

Geography 697.01  
**PHILOSOPHY AND NATURE OF HUMAN GEOGRAPHY**  
Fall 2021 Wednesdays 2-4:50 ES 342  
Instructor: Dr. Byron Miller  
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**Geographers** recognize that injustice is manifest in many different places, including in our Department and the University of Calgary, and across many scales, including urban, regional, national, and global scales. The **Department of Geography** condemns longstanding and continuing injustices suffered on the basis of geographic location, class exploitation, and/or marginalized identity. We stand against racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, classism, xenophobia, able-bodied normativity, mental health profiling, and other forms of prejudice. <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/news/anti-racism-statement>

#### ***Territorial Acknowledgement***

*The Department of Geography acknowledges and appreciates that we live on the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in southern Alberta. The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.*  
<https://www.ucalgary.ca/indigenous/cultural-protocol>

#### **Course Description**

Philosophies of science and theories of social and physical processes underlie our understandings of how the world works, i.e., what the prime causes of various processes are, what entities are crucial to examine, how they relate to each other, how we can study and know them, etc. Philosophies of science and theories of social and physical processes are often inter-related: our ontological assumptions and epistemologies set the limits of what we believe it is possible to know.

Philosophy and theory, together, are foundational to knowledge construction. The crucial question, then, is not whether one relies on philosophy and theory, but rather what type of philosophy and what type of theory, and what the implications of one's philosophical and theoretical assumptions are for constructing geographical knowledge. Ontological (what we take to exist), epistemological (what we can know and how we can know it), and theoretical (how we explain phenomena) foundations vary among disciplines and often among their sub-fields. These differences result in different types of knowledge construction—and different blind spots.

Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there have been several major debates within geography, each representing shifts in the philosophical and theoretical bases for geographical research. Many of these debates are on-going—some of them hot and heavy. In this course we will examine the major debates and shifts that have taken place in geography over the past century and attempt to get different bodies of knowledge to “talk to each other”—not always

an easy task. The assigned readings and class discussions should give you a good basis for understanding the wide range of research being conducted in geography today, help you reflect on the ontologies, epistemologies, and theories that may guide your own research, and foster an appreciation of engagement with perspectives that differ from your own, i.e., “engaged pluralism.”

### Course Format and Grading

This course revolves around discussion of the assigned readings (listed below). Prior to each class you will need to read the assigned readings and write a brief (approximately 2 to 3 page) reaction paper. Your reaction papers should touch on the major issues raised in the readings and then focus on one or two issues that are of particular interest to you. Your reaction papers need not be comprehensive (in fact, they probably can't be comprehensive). You will most likely find some of the reading challenging, not unlike your first venture into statistics, GIS, economics, or chemistry. Please do not bang your head against the wall! I do not expect you to come to class with a perfect understanding of all the nuances of the readings. Make a good faith effort to understand the major points of the readings and then come to class prepared to ask questions and discuss. Your weekly reaction papers must be completed before the beginning of each class. They count for 30 per cent of your grade. Your lowest reaction paper score will be dropped. If you want to replace a reaction paper score, you will also have an opportunity to view and review a film (e.g., *The Botany of Desire*) which deals with a major issue in geographical knowledge construction; a film review may be used to replace another reaction paper score.

Additionally, you will be asked to give two article presentations over the course of the semester (a sign-up sheet will be circulated on the first day of class). Each student will choose two different weeks in which they will present one lengthy or two shorter articles, which may be taken from either the required or the optional reading list for that week. Presentations should be approximately 15-20 minutes in length. Together, these two presentations count for 10 per cent of your grade.

Discussion is extremely important in this seminar and you are expected to attend and participate in all class meetings. Class discussion is a significant part of your grade (20 per cent). Absence will be excused in the case of death in the family or illness (hopefully neither of these will occur!), with documentation, please.

The remainder of your grade (40 per cent) is based on an approximately 15 page (plus bibliography) seminar paper. Your paper may be on any topic of your choosing related to philosophical or theoretical issues in geography. You could, for instance, choose to write on debates over the role of structure and agency in socio-spatial processes, contrasting approaches to landscape interpretation, varieties of feminist geography, social understandings of climate change, prospects for the unification of human and physical geography, or innumerable other topics. You could also choose to pick one of the weekly topics of this course and address it in more detail. I highly recommend that you meet with me (preferably early in the semester) to discuss your topic so that we can be sure that it is well focused and do-able in one semester. I will be happy to provide you with feedback on your paper—including comments

on early drafts--over the course of the semester. Your paper should draw from at least 16 scholarly sources, at least 8 of which should be in addition to the assigned readings. The paper is due Monday, December 20.

#### Grading Assessment

Weekly reaction papers	30%
Article presentations (2)	10%
Class discussion	20%
Seminar paper	40%

#### Grading Scheme

A+	4.00	Outstanding performance
A	4.00	Excellent-superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject
A-	3.70	↑
B+	3.30	
B	3.00	Good
B-	2.70	minimally satisfactory
C+	2.30	unsatisfactory for graduate level study and below

Late assignments will be marked down 5% per day late. Exceptions will be made in the case of illness or other extenuating circumstances.

#### **Required Texts** (most can be inexpensively purchased used):

Hollis, Martin (2010) The Philosophy of Social Science, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (available at the University Bookstore)

Peet, Richard (1998) Modern Geographical Thought, Oxford and Malden: Blackwell. (inexpensive used copies available on Amazon)

Sayer, Andrew (2010) Method in Social Science, New York and Oxon: Routledge. (inexpensive used copies available on Amazon; you can probably find a pdf on-line as well)

Additionally, many required readings will be posted on D2L.

#### **Highly Recommended Supplemental Texts:**

You may find it helpful to read the short overviews of the major reading topics in the Dictionary of Human Geography. These overviews should help you to identify the issues to focus on in the

readings and are an invaluable resource for graduate students. The AAG International Encyclopedia of Geography: People, Earth, Environment, and Technology (2016) is available from our library (online)--it is now a standard reference source for Geography. You'll find it useful!

Livingstone, D. (1992) The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise, Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell. (**very highly recommended**)

Gregory, Derek, Ron Johnston, Geraldine Pratt, and Michael Watts (eds) (2009) The Dictionary of Human Geography, Oxford and Malden: Wiley-Blackwell. (you should be able to **find a pdf on-line**)

Agnew, J., D. Livingstone, and A. Rogers (eds) (1996) Human Geography: an Essential Anthology, Oxford: Blackwell.

Barnes, T. and E. Sheppard (eds) (2019) Spatial Histories of Radical Geography, Oxford: Wiley.

Castree, N., A. Rogers, D. Sherman (eds) (2005) Questioning Geography: Fundamental Debates, Oxford and Malden: Blackwell. (an upper level undergraduate book, but a good introduction) <http://www.muthar-alomar.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Questioning-Geography.pdf>

Gregory, Derek (1993) Geographical Imaginations, Oxford and Malden: Blackwell.

Harvey, D. (1997) Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference, Oxford and Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.

Livingstone, D. (2003) Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

### **Additional Course Information**

Students may ask for an accommodation at least 1 week in advance of any assignment due date. In the event that a student has not made an accommodation and misses any course work due to illness, supporting documentation, such as a medical note or a statutory declaration may be requested <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>  
Please refer to <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq> for frequently asked questions concerning the provision of a medical note/statutory declaration.

**Exams & Deferrals** <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/exams>

### **Referencing Format**

The APA (American Psychological Association) is preferred for all written work presented in this class: <https://www.mendeley.com/guides/apa-citation-guide> However, any commonly used academic reference format will be accepted, e.g., Chicago Manual of Style.

### **Important Dates**

The last day to drop this course and receive a tuition fee refund is **Thursday, September 16th, 2021**. The last day to withdraw from this course is **Thursday, December 9th, 2021**.

### **University of Calgary Academic Integrity Policy**

Academic integrity is the foundation of the development and acquisition of knowledge and is based on values of honesty, trust, responsibility, and respect. We expect members of our community to act with integrity. The University Calendar includes a statement on the principles of conduct expected of all members of the university community (including students, faculty, administrators, any category of staff, practicum supervisors, and volunteers), whether on or off university property. This statement applies in all situations where members of the university community are acting in their university capacities. All members of the university community have a responsibility to familiarize themselves with the principles of conduct statement, which is available at: [www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html](http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html).

### **Plagiarism, Cheating, and Student Misconduct**

The University of Calgary is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Academic dishonesty is not an acceptable activity at the University of Calgary, and students are **strongly advised** to read the Student Misconduct section in the University Calendar at:

[www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-3.html](http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-3.html). Often, students are unaware of what constitutes academic dishonesty or plagiarism. The most common are (1) presenting another student's work as your own, (2) presenting an author's work or ideas as your own without adequate citation, and (3) using work completed for another course. Such activities will not be tolerated in this course, and students suspected of academic misconduct will be dealt with according to the procedures outlined in the calendar at: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-academic-misconduct-procedure>. For students wishing to know more about what constitutes plagiarism and how to properly cite the work of others, the Department of Geography recommends that they attend Academic Integrity workshops offered through the Student Success Centre: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/learning/academic-integrity>

### **Instructor Intellectual Property**

Information on Instructor Intellectual Property can be found at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/intellectual-property-policy>

### **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy**

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation in Alberta disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, such as outside an instructor's office, the department office, etc. Term assignments will be returned to students individually, during class or during the instructor's office hours; if students are unable to pick up

their assignments from the instructor, they must provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

### **Research**

There is to be no human research conducted as part of the assignments in this course.

### **Posting of Grades and Picking-up of Assignments**

Graded assignments will be returned by the instructor personally during scheduled lecture periods, unless they are made available electronically through the course D2L webpage. Grades and assignments will not be available at the Department of Geography's main office and assignments cannot be dropped off at the Department Office.

### **Academic Accommodations**

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations, according to the university policies and procedures listed in the University Calendar.

The student accommodation policy can be found at:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6-1.html>

Students needing an accommodation because of a disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/accommodation-students-disabilities-procedure>

Students needing an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need, preferably in writing to their instructor or the Department Head (email: [freeman@ucalgary.ca](mailto:freeman@ucalgary.ca)).