

**GEO 5058**  
**Geographic Thought – Fall 2006**  
**Instructor: Phil Steinberg**  
**Tuesdays 2:00-4:30**

**What this course is about and what you should get out of it**

This course is designed both for students with previous training in geography and for students who are completely new to the discipline. By the end of the semester, you should be familiar with most if not all of the current debates in geography. You should be able to read an article in a geography journal, or listen to a paper at a geography conference, even outside your subfield, and have a basic appreciation of what's being talked about, and you should be able to place that article or paper within larger debates. This course should give you a sense of current issues in geography within which you can define a thesis/dissertation topic. Additionally, for doctoral students, this course should give you basic preparation for a substantial portion of the general field of your comprehensive examination.

**What's expected of you and what will determine your grade**

The bulk of your grade in this class will come from ten reaction papers. There are no assigned topics for these papers. You may use the reaction papers to compare and contrast that week's readings, to discuss which readings you liked or disliked (and why), to make connections with your potential thesis/dissertation topic, and/or to make connections with previous weeks' topics and readings. For the first two weeks, you will be provided with a few possible questions to get you thinking. After these two weeks, though, you'll be on your own to construct your paper.

Reaction papers are due via the Blackboard site at **9:00 Tuesday morning**. I will read the papers (and hopefully grade them) before class, and use them to identify topics for the in-class discussion. This means that **late papers will not be accepted**. Papers should be around 1000-1500 words (about 4-6 double-spaced pages).

That's the bad news. The good news is that there are 13 weeks of class (after the initial class meeting). This means that for any three weeks of your choosing you can elect not to write a paper. Don't use up these three "free" weeks at the beginning of the term; you may need them for weeks when you have other papers due or for weeks when you find the readings to be completely incomprehensible (!).

The other good news is that there are no final exams, final papers, research papers, or anything like that. All you have to write are those ten reaction papers.

The other component of your grade is in-class participation. Once your final grade is determined from the ten reaction papers, it can be adjusted upward or downward by as

much as a full letter grade based on participation. Your grade will be adjusted upward if you consistently make intelligent contributions to in-class discussion. Negative adjustments may be earned for absences, evidence of not having done reading, or extreme non-participation in in-class discussion.

Remember: This is a core course in the Geography master's and doctoral programs. This means that the minimum passing grade for this course is a 'B'. If you get less than a 'B', you will be required to retake this course the following year.

Note: Class will not meet on Tuesday, November 21, when the Southeastern regional meetings (SEDAAG) will be held. To make up for this class, we will hold class during the regular time during finals week (Tuesday, December 5).

## Readings

There are a lot of them, and many of them are difficult. Sorry, but there's no way around that. Expect 200-250 pages some weeks (I've assigned less for weeks where I think the readings are particularly difficult). Again, the point of this class is to make you proficient in this discipline, to give you the theoretical background to enable you to construct a thesis/dissertation proposal that is coherent within the culture and the questions of the discipline, and to give you the theoretical background and overview with which to pursue more specific geographic knowledge for your comprehensive exams.

That means that we have a lot of material to cover. Unfortunately, there's no perfect starting point, as debates within geography tend to refer to other on-going debates within the discipline and within academia more broadly. This means that you'll be lost some of the time. *Don't* be afraid to admit that the readings confused you; *do* bring your questions to the class meeting so that we can discuss them. The challenge when you're doing the readings is to extract key points and then piece these points together so as to gain an overall understanding of the discipline, so that you can then locate your beliefs and your interests (which you can then fine-tune in next semester's Geographic Research class). Writing the reaction papers and participating in the discussions should help you with this.

To aid you in getting through each week's readings, I'll be handing out assignment sheets that briefly introduce each reading and the topic in question. Read the assignment sheet first. It should help you to put each reading in context. Each assignment sheet also includes a suggested ordering of the readings. I strongly recommend that you follow these suggestions.

Part of being a graduate student (and, indeed, part of being an academic) is learning how to read some parts of articles more intensively than other parts. I'm not telling you to skip any of the readings, but you'll probably find it useful to focus, for instance, more on the part of an article where an author says *what* her/his central point is than the part of the

same article where the author goes on to prove that point through an empirical study. This is an acquired skill, but it becomes easier as you become more familiar with the discipline. At some point, for instance, you'll be able to quickly look at an article and identify the broad school of thought with which it's associated. Armed with this knowledge, you'll find it much easier to make sense of what the author is saying and, as a result, it won't take you as long to get through the article. Of course, you can "overdevelop" this skill to the point where you miss the nuances of individual articles because you're so intent on simplification through categorization (and on saving time through speed-reading).

There are six required books for this class:

Richard Peet. 1998. *Modern Geographic Thought* (Blackwell).

Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin, & Gill Valentine (Eds.). 2004. *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* (Sage).

John Agnew, David Livingstone, & Alisdair Rogers (Eds.). 1996. *Human Geography: An Essential Anthology* (Blackwell).

Gillian Rose. 1993. *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Minnesota/Polity).

John Pickles. 2003. *A History of Spaces* (Routledge).

Doreen Massey. 2005. *For Space* (Sage).

The bulk of this course's readings come from these six books.

Several of the other readings for this class are from:

James Duncan, Nuala Johnson, & Richard Schein (Eds.). 2004. *A Companion to Cultural Geography* (Blackwell).

I'm not asking you to purchase this book (it's very expensive and we'll only be reading a few chapters from it), but all of the books in the Blackwell "Companions to Geography" series are excellent reference books (currently, in addition to the cultural geography volume, there are companions to political geography, economic geography, feminist geography, tourism, and the city). If you're interested in any of these subfields, reading the appropriate "Companion" guide is a great way to get acquainted with the subfield. Sage publishes a similar series of "Handbook to Geography" books which also are very good.

Two other reference books that you're likely to find useful are the *Dictionary of Human Geography* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., 2000; Johnston, Gregory, Pratt, & Watts, eds.) and the *Dictionary of Physical Geography* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2000; Thomas & Goudie, eds.), both published by

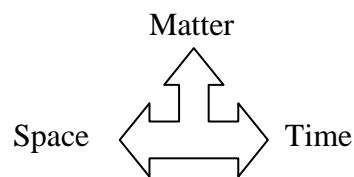
Blackwell (don't confuse these with the Penguin geography dictionaries, which are not nearly as good). There are copies of each of these books on the reserve shelf in the seminar room, and you're encouraged to consult them as you write your reaction papers (and as you proceed through graduate school).

### Outline of classes

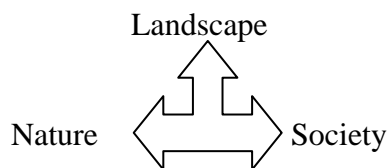
Explanatory note about the weird subject headings. In Geography, as in all disciplines, the same conceptual debates seem to reappear over time: What is the relationship between space and time, between nature and society, between space and place, etc. While this class is broadly historical, it also is thematic, and each week we will be investigating how geographers have examined a specific conceptual relationship. These conceptual relationships are expressed in the arrow-diagrams for each week.

August 29: Introductory class

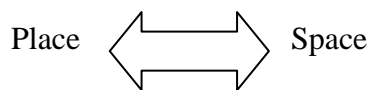
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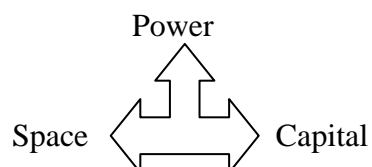
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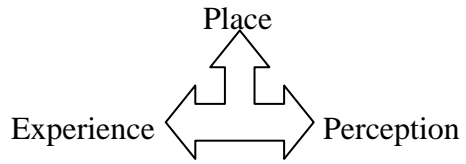
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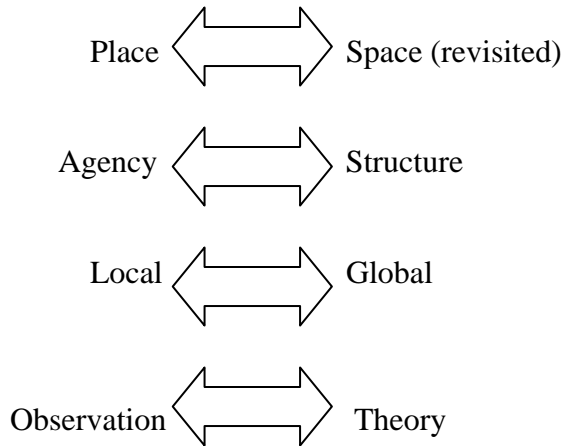
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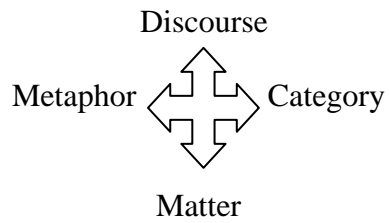
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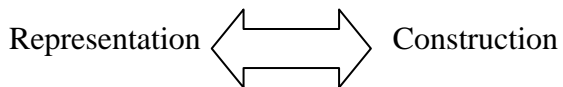
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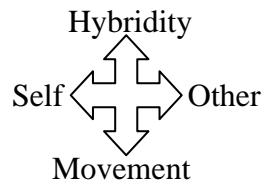
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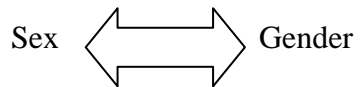
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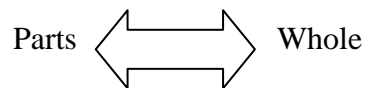
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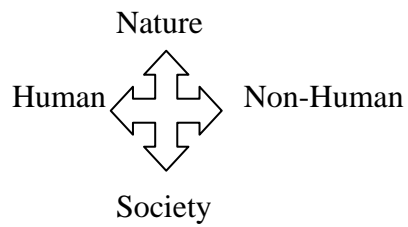
November 7:



November 14:



November 28:



December 5:

