and compose weekly reaction papers, a midterm paper and a final term paper.

Course Requirements

This is a reading-intensive seminar and it is crucial that students keep up with the readings. Yet while we will cover a lot of material, it is not possible to be exhaustive. This course is a survey, meant broadly to give students the direction and tools to situate and pursue their own research. The class meets once per week, and sessions will consist of a short lecture on the weekly material, a student presentation of the assigned readings, and a class discussion. Each week a different student will be responsible for presenting the readings and composing at least three discussion questions. As this is a graduate-level course, students are responsible for putting in sufficient time outside of class to learn the material so that we can have productive discussions. I will help to guide discussions, but will mostly be interested in students’ own analysis of the works. 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 4.

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, comparison, and discussion of the main 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 on a scale of 1 to 5: 0 points for no paper posted or rushed, unclear papers, and 5 points for outstanding 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 choose from a variety of questions and analyze weekly class readings to date. Midterm paper questions and requirements will be posted on Blackboard on Wednesday, October 16. The paper is due by class time two weeks later, on Wednesday, October 30. You may submit the paper to me via email or in print.

**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. A one page final paper proposal and a preliminary bibliography will be due on October 2. The final paper is due via email at 5pm on Monday, December 16.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class participation, presentations, and reaction papers</th>
<th>40%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final term paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
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**Important Course Dates:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, August 28</td>
<td>First class meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, September 4</td>
<td>No class (College closed).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, October 30</td>
<td>Midterm papers due in class or via email.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, November 27</td>
<td>No class (Friday schedule).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, December 11</td>
<td>Final class meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, December 18</strong></td>
<td><strong>Final papers due by 5pm via email.</strong></td>
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**Expected Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this course, students will be able to trace some of the main theoretical and historical developments within the discipline of geography, particularly in the latter half of the 20th century. 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 theoretical perspectives overlap and how they are at odds. They will have gained the skills to identify and situate academic articles within particular research currents, 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 28:** No readings.
Course overview: scope, organization, expectations, and assignment of discussion leaders.

**SEPTEMBER 4 – NO CLASS**

**Week 2 – September 11:** Introduction to Social Theory and Contemporary Geographic Thought


**Week 3 – September 18:** Geography, Enlightenment, and Empire


**Week 4 – September 25:** Economic Geography, Globalization and Neoliberalism


**Week 5 – October 2: Political Geographies: Nation, state, territory**


**Week 6 – October 9: Space and Scale**


**Week 7 – October 16: Urban Geographies**


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**Week 8 – October 23: Agriculture: Food, Land, and Labor**


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**Week 9 – October 30: Geospatial Technologies and the production of knowledge**

*Midterm Papers are due today in class.*


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**Week 10 – November 6: Culture, Power, Violence, Militarization**


Week 11 – November 13: Nature/Society and Political Ecology


Week 12 – November 20: Movement/Migration and Detention


**November 27 – No Class**

Week 13 – December 4: Post-Colonial Geographies


**Week 14 – December 11: Infrastructure and Development**


