

PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE
GEOGRAPHY*4880: Contemporary Geographic Thought
Department of Geography, Environment and Geomatics
Winter 2027

Land Acknowledgement

All of Canada resides on the traditional territories, treaty or unceded lands and/or homelands of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The University of Guelph campus sits within the Dish with One Spoon wampum. The Dish with One Spoon is an agreement between Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabeg and their allied nations to live peaceably on the lands throughout what is now known as the Great Lakes Region. The circle at the centre is a dish with a beaver's tail, indicating that they will have one dish and what belongs to one will be shared among all. We are to eat of the beavertail, using no sharp utensils, to prevent the shedding of blood. We all share resources and everything the Creator has provided for us upon our arrival to Mother Earth.

Reflecting with intention about where we live, learn and work is one way to uphold Indigenous histories, peoples and territories. Another is to learn more about Canada, colonialism and reconciliation; if you would like to do so, one way to begin is by visiting the website of the [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#) and reading the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action](#). The Territorial Acknowledgement above is adapted from university materials and resources by the Jake Thomas Learning Centre.

Course Description

This course explores the origins and evolution of contemporary geographic thought. The course builds around important concepts and thinkers in geography. As a capstone course that students complete near to the end of their degree, it also encourages students to reflect and to examine the relevance and significance of geographical knowledge to society, their own lives, and future career paths.

Class sessions will be participatory, combining lectures with in-class workshops and exercises, online reading discussions, and engagement with assignment materials submitted by you and your classmates. The success of the course rests on the level and quality of effort that students bring. Students are expected to keep up with readings and come to class and online discussions prepared to meaningfully engage.

Course Objectives

The course is designed to have students bring together what they have learned during their degree and to think more about what it might mean to be 'a geographer'. By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- demonstrate understanding of historical and contemporary geography;
- examine, assess, and critically discuss key scholarly contributions of geography;
- construct a logical, well-supported, and convincing argument;
- demonstrate mastery of skills in written and oral presentation;
- demonstrate enhanced skills in professionalism, group work, and case study analysis; and,
- identify and professionally communicate personal skills and career goals.

Assessments TENTATIVE & SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Test

Professional Pathways Documents

Document 1: Histories of Geography Timeline

Document 2: Opportunities Mind Map

Document 3: Cover letter

Group News/Podcast

Discussion Board Posts

Final Exam

Basic Course Schedule

WEEK	TOPIC and/or ACTIVITY
1	Course Introduction and Overview
	Histories of Geography Introduction to Canva & Professional Pathways Documents Assignment
2	Geographical Concepts: Place, Nature, Scale
	Geographical Research: Explanation and Critique
3	Histories of Geography Timeline Day
	VIRTUAL SYNCHRONOUS Use lecture period to: Watch Professional Prospects Interviews Search job adverts; select 2 to serve as options for your mind map and cover letter
4	Test Covers all slide, lecture and reading material to date.

WEEK	TOPIC and/or ACTIVITY
	What do Geographers do? Some common options and pathways
5	Job Options and Mind Map Day
	Preparation for second half of the course How will weeks 7 through 11 of the course work? Introduction to Miro Introduction to News/Podcast, including listening to 1-2 examples from last year Groupwork time
6	Each news/podcast group meets with Prof. Silver during class time (precise schedule TBD)
	Podcast groupwork day
7	Explaining deforestation and critiquing land cover change Mini-lecture Interactive Miro board This week's group(s) informally preview their news/podcast
	VIRTUAL SYNCHRONOUS News/Podcasts & Discussion Posts
8	Explaining industrial agriculture and critiquing food regimes Mini-lecture Interactive Miro board This week's group(s) informally preview their news/podcast

WEEK	TOPIC and/or ACTIVITY
9	VIRTUAL SYNCHRONOUS News/Podcasts & Discussion Posts
	Explaining biodiversity and critiquing conservation Mini-lecture Interactive Miro board This week's group(s) informally preview their news/podcast
10	VIRTUAL SYNCHRONOUS News/Podcasts & Discussion Posts
	Explaining urbanization/sprawl and critiquing land use planning Mini-lecture Interactive Miro board This week's group(s) informally preview their news/podcast
11	VIRTUAL SYNCHRONOUS News/Podcasts & Discussion Posts
	Explaining value chains and critiquing globalization Mini-lecture Interactive Miro board This week's group(s) informally preview their news/podcast
12	VIRTUAL SYNCHRONOUS News/Podcasts & Discussion Posts
	Class wrap-up & exam question release VIRTUAL SYNCHRONOUS Prof. Silver will host drop-in office hours over Zoom
	VIRTUAL SYNCHRONOUS Final exam on date/time scheduled by the registrar's office and posted to Web Advisor

Reading List

- Beesley, K. B., Ramsey, D. (2009). Agricultural Land Preservation. In Kitchen, R. & Thrift, N. (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (pp. 65-69). Elsevier. ISBN: 9780080449111.
- Campbell, L. M., & Godfrey, M. H. (2010). Geo-political genetics: Claiming the commons through species mapping. *Geoforum*, 41(6), 897-907.
- Cadieux, K. V., Taylor, L. E., & Bunce, M. F. (2013). Landscape ideology in the Greater Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt Plan: Negotiating material landscapes and abstract ideals in the city's countryside. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 32, 307-319.
- Coral, C., & Mithöfer, D. (2023). Contemporary narratives about asymmetries in responsibility in global agri-food value chains: the case of the Ecuadorian stakeholders in the banana value chain. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 40(3), 1019-1038.
- Easterling, W.E. & Polsky, C. (2004). Crossing the Divide: Linking Global and Local Scales in Human-Environment Systems. In E.S. Sheppard & R.B. McMaster (Eds.), *Scale and geographic inquiry: nature, society, and method*, (pp. 66-85). Blackwell.
- Ginn, F. & Demeritt, D. (2009). Nature: A Contested Concept. In N. Clifford, S. Holloway, S.P. Rice, G. Valentine (Eds.), *Key Concepts in Geography*, 2nd ed., (pp. 300-311). SAGE.
- Guthman, J. (2003). Fast food/organic food: Reflexive tastes and the making of 'yuppie chow'. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 4(1), 45-58.
- Hassler, M. (2009). Commodity Chains. In Kitchen, R. & Thrift, N. (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (pp. 202-208). Elsevier. ISBN: 9780080449111.
- Heffernan, M. (2009). Histories of Geography. In N. Clifford, S. Holloway, S.P. Rice, G. Valentine (Eds.), *Key Concepts in Geography*, 2nd ed., (pp. 1-20). SAGE.
- Jay, M., Morad, M. (2009). Conservation and Ecology. In Kitchen, R. & Thrift, N. (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (pp. 259-267). Elsevier. ISBN: 9780080449111.
- Katz, C. (2009). Social Systems: Thinking about Society, Identity, Power and Resistance. In N. Clifford, S. Holloway, S.P. Rice, G. Valentine (Eds.), *Key Concepts in Geography*, 2nd ed., (pp. 236-250). SAGE.
- Kelley, L. C. (2018). The politics of uneven smallholder cacao expansion: A critical physical geography of agricultural transformation in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. *Geoforum*, 97, 22-34.
- Lave, R., Biermann, C., Lane, S. N. (2018). Introducing Critical Physical Geography. In Lave, R., Biermann, C., Lane, S. N. (Eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Critical Physical Geography* (pp. 1-21). Palgrave. ISBN: 9783319714608.
- Metz, J. J. (2009). Deforestation. In Kitchen, R. & Thrift, N. (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (pp. 39-50). Elsevier. ISBN: 9780080449111.

Pritchard, B. (2009). Food Regimes. In Kitchen, R. & Thrift, N. (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (pp. 221-225). Elsevier. ISBN: 9780080449111.

Swyngedouw, E. (2004). Scaled Geographies: Nature, Place, and the Politics of Scale. In E.S. Sheppard & R.B. McMaster (Eds.), *Scale and geographic inquiry: nature, society, and method*, (pp. 129-153). Blackwell.

****All assigned readings for this course are freely available as PDFs at no additional cost. Student should access and download the readings through Courselink and Ares.****