Syllabus GEOG 490

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Introduction:

This course is designed as a capstone project for students who have previous experience in research and research methods in Urban Geography who would like to put those skills to work using the urban setting as a research laboratory – to bring the every-day into conversation with research and to bring the researcher’s eye to the every-day. Students will spend a significant amount of time in the field collecting primary research data, analyzing primary and secondary sources, and becoming experts in their chosen neighborhood on a particular topic of geography – all of which will be used toward the final project and presentation. The success of this course is strongly dependent upon students’ enthusiasm for and engagement with course and project materials.

**Student learning goals**

Develop a stronger understanding of the Greater Seattle region through the deep exploration of neighborhoods of Seattle.

Learn about and practice radical methodologies in the every day spaces of the urban environment.

Gain a deeper appreciation for what urban geography and its (inter)related disciplines have to offer you the student, you the researcher, and you the citizen.

**General method of instruction**

Lectures, discussions, site visits, fieldwork.

**Recommended preparation**

This is a senior-level course. Students should have attained upper-division status. Further, they should have preparation for and/or have an interest in a self-directed research project that will involve 1) defining a problem or question of interest, 2) collecting relevant qualitative and/or quantitative data, 3) describing and analyzing data in order to produce field note reports that will culminate in a final presentation.

**Class assignments and grading**

Grades will be based on:

1) Weekly 'lab' assignments, using skills introduced in class and data collected in the field: 35%  
2) Field research presentation: 30%   
3) Participation in class and in group work: 20%  
4) Reading group presentation: 15%

**Course Readings:**

*Required Texts:*

Brown, Michael and Richard Morrill (eds). 2011. *Seattle Geographies* University of Washington Press.

Class Reader, pick up from Rams Copy at the end of Week 2.

**A Note on Photo Research**

Your final project will benefit from your beginning to take photos **right now**. Don’t wait until a week before the project is done. Taking meaningful photos takes practice – your eye will develop as you begin to look around you as a photographer and researcher. Also, it is far better to have way too many excellent photos to choose from than to not have enough! As most of you have some kind of digital photo taking device attached to your body at all times – start using it! Your final grade is not dependent upon your needing an expensive camera.

Keep a small fieldnotes diary with you at all times. You never know when you will be struck by inspiration and having a place to write down where, when, and why you took a photo will be invaluable to you at the end of the quarter. Don’t think you’ll remember it – our memories are curious things and even the most important events in our lives can become muddlemaoquai

During Week 1, we will have a professional urban photographer come to speak to the class. He will get you started in thinking about how to take photos, when to take them, and appropriate ways to approach people about taking their photographs. It is very important that you come to class on Wednesday, March 30th.

Also, I have requested colour prints for you through the Geography department.

**Weekly Assignments**

Students will turn in seven type-written weekly assignments. Each assignment has been designed as a piece of the structural skeleton that will hold up your final project. **Late** or **poorly executed** assignments will not receive full credit. Please make the time to do these assignments, and to do them well. I will remind you about them the week before they are due; however, **many of these assignments require advance preparation that you will be responsible for doing**. Not putting in the necessary prep work will affect your ability to complete the assignments effectively.

*Due: Week 1 – Assignment*

Choose a neighborhood within the Seattle Region and a topic in geography that you will spend the entire quarter studying. Please write 2+ page (double spaced) report about why you chose the particular neighborhood you did. What is it that interests you about the neighborhood? What is your connection to the neighborhood (or is there one?)? What do you know about the neighborhood already? What do you hope to learn about the neighborhood? Also, what is it that you would like to learn about your topic in relation to the neighborhood? What do you think you’ll find? What do you think you may have difficulty finding?

*Due: Week 2 – Lab*

Bring 5 titles and abstracts (please do not simply copy and paste the abstracts from the articles) of urban geography articles from peer-reviewed journals on topics that are of interest to you. You may choose from any peer-reviewed journal, including, but not restricted to, *Antipode*, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *The Professional Geographer*, *Canadian Geographic*, *Cultural Geographies, etc*. For more ideas of Geography journals, visit the Geography journal page on UW Libraries website: <http://lib.washington.edu.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/subject/Geography/dr/eljnl.html>

*Due: Week 3 – Lab*

Write up a three - four page (double spaced) in-depth methods report on one article that you brought to class with you last week, and analyze it in the context of the other four articles. This report will include:

* Subject of the article – provide a brief summary of the article and the research it stems from
* Most important point / question or central argument or controversy
* Research methods – what methods did the researcher employ: were they qualitative, quantitative; what were they, exactly? Did he or she conduct interviews? How many? How were interviewees recruited? Give as much detail as you can
* Key supporting facts or evidence
* Connecting themes – compare and contrast this article with the other four from last week. How are they related? How are they different? What conclusions can you draw from the five?

*Due: Week 4 – Lab*

Write up a three-four page (double spaced) report of your visit to the AAGs. What sessions did you attend? Who were the speakers and the titles of their talks? What did you learn about the topic? What did you learn about presentation styles?

What posters did you look at? What struck you the most about the posters? Was there one that stuck out to you? Why or why not? What did you learn about visual representation?

*Due: Week 5 – Lab*

Write up a three - four page (double spaced) report about what you’ve learned about your neighborhood from the archives or government stacks. What materials did you use (Don’t be shy about exploring fire insurance maps, zoning ordinance maps, newspaper clippings, public officials’ correspondence, non-governmental organizations’ literature, etc.)? You may include pictures, maps, design plans, etc. (in addition to the four written pages). What surprised you? What was new to you? What difficulties did you have finding information in the archives or government stacks?

*Due: Week 6 – Lab*

Write up a three - four page (double spaced) fieldnote report about your civic meeting. Be sure to include *when* the meeting took place, *where* the meeting took place, *what* the meeting was about, *who* was at the meeting (both as presenters / discussants and in the audience), and *why* you chose this meeting to attend. What did you learn about your neighborhood / topic? Was anything resolved at this meeting – why or why not? Did you participate in the meeting, or did you only watch and take notes? Did you let anyone know what you were doing? Why or why not? How does this relate to your topic of interest? How can you apply what you learned / heard / experienced to your final project?

*Due Week 8 – Lab*

Write up a three – four page (double spaced) fieldnote report about your bus ride. Be sure to include *what* bus line you rode, *when* you rode the bus (start and finish times), *who* was riding the bus, and *where* the bus traveled (include a map of the bus route – not counted into page requirement). What changes did you notice in the landscape? In the people getting on and off the bus?

*Due Week 9 – Lab*

Write up three - four page (double spaced) fieldnotes from your interview. Be sure to include *who* you interviewed, *why* this person was chosen (is he or she an expert in your field of study, an active member of the community, someone you simply found fascinating?), *where* you interviewed him or her, *when* you interviewed him or her, *how* the interview went (did you get along swimmingly? Was it awkward? Did you learn what you came to learn or did you get off-track?), and *what* you learned about your neighborhood or topic. Remember to include even the minutest details – sometimes what seems unimportant is actually very important.

*Final Presentation & Report*

1. Choose a minimum of six (maximum 8) photos that best represent your neighborhood and / or respond to the issue or question (topic) that you have spent the quarter learning about. You should select photos that you find most significant and meaningful - photos you want to share with a broader audience because of the story the photo tells or the way it reflects the framing questions.
2. Write six one-two page (double spaced) reflection papers – one for each of your photos (only six – if you’ve chosen more than six, choose your six most important). Answer following questions:
   1. Provide a brief description of the photo
   2. Why do you want to share this photo?
   3. What’s the real story the photo tells?
   4. How does this relate to your overall research question / area of interest?
3. Please create a visual representation (poster) using your photos. You may also include maps, archive photos (don’t forget to give citations!), newspaper clippings, etc; however, please remember that sometimes less is more! You may only use a maximum of 150 words on your poster (not including citations, legends, etc.)
4. Please have available for viewers a report folder containing:
   1. All of your weekly lab assignments – updated, edited, and prepared for an official presentation
   2. Your six reflection papers
5. During Week 10, half of the course participants will present their posters on Monday, the other half on Wednesday. Be prepared to speak about your poster and what you’ve learned about your neighborhood and the particular topic you chose for study. You will have five minutes to speak and another few minutes for questions. Make your time count. You will be graded in real time by me as well as your peers!
6. You will also take this project to the Geography Symposium at the end of the quarter!

*Reading group presentation*

Mechanics

Beginning on Monday, April 11th, 60 minutes of Thursday’s class session each week will be devoted to group presentations of class readings.  You will be in a group of approximately three-five students.  Your group will be responsible for presenting your chosen reading.

Content and Structure of class presentation (30 mins total)

1)  Your first task is to provide a brief description of the piece.  Introduce the broad topic area; identify the specific questions being addressed, identify the author's goals (for example, is the author presenting a model, a theoretical perspective, and/or is s/he describing and providing empirical detail).  Summarize, using specific examples, the details of the case study, or the argument being presented (approximately 40% of your discussion).

2) The bulk of your discussion should address the contributions of this reading to our understanding of Seattle region and some aspect of urban geography.  Your group can go about this in a number of ways.  Think about incorporating a variety of media and activities to encourage student learning.  These might include video clips, visual illustrations, examples from current news media -- and of course ideas you will have that I didn’t!  Be creative!

Your leadership in the presentation should bring us to a full understanding of the book that you have read (and excite us enough to want to read it). Build in five minutes at the end of your presentation for questions and comments from the rest of the class.

Your group will need to meet at least twice before your scheduled presentation in order to discuss and organize your ideas and presentation.  Think of these meetings as reading groups to support you as you study the material for this class. This assignment is worth 15% of your total grade, including a portion of which will be peer-evaluations, or assessments of your contribution to the group’s presentation.

Choose **one** for your group presentation assignment, but feel free to read all of them!

Thrush, Coll-Peter. 2007. *Native Seattle: histories from the crossing-over place*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Putman, John C. 2008. *Class and gender politics in progressive-era Seattle*. Reno: University of Nevada Press.

Klingle, Matthew W. 2007. *Emerald city: an environmental history of Seattle*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Dietrich, William. 2010*. The final forest: big trees, forks, and the Pacific Northwest*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Abrums, Mary Elyeen. 2010. *Moving the rock: poverty and faith in a Black storefront church*. Lanham: AltaMira Press.

Taylor, Quintard. 1994. *The forging of a black community: Seattle's Central District, from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Anderson, Rick. 2010. *Seattle Vice Strippers, Prostitution, Dirty Money, and Crooked Cops in the Emerald City*. New York: Sasquatch Books.

Diers, Jim. 2004. *Neighbor power: building community the Seattle way*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Sanders, Jeffrey C. 2010. *Seattle and the roots of urban sustainability: inventing ecotopia*. Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Johnson, Jeffrey A. 2008. *"They are all red out here": socialist politics in the Pacific Northwest, 1895-1925*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Shimabukuro, Robert Sadamu. 2001. *Born in Seattle: the campaign for Japanese American redress*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

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Atkins, Gary. 2003. *Gay Seattle: stories of exile and belonging*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

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Wilma, David W., and Walt Crowley. 2010. *Power for the people: A history of Seattle City Light*. [Seattle, Wash.]: HistoryLink in association with University of Washington Press. Bottom of Form

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