

DRAFT – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Territorial Acknowledgment

The University of Guelph resides on the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, lands long cared for by Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Attawandaron peoples. We also recognize the Dish with One Spoon Covenant. This acknowledgement of the land where we live, learn and work is our declaration of our collective responsibility to care for this place and one another, and to respect the histories, rights, and presence of all First Nations, Métis and Inuit who live here today. In acknowledging the land, we also recognize that these words must be supported by actions.

Course Meetings

Fall 2026
Day/Time TBD

Instructor

Dr. Noella Gray (pronouns: she/her)
grayn@uoguelph.ca
Hutt Building Rm 121

*Please note that this course runs for two semesters, F25 and W26. While this syllabus is for the F25 semester, the learning outcomes cover both semesters, and several activities and assessments are designed to build across both semesters.

Course Description

You are taking this course because it is one requirement for the completion of a PhD – a Doctor of Philosophy – in geography. What does it mean to be a doctor of geographical philosophy? By the end of this course, and your degree, you will have developed your own answer to this question. Geography is a wide-ranging discipline, including human geography, physical geography, and GIScience. What it means to be a geographer – to produce geographical knowledge – varies across these sub-disciplines, as well as within them. This makes the discipline of geography exciting and rich, as well as fragmented and often difficult to define.

All knowledge, geographical and otherwise, is situated. This means it is produced by particular people at particular moments in time, in particular places and contexts. In this course, we are learning how to produce knowledge in the context of a western academic institution situated on treaty land, in a discipline whose history is intertwined with colonial violence and

dispossession, and at a moment in time when knowledge and expertise are increasingly questioned. In other words, there is a politics to knowledge production. We will reflect on this politics throughout the course, considering both the problems and the possibilities inherent in a range of knowledge production practices. We will also work together to build an appreciation for the diverse ways in which geographical knowledge is produced, and to build from there an appreciation for what geography is – recognizing the answer to “what is geography?” is contingent, contested, and constantly changing. What geography will become moving forward is partly dependent on you!

The course is designed to support inquiry into both the philosophical and pragmatic aspects of geographical knowledge production. In the Fall semester, we will focus more on the philosophical aspects, though with some consideration for timely practical matters. However, this course does not offer an exhaustive survey of all philosophical approaches and concepts used within the discipline, nor does it provide a comprehensive review of the history of geographical thought. Rather, it seeks to provide students with the tools needed to understand, explain and evaluate the diverse ways in which geographical knowledge is produced, in order to become geographical knowledge producers themselves.

This syllabus reflects a series of deliberate choices about *what* you, as a PhD student, need to learn about the discipline and *how* you can and should learn it. These choices are informed by a commitment to: acknowledging the decolonial imperative and our responsibilities as scholars situated in a colonial institution; challenging a disciplinary history of excluding or marginalizing ‘other’ ways of knowing; and building awareness of both the opportunities and challenges of learning together across a diverse discipline, by finding shared ‘lenses’ through which to read and think together. While these choices result in inevitable trade-offs and silences, I hope they will create opportunities for productive conversations.

Finally, while a PhD can sometimes feel like a lonely, solitary endeavour, knowledge production is a collective exercise. We will aim to build a supportive community that is curious, constructive, and mutually encouraging. We will meet together with the students in GEOG*6090 (the required Geography Masters course) several times throughout the semester, in support of this goal.

Course Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course (F23 semester) you will be able to:

1. Define and characterize the discipline of Geography, considering its diverse philosophical, theoretical, and methodological approaches;
2. Compare and evaluate these approaches, in general and in relation to your particular area of research;
3. Explain and evaluate the ways in which knowledge is produced within the discipline of geography, considering ontological, epistemological, methodological, ethical, and practical aspects;

4. Participate in and facilitate collaborative, productive discussions of geographic thought, with a focus on discussion across sub-disciplines; and
5. Reflect on what it means to decolonize geographic knowledge production.

These course learning outcomes will be fulfilled through a combination of:

- A variety of writing assignments, including written reflection on the content of assigned readings as well as an annotated bibliography;
- Oral communication, including participation in weekly discussions, facilitation of at least one seminar, and a formal presentation.

Course Format

Class will be conducted in seminar format; students are expected to attend all classes and to come prepared to participate actively in each class. If you will be unable to participate in a class, please communicate with the instructor about this as soon as possible.

Course Learning Environment

We will discuss the kind of learning environment we want to create in this course during the first class – collective commitment to creating and upholding this environment is critical. At minimum, we will respect each other’s perspectives and provide space where differing experiences, positions and ideas are welcome.

Text Books and Required Readings

All required readings will be made available through CourseLink or the University of Guelph library. See below for a detailed list.

Course reserve materials can be accessed through the University of Guelph McLaughlin Library. To access these items, select **Ares** on the navbar in CourseLink. Note that you will need your Central Login ID and password in order to access items on reserve.

For further instructions on accessing reserve resources, visit [How to Get Course Reserve Materials](#).

If at any point during the course you have difficulty accessing reserve materials, please contact the e-Learning Operations and Reserve Services staff at:

Tel: 519-824-4120 ext. 53621 | Email: libres2@uoguelph.ca | Location: McLaughlin Library, First Floor, University of Guelph

Cost of Text Books and Learning Resources

There are no costs for textbooks or learning resources.

Assessment Breakdown

Note that because GEOG*6100 is a full year (1.0 credit) course, you are not assigned a grade until the end of the Winter 2024 semester. At the end of Fall 2025, you will receive a grade of in-progress (INP) on your transcript. Your final grade for GEOG*6100 will be based on the work submitted in the fall as well as in Winter 2026. Half of your grade (50%) comes from assignments completed in the Fall (see below), and half of your grade will come from assignments completed in the Winter.

Description	Due Date* (Learning Outcomes)	Percentage of overall grade
Participation	Weeks 1-12 (see Assessment Details and Course Schedule below) (Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)	25%
Final Presentation – What is Geography?	Nov. 27 (Learning Outcomes 1, 3, 4)	10%
Critical Review Paper	Oct. 10: Topic Selection (no grade) Oct. 31: Initial Bibliography (no grade) Dec. 12: Annotated Bibliography and Paper Outline (10%) Winter 2026: Polished Draft, Peer Review. Final Paper (Learning Outcomes 2, 3)	10%
Draft Scoping Document	Dec. 12 (Learning Outcome 3)	5%

Assessment Details

Details for all assignments listed above will be distributed separately.

Course Grading Policies

Extensions are often available if you cannot meet a due date. Please talk to the instructor in such cases, ideally before the due date. Late policies will be noted for each assignment individually. Generally, I would rather work with you to find a solution to any challenges in meeting deadlines, rather than impose a late penalty. Please see separate Assessment Details for instructions regarding Assignment Submission.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Any use of AI in this course, including LLM tools like ChatGPT, is prohibited.

Students are expected to complete their work independently and showcase their critical thinking abilities. Undeclared and/or unauthorized use of AI tools to produce coursework is considered a form of academic misconduct. Any misuse of AI tools, including submitting AI-generated work, may be considered academic misconduct.

Review the [University of Guelph's Statement on Artificial Intelligence Systems, ChatGPT, and Academic Integrity](#) for more information.

Course Communication

[CourseLink](#) (online course management platform) will be used to: share all assigned readings; submit assignments and receive feedback on these assignments; and engage in online class discussions. Remember to check content on CourseLink regularly.

Schedule of Topics and Assignments:

Date	Topic and Activities	Readings and Due Dates
Sept. 16	<i>Meet in Rm. 234</i> 1 st half: Introductions (w/ GEOG*6090) 2 nd half: Overview, Course Approach <i>Before Class:</i> Review course outline and assignment descriptions. Complete readings. <i>After Class:</i> Write participation goals. Plan a meeting with your advisor to discuss possible topics for your Review paper. Find a published review paper in your field.	Cresswell 2013, Ch.1 McCormick and Kahn 1982
Sept. 23	Reconciliation, decolonization, and what it means to learn and conduct research at the University of Guelph <i>Class will be held downtown Guelph – details on CourseLink.</i> <i>Before Class:</i> Complete readings. Write reflection.	Daigle 2019 Martin 2024 Tuck and Yang 2012 Wilson and Hughes 2019 Reflection Due by midnight on Sept. 14

Date	Topic and Activities	Readings and Due Dates
Sept. 30	<p>“Geography is what geographers do”</p> <p>Focus: Environmental change and vulnerability in the Arctic</p> <p>Before Class: Complete readings. Write reflection.</p>	<p>Cameron 2012 Derksen et al. 2012 Laidler et al. 2009 Whyte 2017</p> <p>Reflection Due by midnight on Sept. 21</p>
Oct. 7	<p>Meet in Rm. 234</p> <p>1st half: Constructing Literature Reviews (w/ GEOG*6090)</p> <p>Guest Speaker from Writing Services</p> <p>2nd half: The PhD Qualifying Exam and the Scoping Document – demystifying the process</p> <p>Before Class: Complete readings. Watch videos on Courselink.</p> <p>After Class: Talk to your advisor and identify preliminary structure of your scoping document. Check in about plans for your Critical Review Paper.</p>	<p>Calarco Ch.4 Garrod 2023 Grant et al. 2009 Healy and Healy 2016 Rewhorn 2018</p>
Oct. 14	<p>“Geography is what geographers do”</p> <p>Focus: Maps</p> <p>Before Class: Complete readings. Find a map that relates to your research interests and bring it with you to class (either print or digital). Write reflection.</p>	<p>Orford 2005 Potapov et al. 2022 van der Meij et al. 2022 Kelly 2019 Jayaraman et al. 2025</p> <p>optional: Crampton and Krygier 2009</p> <p>Reflection Due by midnight on Oct. 5</p> <p>Review Paper Topic Selection Due Oct 10th</p>
Oct. 21	<p>Meet in Rm. 234</p>	<p>Ashmore 2015 Desbiens 2019</p>

Date	Topic and Activities	Readings and Due Dates
	<p>“Geography is what geographers do” (w/ GEOG*6090)</p> <p>Focus: rivers</p> <p>Before Class: Prepare as a group to lead this class, w/ GEOG*6090 students as participants.</p>	<p>Lave 2012 Martuwarra RiverOfLife et al 2021 Tamminga et al 2025</p>
Oct. 28	<p>No class (Noella away)</p> <p>Note: No reflection due this week, but we will put Liboiron’s <i>Pollution is Colonialism</i> into conversation with other work in the following two weeks, so take notes to inform those upcoming reflections. Allow time to read the entire book carefully.</p>	<p>Liboiron 2021</p> <p>Initial Bibliography for Review Paper Due Oct 31</p>
Nov. 4	<p>“Geography is what geographers do”</p> <p>Focus: scale</p> <p>Before Class: Read. Write reflection.</p>	<p>Cohen and Bakker 2014 Jiang and Brandt 2016 Liboiron and Lepawsky 2022, Ch. 2 Sayre 2009</p> <p>Reflection Due by midnight on Nov. 2</p>
Nov. 11	<p>Is Geography a science? If so – what does that mean?</p> <p>Before Class: Read. Watch “GUTS” video on Courselink. Write reflection.</p>	<p>Castree 2005 Haraway 1988 Harding 1995 Hickey and Lawson 2005 Táiwò 2020</p> <p>Reflection Due by midnight on Nov. 9</p>
Nov. 18	<p>Meet in Rm. 234</p> <p>1st Half: Strategies for Giving Presentations (w/ GEOG*6090) Guest from the Library</p>	<p>Harrison et al. 2004 Lave et al. 2018, Ch. 1 Yeh 2016 Viles 2005</p> <p>Reflection Due by midnight on Nov. 16</p>

Date	Topic and Activities	Readings and Due Dates
	2 nd Half: The Interdiscipline – Challenges and Opportunities Before Class: Read. Write reflection.	
Nov. 25	Meet in Rm. 234 PhD program planning – the Individual Development Plan Before Class: Complete readings. Review the Individual Development Plan (see CourseLink) – complete Step 1 – “Assess Your Skills” and Appendix A – “Clarifying expectations: worksheet”	Berdahl and Malloy Ch.1 & 8 (p.157-173)
Nov. 27 (*Thursday*)	Presentations (w/ GEOG*6090)	‘What is Geography’ Presentation in class on Nov. 27 Annotated Bibliography and Paper Outline Due Dec 12th

Readings

- Ashmore, P. (2018). Transforming Toronto’s rivers: a socio-geomorphic perspective. In Lave, R., Biermann, C. and Lane, S.N. (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Physical Geography* (pp. 485-511). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Berdahl, L. and J. Malloy. 2018. *Work Your Career: Get What You Want from Your Social Sciences or Humanities PhD*. University of Toronto Press.
- Calarco, J.M. 2020. *A Field Guide to Grad School: Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum*. Princeton University Press.
- Cameron, E. S. (2012). Securing Indigenous politics: A critique of the vulnerability and adaptation approach to the human dimensions of climate change in the Canadian Arctic. *Global environmental change*, 22(1), 103-114.
- Castree, N. (2005). Is Geography a Science? In Castree, N., Rogers, A. and Sherman, D.J. (Eds). *Questioning geography: fundamental debates* (pp. 57-79). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Cohen, A., & Bakker, K. (2014). The eco-scalar fix: Rescaling environmental governance and the politics of ecological boundaries in Alberta, Canada. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 32(1), 128-146.
- Crampton, J. W., & Krygier, J. (2009). *Mapping : A Critical Introduction to Cartography and GIS*. Wiley. (Chapter 1)
- Cresswell, T. 2013. *Geographic Thought: A Critical Introduction*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell

- Daigle, M. (2019). The spectacle of reconciliation: On (the) unsettling responsibilities to Indigenous peoples in the academy. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 37(4), 703-721.
- Derksen, C., Smith, S. L., Sharp, M., Brown, L., Howell, S., Copland, L., ... & Walker, A. (2012). Variability and change in the Canadian cryosphere. *Climatic Change*, 115(1), 59-88.
- Desbiens, C. (2019). Appreciating difference? A view from Indigenous rivers. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien*, 63(4), 540-552.
- Garrod, B. (2023). What makes a good critical literature review paper?. *Tourism and Hospitality*, 4(1), 141-147.
- Grant, M.J. et al. 2009. A typology of reviews: an analysis of 14 review types and associated methodologies. *Health Information and Libraries Journal* 26: 91–108.
- Haraway, D. 1988. Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575-599.
- Harding, S. 1995. "Strong Objectivity": A Response to the New Objectivity Question. *Synthese*, 104, 331-349.
- Harrison, S., Massey, D., Richards, K., Magilligan, F. J., Thrift, N., & Bender, B. (2004). Thinking across the divide: perspectives on the conversations between physical and human geography. *Area*, 36(4), 435-442.
- Healey, R.L. and Healey, M. (2016). Identifying and Reviewing the Key Literature for your Assignment. In Clifford, N.J. (Ed.), *Key Methods in Geography* (pp. 44-61). Sage.
- Hickey, M. and V. Lawson. 2005. Beyond Science? Human Geography, Interpretation and Critique. In Castree, N., Rogers, A. and Sherman, D.J. (Eds). *Questioning geography: fundamental debates* (pp. 96-114). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Jayaraman, N., Bremner, L., Coelho, K., Kumar, P., & Kasinathan, S. (2025). Counter-Mapping, Counter-Histories, and Insurgencies of Subjugated Knowledges in the Fisher Struggle for Ennore Creek. *Antipode*, 57(1), 259-281.
- Jiang, B., & Brandt, S. A. (2016). A fractal perspective on scale in geography. *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information*, 5(6), 95.
- Kelly, M. (2019). Mapping Syrian refugee border crossings: A feminist approach. *Cartographic Perspectives*, (93), 34-64.
- Laidler, G. J., Ford, J. D., Gough, W. A., Ikummaq, T., Gagnon, A. S., Kowal, S., ... & Irngaut, C. (2009). Travelling and hunting in a changing Arctic: assessing Inuit vulnerability to sea ice change in Igloolik, Nunavut. *Climatic change*, 94(3), 363-397.
- Lave, R. (2012). Bridging political ecology and STS: A field analysis of the Rosgen Wars. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 102(2), 366-382.
- Lave, R., Biermann, C. and Lane, S.N. (2018). Introducing Critical Physical Geography. In Lave, R., Biermann, C. and Lane, S.N. (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Physical Geography* (pp. 3-21). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Liboiron, M. (2021). *Pollution is colonialism*. Duke University Press.
- Liboiron, M. and J. Lepawsky. (2022). Chapter 2 "The Scales of Waste" in *Discard Studies: Wasting, Systems, and Power*. MIT Press.
- Martin, J. (2024). *Decolonizing the place narrative of Guelph: A PhD student's experience*. Available at: <https://soprstories.ca/2024/11/19/decolonizing-the-place-narrative-of-guelph-a-phd-students-experience/>

- Martuwarra RiverOfLife, Unamen Shipu Romaine River, Poelina, A., Wooltorton, S., Guimond, L., & Sioui Durand, G. (2022). Hearing, voicing and healing: Rivers as culturally located and connected. *River Research and Applications*, 38(3), 422-434.
- McCormick, D., & Kahn, M. (1982). Barn raising: Collaborative group process in seminars. *EXCHANGE: The Organizational Behavior Teaching Journal*, 7(4), 16-20
- Orford, S. (2005). Cartography and Visualization. In Castree, N., Rogers, A. and Sherman, D.J. (Eds). *Questioning geography: fundamental debates* (pp. 189-205). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Potapov, P., Hansen, M. C., Pickens, A., Hernandez-Serna, A., Tyukavina, A., Turubanova, S., ... & Kommareddy, A. (2022). The Global 2000-2020 Land Cover and Land Use Change Dataset Derived From the Landsat Archive: First Results, *Front. Remote Sens.*, 3, 856903.
- Rewhorn, S. (2018). Writing your successful literature review. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 42(1), 143-147.
- Táíwò, O. 2020. Being-in-the-room privilege: Elite capture and epistemic difference. *The Philosopher*, 108(4). <https://www.thephilosopher1923.org/post/being-in-the-room-privilege-elite-capture-and-epistemic-deference>
- Tamminga, A., Brett, E., & Brent, M. (2025). Evaluating satellite-based depth mapping for large river monitoring: A case study of Peace River, British Columbia, Canada. *Geomorphica*, 2(1).
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, education & society*, 1(1), 1-40.
- van der Meij, W. M., Meijles, E. W., Marcos, D., Harkema, T. T., Candel, J. H., & Maas, G. J. (2022). Comparing geomorphological maps made manually and by deep learning. *Earth Surface Processes and Landforms*, 47(4), 1089-1107.
- Viles, H. 2005. A Divided Discipline? In *Questioning Geography*, eds. N. Castree, A. Rogers and D. Sherman, 26-38. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Wilson, S. and Hughes, M. (2019). Why Research is Reconciliation. In Wilson, S., Breen, A. V., and DuPré, L. (Eds.). *Research and reconciliation* (pp. 21-34). Canadian Scholars.
- Whyte, K. (2017). Indigenous climate change studies: Indigenizing futures, decolonizing the Anthropocene. *English language notes*, 55(1), 153-162.
- Yeh, E. T. 2016. "How can experience of local residents be 'knowledge'?" Challenges in interdisciplinary climate change research. *Area*, 48(1), 34-40.

University Policies

Graduate Academic Misconduct

The [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) is detailed in the Graduate Calendar. The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and **it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct** and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that

discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required; however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway. Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to make a booking at least 10 business days in advance, and no later than the first business day in November, March or July as appropriate for the semester. Similarly, new or changed accommodations for online quizzes, tests and exams must be approved at least a week ahead of time. For students at the Guelph campus, information can be found on the [SAS website](#).

Accommodation of Religious Obligations

If you are unable to meet an in-course requirement due to religious obligations, please email the course instructor within two weeks of the start of the semester to make alternate arrangements.

See the Academic calendar for information on regulations and procedures for [Academic Accommodation of Religious Obligations](#)

Copies of Out-of-Class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Drop Date

Courses that are one semester long must be dropped by the end of the last day of classes; two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of classes in the second semester. The regulations and procedures for [Dropping Courses](#) dropping courses are available in the [Graduate Calendar](#).

Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

Health and Wellbeing

The University of Guelph provides a wide range of health and wellbeing services at the [Vaccarino Centre for Student Wellness](#). If you are concerned about your mental health and not sure where to start, connect with a [Student Wellness Navigator](#) who can help develop a plan to manage and support your mental health or check out our [mental wellbeing resources](#). The Student Wellness team are here to help and welcome the opportunity to connect with you.

Illness

Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g., final exam or major assignment).

Recording of Materials

Presentations that are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a student, or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

Resources

The [Academic Calendars](#) are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the Graduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for [Academic Consideration](#).