GEOG 605
GEOGRAPHIC IDEAS AND METHODOLOGY

DR. PAUL KINGSBURY
Office: 7140 RC Brown Hall
Email: kingsbury@sfu.ca
Office Hours: Thursday, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., and by appointment

Seminar
Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 10:20 a.m., RC Brown Hall, Room 7325

Required Texts
Readings will be made available in class and/or electronically.

Course Description
‘Geographic Ideas and Methodology’ introduces students to the range of multi and inter-disciplinary scholarship of a social theoretical nature that has implications for how ideas and methodologies are used in contemporary human geography. The course has three main goals: first, to systematically develop a thorough and relational knowledge of primary social theoretical texts. Second, to understand how social theories are methodologically ‘put to work’ in geography’s various empirical settings and contexts. To do this, we will read entries from the International Encyclopedia of Human Geography (2009) that will help situate thinkers, key concepts, and theoretical traditions in relation to human geography. Third, to foster a creative ethics of reading and discussion whereby students are encouraged to reflect upon, critique, deform, and enact in productive ways the entanglement of social theoretical thinkers and texts. Part of our learning, then, concerns how we translate and understand (as we interrogate) disparate theoretical currents.

Structure, Expectations, & Evaluation
(a) Structure and Expectations. The course is composed of intensive seminars, i.e., everyone is expected to read all of the scheduled material prior to the weekly class meetings and participate in the discussions. In addition, each week, one participant will provide a brief (5 minute) presentation that provides an overview of the thinkers’ works, as well as take responsibility for providing questions for discussion, as well as guiding subsequent discussions. The focus is on the primary social theoretical text rather than the encyclopedia entry. In addition, the goal is not to exhaustively ‘decode’ the reading, but rather to incite questions about the text in ways that will edify discussions, expose us to the diversity of scholarship, as well as share the workload that the course demands. Good questions that incite discussion emerge from close readings of the text and may include: What is at stake in the text’s arguments? Why is the thinker making these arguments? What are the main concepts and how do they relate to the broader argument? What aspects of the text do we not understand? How is society and space conceptualized? How does the text relate to its social, historical, and geographical contexts? Again, the key point is to ground discussions not only in the text but also through interpretative practices (e.g. focusing on specific phrases and passages) that read with the text. That is to say, before we can usefully embark on an external critique of the text it is important to understand its basic ideas and arguments, that is, to be able to conduct and immanent critique. Spending fifteen minutes interpreting several sentences is often far more productive than sprawling discussions of a text’s merits and/or flaws. In sum: the task, individually and as a group, is first to engage with what the author means, then to appreciate and critique the work, and finally to
understand how each text relates historically and conceptually to other course readings. Through this analytic process students will emerge from the course with a deep understanding of important cornerstones in social theory and the tools to continue reading new social theories on their own.

I take these expectations very seriously, because without them, the course is hobbled from the beginning. I recognize that there is a lot of reading, and some of it is difficult, requiring slow engagement with the text—this is what the class is all about. Please come prepared to contribute and to listen.

(b) Evaluation. GEOG 605 involves critical reading-listening-talking seminars. Students will be evaluated on seminar participation (preparation, presentation, discussion, debate, absences (30% of the final grade)). Each participant will contribute two short ‘reaction papers’ (3-4 pages double-spaced) (2 x 15% = 30%) and one extended paper (12-15 pages double-spaced) (40%). The reaction papers will consist of critical reflection upon the material for that week. There is no set way to go about this—you can reflect on the readings, or compare them, or comment on some element that intrigued you, or criticize them, or relate them to a current issue in human geography—all are fine. The only constraint is that it should be presented in an organized form (not random notes), grammatically correct, and it cannot be a summary; it should focus on critique. These papers are due in class of the week in question. Since many students have not done this kind of short analytic piece before, grading of the papers will be weighted more heavily as the course goes on. The longer paper will consist of an in depth critical analysis and discussion of a theme or themes in light of the semester’s discussion and further thoughts you may have had on the issues at hand.

Please print reaction papers on double-sided paper if possible, staple them together, and give a copy to me at the beginning of the seminar.

| Participation | 30% |
| Reaction Papers | 30% |
| Extended Paper | 40% |
| **Total** | **100%** |

Final letter grades are then assigned according to the standard (%):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent Performance</th>
<th>Good Performance</th>
<th>Satisfactory Performance</th>
<th>Marginal Performance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90+ = A+</td>
<td>77-79.9 = B+</td>
<td>67-69.9 = C+</td>
<td>50-59.9 = D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85-89.9 = A</td>
<td>73-76.9 = B</td>
<td>63-66.9 = C</td>
<td>&lt;49.9 = F (Fail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-84.9 = A-</td>
<td>70-72.9 = B-</td>
<td>60-62.9 = C-</td>
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The following performance standards guide the grading in this class:
Excellent = A; Good = B; Satisfactory = C; Marginally Satisfactory = D; Unacceptable = F.
These follow the standards in the University Calendar:
(https://students.sfu.ca/calendar/2013/fall/student-info/grading-systems-policies/grading-systems-and-policies.html)
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 – September 8  Seminar: *Introducing Geographic Ideas and Methodology*
Readings: None

Week 2 – September 15 Seminar: *What is Enlightenment?*
Readings: Kant; Foucault; Habermas; Withers

Week 3 – September 22 Seminar: *Karl Marx and Political Economy*
Readings: Marx; Cumbers; Jones

Week 4 – September 29 Seminar: *Antonio Gramsci, Hegemony, and Ideology*
Readings: Gramsci; Glassman; Olwig

Week 5 – October 6 Seminar: *Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt School*
Readings: Benjamin; Bohman

Week 6 – October 13 Seminar: *Sigmund Freud and Psychoanalysis*
Readings: Freud; Kingsbury

Week 7 – October 20 Seminar: *Structuralism*
Readings: Barthes; Smith

Week 8 – October 27 Seminar: *Slavoj Žižek and Ideological Enjoyment*
Readings: Žižek

Week 9 – November 3 Seminar: *Friedrich Nietzsche and Post-structuralism*
Readings: Nietzsche; Woodward, Dixon, and Jones III

Week 10 – November 10 Seminar: *Jacques Derrida and Deconstruction*
Readings: Derrida; Barnett

Week 11 – November 17 Seminar: *Michel Foucault and Discourse*
Readings: Foucault; Cresswell

Week 12 – November 24 Seminar: *Judith Butler and Feminism*
Readings: Butler; Johnson

Week 13 – December 1 Lecture: *Gayatri Spivak and Post-colonialism*
Readings: Spivak; McEwan

**FINAL PAPER DUE** (leave in my mailbox) December 8, Monday, noon
Seminar Readings


**Recommended Journals for the Research Paper**

ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies; Annals of the Association of American Geographers; Antipode; The Canadian Geographer; cultural geographies; Dialogues in Human Geography; Environment and Planning D: Society and Space; Gender, Place & Culture; Geoforum; Progress in Human Geography; Social & Cultural Geography; Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers; International Encyclopedia of Human Geography

*Useful Information: Geography Library Liaison: Julie Jones, 778-782-9704, jsj7@sfu.ca*