

**GGG 689 Seminar in Geographic Thought and Methodology**

*Fall 2021*

*Thursdays 4:30 – 5:45 pm, 2103 Exploratory Hall*

Instructor: David Wong, Professor

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**Office Hours:** Thursdays 3-4 pm, or by appointment (refer to Bb)

**Virtual Office:** <https://gmu.zoom.us/j/4701770761>

**Course Description:**

**From the catalog:** *Includes historical development of geographic thought and current philosophy of geography; rationale for various subfields; and geographic research techniques and methods of analysis. Offered by Geography/Geoinformation Sci. May not be repeated for credit.*

This is a graduate seminar focusing on research in Geography, i.e. **what** to do and **how** to do. To a certain degree, the course also addresses **why** a particular research topic should be conducted. **The primary objective** is to provide an overview of the historical development of geography, including the evolving subject contents and geographic thoughts over time. The overview also includes a survey of current research methods. **The secondary objective** is to assist students to develop a research proposal. Materials cover major approaches in contemporary Geography and some common research methodologies for geographical studies. Students should expect to expose to thoughts and methods beyond their comfort zones. Primary modes of learning include reading, writing assignments, presentation, and discussions (both on discussion board and during online sessions).

**Learning Outcomes:**

**General:** After finishing the course, students should recognize the evolving and diverse subject matters and philosophical strands in geography. Students should also aware of different contemporary methods in conducting research and analysis. Students should also be able to develop a research proposal for their thesis or dissertation.

**Specific Learning Objectives (LO) /Outcomes**

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- 1) Identify the major types of geographical inquiries from ancient time to modern era.
- 2) Discern different philosophical-methodological approaches employed in geographical research.
- 3) Select appropriate research and analysis methods and tools to support one's research.
- 4) Develop a research proposal, including conducting a literature review for his/her thesis or dissertation.

**Texts:**

**Required texts**

Holt-Jensen, Arild (2018) *Geography: History and Concepts* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.) Sage Publishing. (HJ)

Montello, D. and P. Sutton (2013) *An Introduction to Scientific Research Methods in Geography and Environmental Studies* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) Sage Publishing. (MS)

**Additional references (books)**

Clifford, N., M. Cope, T. Gillespie, and S. French (2016) *Key Methods in Geography* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.) Sage Publishing.

Cresswell, T. 2013. *Geographic Thought: A Critical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Davis, J. P. 2011. *The Rowman & Littlefield Guide to Writing with Sources*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition.

Gomez, B. and J. P. Jones III. (eds.) 2010. *Research Methods in Geography*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Gregory, D., R.J. Johnston, G. Pratt, M. Watts, and S. Whalmore. (eds.) 2009. *The Dictionary of Human Geography*. Wiley-Blackwell. 5th Edition.

\*Terrell, S. R. (2015) *Writing a Proposal for Your Dissertation: Guidelines and Examples*. Guilford. [**This is not required, but strongly recommended.**]

**Assessment Methods:**

- 1) 45% 8 Reflections & Discussions + self-introduction (5% each)
- 2) 10% Presentation of initial research topic
- 3) 10% Literature review practice (3 pages)
- 4) 35% Research proposal (8-10 pages text)

- Each week **before** class, students are expected to (1) read the assigned chapters of the week; (2) be prepared to ask questions and participate in any class discussion.

- Students should complete the **Reflections & Discussions (R&D)** writing assignments on Blackboard (Bb) (on **Discussion Board**) after most sessions. **R&D** consist of questions and comments related to the reading materials of the week. Students need to respond to demonstrate their comprehension of the reading materials. Student's responses should be posted on the Discussion Board. Students also need to respond to other student's postings. Students should refer to the **rubrics**, which are posted on Bb under **R&D** and Discussion Board.

- Each student is expected to develop a research proposal on a topic of his/her interest/choice. Ideally, this proposal will eventually become the student's thesis or dissertation proposal. Before formally and fully developed the proposal, each student will write a 75-100 words **summary** of the research idea and prepare a **10-minute presentation** to explain the research to your fellow classmates and instructor for comments and critique. Specifics of the presentation are provided on Bb.

- A major component of a research proposal is literature review. Students are required to submit the draft of the **literature review** of the proposal for comment. The beginning of the 3-page review should include the title of your research topic, and a short paragraph (~40-70 words) concisely stating your research question(s).

- Develop the research idea more fully over the semester as students will be exposed to various thoughts and methodologies. Submit the **research proposal** (8-10 pages of text, plus figures, tables and bibliography), which includes the revised 3-page **literature review**, at the end of semester. Suggested structure of the proposal will be provided later.

- Literature review and proposal should be *double-spaced, include page numbers, and use Times New Roman in 12-point font with 1-inch margin in all sides.*

**Final Grading Scale:** approximately A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), F (69 and below) or “curved” with an average on “B+/A-.” The best students will receive an A, regardless of how high or low his/her total scores may be. Students may fail if their total scores are “significantly” lower than the rest of the class.

**Additional grading policies:**

- 10% of the score for each day will be deducted if an assignment is **late**. Unless otherwise stated, all assignments are due by the end of the day in which they are due.
- All materials submitted to meet the evaluation criteria should be completed in accordance with the student **Honor Code** (University Catalog). Also, no “double dipping” of term paper/report is allowed unless permissions are given by involved instructors.
- **Incomplete** will be handled strictly according to the University policy. Make-up tests are not given unless under unusual circumstances such as serious illness. Proof (documentation) is necessary to be eligible for make-up test/exam.

**Course Outline and Schedule** (Subject to change):

Date	Topics	Learning activities/Assignments
		R&D – Reflections and Discussions HJ: Holt-Jensen; MS: Montello & Sutton
	Pre-course actions	- Purchase textbooks - Review Syllabus, Technology Requirements and Schedule - Self-introduction
Week 1 8/23-27	Course Logistics	- class meets on 8/26, 4:30 pm
Week 2 8/30 - 9/3	<b>Basics:</b> What is Geography?	- class meets on 9/2, 4:30 pm - Read HJ Ch. 1 (What is Geography?) & Ch. 2 (The Roots of Geography) - R&D #1
Week 3 9/6-10	<b>Basics:</b> Some Notions of Science	- class meets on 9/9, 4:30 pm - Read MS Ch. 1 (Intro: Scientific Approach) & HJ Ch. 6 (Paradigms & Revolutions) - R&D #2
Week 4 9/13-17	<b>Research:</b> Research Concepts, Ideas, Publish and Ethics	- class meets on 9/16, 4:30 pm - Read MS Ch. 2 (Fund. Research Concepts), Ch. 3 (Scientific Communication), & Ch. 14 (Ethics) - Watch lecture videos and review slides - Start preparing the presentation of initial research idea
Week 5 9/20-24	<b>Research:</b> Proposal Development I: Components and Structure; Literature Review & Library Research	- class meets on 9/23, 4:30 pm - Watch lecture videos and review slides - Instructor’s demos of “Library Research” & Review

Week 6 9/27 – 10/1	<b>Research:</b> Proposal Development II: Methodology & Data; Expected outcome/ preliminary results	- class meets on 9/30, 4:30 pm - Watch lecture videos and review slides
Week 7 10/4-8	<b>Research:</b> Proposal Development III: Initial Research Directions - Topics	- class meets on 10/7, 4:30 pm - Presentations of Research Ideas – general topics - discussion
Week 8 10/11 – 15	<b>Modern Geography I:</b> Toward Modern Geography Regional Tradition	- class meets on 10/14, 4:30 pm - Responses and Revisions - Read HJ Ch. 3 (From Cosmography to ...) & Ch. 4 (The Regional Tradition) - R&D #3
Week 9 10/18 – 22	<b>Modern Geography I:</b> Spatial Science, Positivism & Critics	- class meets on 10/21, 4:30 pm - Read HJ Ch. 5 (The Growth Spatial Science) & Ch. 7 (Positivism and its Critics) - R&D #4
Week 10 10/25 – 29	<b>Methods:</b> Data Collection, Physical & Human Data	- class meets on 10/28, 4:30 pm - Read MS Ch. 4 (Data Collection), Ch. 5 (Physical Measurements) & Ch. 7 (Explicit Reports) - R&D #5
Week 11 11/1 – 5	<b>Methods:</b> Behavioral Research Experimental vs. Non- experimental	- class meets on 11/4, 4:30 pm - Read MS Ch. 6 (Behavioral Observations & Archives) & Ch. 8 (Experimental & Nonexperimental Research) - R&D #6
Week 12 11/8 – 12	<b>Methods:</b> Data Sampling, Display, & Reliability	- class meets on 11/11, 4:30 pm - Read MS Ch. 9 (Sampling), Ch. 11 (Data Display) & Ch. 12 (Reliability and Validity) - R&D #7
Week 13 11/15 - 19	<b>Modern Geography II:</b> Alternatives to Spatial Science; Poststructuralism and Beyond	- class meets on 11/18, 4:30 pm - Read HJ Ch. 8 (Alternatives to Spatial Science) & Ch. 9 (Post-Structuralism & Beyond) - R&D #8
Week 14 11/22 - 26 (Thanksgiving)		No class
Week 15 11/29 – 12/3	<b>Contributions</b> Geographical Tasks	- class meets on 12/2, 4:30 pm - Read HJ Ch. 10 (Geographical Tasks in a Globalization World)

### Other Policies:

**GMU Email Accounts:** Students must use their GMU email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

**Honor Codes:** All students are required to be familiar with and adhere to the George Mason University Honor Code and the Mason Values of Academic Integrity which can be found in the Office of Academic Integrity or online at (<http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>). Failure to abide by the code could result in failure of this course and dismissal from the University.

**Office of Disability Services:** If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, <http://ods.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

**GMU Resources:**

The Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

University Libraries, Ask a Librarian: <http://library.gmu.edu/ask>

Counseling and Psychological Services: <http://caps.gmu.edu>

University Catalog: <http://catalog.gmu.edu>

University Policies: <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu>

**Course Materials and Student Privacy:**

- All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course site are private; by federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.
- Video-recordings of class meetings that include audio or visual information from other students are private and must not be shared.
- Live Video Conference Meetings (e.g. Collaborate or Zoom) that include audio or visual information from other students must be viewed privately and not shared with others in your household.
- Some/All of our synchronous meetings in this class will be recorded to provide necessary information for students in this class. Recordings will be stored on Blackboard [or other secure site] and will only be accessible to students taking this course during this semester.

\*\* The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus, but will notify students about the change. \*\*

**Selected Important Literature (not in alphabetical order)**

Semple, E. 1911. "Influences of Geographic Environment." from *Influences of Geographic Environment on the Basis of Ratzel's System of Anthrogeographie*, New York: Henry Holt, p. 1-32.

Sauer, C. 1925. "The Morphology of Landscape." University of California Publications in Geography 2(2): 19-54.

Pattison, W. 1990. "The Four Traditions of Geography." *Journal of Geography* Sept./Oct. 202-206.

Cutter, S., Gollledge, R. and Graf, W. 2002. "The Big Questions in Geography." *The Professional Geographer* 54: 305-317.

Taaffe, E.J. 1974. "The Spatial View in Context." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 64(1): 1-16.

Hartshorne, R. 1939. "The Character of Regional Geography." in *The Nature of Geography*, Association of American Geographers, Washington DC: 436-444.

Schaefer, F.K. 1953. "Exceptionalism in Geography: A Methodological Examination." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 43: 226-249.

- Hartshorne, R. 1954. "Comment on Exceptionalism in Geography." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 44: 108-109.
- Hartshorne, R. 1958. "The Concept of Geography as a Science of Space, from Kant to Humboldt to Hettner." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 48(2): 97-108.
- Burton, I. 1963. "The Quantitative Revolution and Theoretical Geography." *The Canadian Geographer* 7(4): 151-162
- Wilson, A.G. 1972. "Theoretical Geography: Some Speculations." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 57: 31-44.
- Isard, W. 1956. "Regional Science, the Concept of Region, and Regional Structure." *Papers and Proceedings, The Regional Science Association* 2: 13-26
- Wright, D., Goodchild, M. and Proctor, J. 1997. "GIS: Tool or Science? Demystifying the Persistent Ambiguity of GIS as Tool versus Science." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87(2): 346-362.
- Pickles, J. 1997. "Tool or Science: GIS, Technoscience and the Theoretical Turn." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87(2): 363-372.
- Harvey, D. 1985. "The Geography of Capitalist Accumulation." in *The Urbanization of Capital*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell pp. 32-61.
- Massey, D. 1979. "In What Sense a Regional Problem?" *Regional Studies* 13: 233-243.
- Harvey, D. 1987. "Flexible Accumulation Through Urbanization: Reflections on Post-Modernism" in the American City, *Antipode*, 19: 260-286.
- Cassetti, E. 1999. "The Evolution of Scientific Disciplines, Mathematical Modeling and Human Geography." *Geographical Analysis* 31: 332-339.
- Markusen, A. 1999. "Fuzzy Concepts, Scanty Evidence, Policy Distance: The Case for Rigor and Policy Relevance in Critical Regional Studies." *Regional Studies* 33: 869-884
- Wheeler, J.O. 2000. "Have We Lost a Generation of Urban Geographers?" *Urban Geography* 21: 377-379.
- Sheppard, E. 2001. "Quantitative Geography: Representations, Practices and Possibilities." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 19: 535-554.
- Openshaw, S. 1991. "A View on the GIS Crisis in Geography." *Environment and Planning A*, 23: 621-628

Holt-Jensen, Arild (2018) *Geography: History and Concepts* also has additional articles for each chapter. The list of articles can be found on the publisher's website.

<https://study.sagepub.com/geography/student-resources/holt-jensen-geography-5e>