



## **ADVANCED CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY: *A Cultural Politics of Space***

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*or by appointment*

**Seminars:**  
**Tuesdays, 10:30-12:30, Rm #2322e, SSC**

*Syllabi from*  
*Graduate Course Descriptions, Geography, UWO*  
[http://geography.ssc.uwo.ca/grad/courses/course\\_descriptions.html#9518](http://geography.ssc.uwo.ca/grad/courses/course_descriptions.html#9518)

**Geography 9518: Advanced Cultural Geography**

This course examines the production and interpretation of cultures, the major cultural markers of identity, and the politics of space, place and landscape. Final list of seminar topics and readings for discussion are developed in consultation with students.

**2 hour seminar, 0.5 course**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The primary goal of this course is to encourage the graduate student to develop, question, critique and apply conceptions of *culture*, *cultural identities* and *practices* to his or her research interests. ‘*Cultural geography*’ is “*one of the most rapidly growing and energetic sub-fields of Anglophone geography over the past 20 years.*”<sup>1</sup> In fact, there has been what is termed ‘*the cultural turn*’ within many branches of human geography and the larger social sciences. The topics of ‘*culture*’ and the methods used to examine them are thus wide ranging and interdisciplinary employing a critical and political approach grounded in contemporary social theory and ‘*cultural studies*.’

Within contemporary cultural geography specifically, ‘*culture*’ is approached as a site of contested identities and practices, and is thus intrinsically spatial *and* political. The

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<sup>1</sup>.Amin, A. (2009). ‘Cultural Geography,’ in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. D. Gregory, R.J. Johnston, G. Pratt, M.J. Watts and S. Whatmore (eds), 129. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.

student will learn how and why culture and space are intrinsic to understanding and explaining a society's plurality of conflicting interests, ideologies and relations, and, ideally the role(s) space may play in resolving differences in a spirit of equity and social justice. Central to our enquiry is the question of how major markers of cultural identity—*e.g.s. ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, nationality*—are distributed and practiced spatially? How and why people are spatially included or excluded because of identity? And how do the aspatial or non-spatial processes of economy, politics and power give rise to these cultural landscapes?

## **PURPOSE**

This graduate course has several objectives:

- i. Develop critical thinking and intellectual discussion.
- ii. Expose students to contemporary theories in cultural studies.
- iii. Introduce dominant themes and topics in cultural geography.
- iv. Encourage responsibility for independent learning.
- v. Exercise and develop reading, writing and verbal skills.

Fulfilling these objectives will enable the student to

- i. Situate his/her own research in the larger theoretical and topical contexts of cultural geography and cultural theory.
- ii. Critique and differentiate cultures and cultural creations in a logical and systematic fashion
- iii. Systematically critique the politics of culture as manifested in, over, and through space
- iv. Better articulate his/her opinions, interpretations and arguments in both verbal and written form.

## **FORMAT AND EVALUATION**

Because this is primarily a 'reading'-based course, students are expected to read numerous works identified through instructor-student consultation. Course material is tailored specifically toward the needs and research interests of the student(s), particularly in the latter half of the term. Weekly seminars are used to discuss materials and address the two essay assignments. These seminar meetings are intellectual forums to discuss, debate, question and critique the literature and the development and successful completion of the assignments. With mutual participation and unbridled enthusiasm, the process should prove both stimulating and interesting!

Evaluation is based on written evidence of your ability to construct and present a lucid, well-structured, articulate and grounded argument on relevant topics of your choice in two 3,000 to 4,500-word/ten to fifteen-page papers (M.A. level and PhD. levels,

respectively). The precise topic of the papers and the specific due dates will be determined through consultation with the instructor. Format requirements will be made explicit at that time.

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|---------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| <b>First paper</b>  | <b>Approx. 3,000 - 4,500 words</b> | <b>50 %</b> | <b>October, T.B.A</b>  |
| <b>Second paper</b> | <b>Approx. 3,000 - 4,500 words</b> | <b>50%</b>  | <b>December, T.B.A</b> |

How do I grade? I regard the mark of 'B+' (78%) indicative of average work at the graduate level: this is both competent and acceptable. You have completed all of the readings and demonstrated a general understanding of the course material as evidenced in the essays and seminars. An 'A' is reserved for outstanding effort and achievement. Exceptional diligence, a thorough knowledge of course materials and the ability to apply key concepts in an effective, logical and literate fashion are clearly evident. Hard labour and exceptional effort are necessary but not, by themselves, sufficient to warrant an 'A.' An 'A+' (90%+) is rare, but it is awarded on occasion. An outstanding performance in the seminars and written work demonstrating a superb command of English and a critical mind capable of synthesizing complex facts and ideas to arrive at particularly astute conclusions, will earn this prestigious grade.

## CONTENT

Course content is largely student driven by student interests and his/her needs as perceived by the instructor. In keeping with the course title and intent, works will necessarily address key concepts and issues in contemporary cultural geography, but will necessarily be drawn from the larger, interdisciplinary body of work on cultural identities and practices within the social sciences.' Students are encouraged to suggest topics and specific readings as the term progresses.

The topics, authors and readings we cover in much of the course are flexible. Possible topics and/or authors include, but are *not* limited to, the following:

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| - Age                                  | - <i>Nationalism</i>                   |
| - <i>The Body</i>                      | - <i>Nature</i>                        |
| - <i>Class</i>                         | - <i>Political economy</i>             |
| - <i>Consumption</i>                   | - <i>Pop/mass Culture</i>              |
| - <i>Ethnicity</i>                     | - <i>Post-colonialism</i>              |
| - <i>Feminism</i>                      | - <i>Post-modernism</i>                |
| - <i>Gender (feminism/masculinity)</i> | - <i>Racism</i>                        |
| - <i>Hybridity</i>                     | - <i>Sexuality</i>                     |
| - <i>Ideology</i>                      | - <i>Social Justice</i>                |
| - <i>Landscape</i>                     | - <i>Symbolic economy</i>              |
| - <i>Media</i>                         | - <i>Others of your own choice....</i> |
| - <i>Multiculturalism</i>              |  |
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|------------|------------|
| - Chomsky  | - Marx     |
| - Cosgrove | - Mitchell |

- Duncan
- Foucault
- Hall
- Harvey
- Jackson
- Ley
- Rose
- Smith (David M.)
- Valentine
- Young
- **Others of your choice**

Useful journals available on-line and most likely in DB Weldon Periodicals that may assist you in topic and author selection, as well as with your essay assignments, include the following:

- Annals of The American Association of Geographers*
- Annals of Tourism Research*
- Antipode*
- Area*
- The Canadian Geographer*
- Environment & Planning D: Society & Space*
- Geografiska Annaler Series B*
- Geographical Review*
- Gender, Place and Culture*
- Landscape*
- Progress In Human Geography*
- Social & Cultural Geography*
- Theory, Culture & Society*
- Transactions of The Institute of British Geographers*
- Tourist Geographies*

## **MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS**

You can expect me to come prepared for, and attend, all of our seminars regularly and punctually. I will strive to promote a collegial atmosphere of mutual respect conducive to the exchange of ideas and learning. This entails respecting the opinions and questions of others and conducting myself in a courteous manner. I demand the same from you. If we all abide by this code of civility, we set the stage for a healthy, safe, and intellectually stimulating forum.

Finally, if you have problems with any aspect of the course, please come and talk to me during my office hours. I am approachable and I welcome your comments and questions.

**Please Note: Course content and dates may vary due to unforeseen circumstances.**

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## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STUDENTS, STAFF, AND FACULTY FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY**

Affiliation with the Department of Geography presumes mutual respect among students, staff, teaching assistants, and faculty. A positive atmosphere of professionalism and collegiality is essential for everyone to perform to the best of his or her abilities. This requires respect for the opinions and questions of others and behaviour that is, at all times, courteous, and conducive to creating a pleasant and productive environment for learning and working.

As members of a Department of Geography, we are expected to show special respect for our environment, being individually responsible for promoting a clean and safe work environment within the facilities of the Department and the Social Science Centre, including classrooms, laboratories, the Map Library, offices, hallways, washrooms, exterior grounds, and the facilities and vehicles used in field courses and field trips.

It is inevitable that misunderstandings will occur from time to time. However, it is in everyone's interest to try and resolve problems in a non-confrontational manner. Threatening, violent, or abusive behaviour, harassment (including sexual and racial harassment), rudeness (in person, in writing, or on the telephone), and abuse of authority, for whatever reasons, corrode good working and learning conditions.

Incidents that cannot be resolved amicably may be reported to the Chair of the Department (661-3653). The Chair will consider appropriate actions for resolving the problem, usually after consultation with the parties involved. If required, contact with university services (e.g., Police, Equity) or civil authorities will be invoked.

### **Student Use of University Facilities and Classroom Decorum:**

Students are expected to comply with the authority of University staff and faculty on all matters relating to access to facilities (offices, classrooms, laboratories, and Map Library) and to use of equipment and resources.

Students are expected to attend all lectures and laboratory sessions regularly and punctually.

Instructors are responsible for maintaining an appropriate academic atmosphere in all class activities; students are expected to cooperate in this effort.

Actions that impede instruction deter the ability of students to learn, or show disrespect for instructors and fellow students, will not be condoned in Geography classrooms and labs. Such actions include reading during lectures, disturbing consumption of food or drink, use of walkmans and radios, and disruptive conversation. Serious disrespect for classroom decorum should be reported to the instructor and, if required, to the Chair of the Geography Department (SSC 2429, Telephone 661-3653).

Students are expected to adhere to University standards of academic honesty, as outlined under "Scholastic Offences" in the Western Calendar. Unacceptable practices include cheating, impersonation, plagiarism, misrepresentation of research, falsification of documents, obstructing the academic activities of another, aiding or abetting academic misconduct, and abuse of confidentiality. In addition to incurring penalties, as outlined in the Calendar, some academic offences may fall under the Criminal Code of Canada.

*Approved on behalf of Faculty, Staff, and Students by the Council of the Department of Geography on 4 March 1994.*