

**University of Western Ontario**  
**GEOGRAPHY 4000b**  
**The Nature and Philosophy of Geography**

Winter 2017

**Instructor:** Dr. L. Graham Smith  
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**Meetings:** Fridays, 9:30-11:30 am UCC 66

**Calendar Description:**

The discussion of geographical paradigms within an historical and social context. A central concern is the relationship between the academic and professional practice of geography.

**Prerequisite:** Fourth year status, and enrollment in a major or Honors Specialization in the Department of Geography

**Scope:**

The central focus of this course is the question: what makes geography and a geographical education relevant today and on into the future? The central premise within the course is that whereas there is no single answer to the question "what is geography?", it is essential that each geographer have an individual sense of clarity about the nature and philosophy of their discipline.

This course examines the nature and philosophy of geography. Discussions focus on geographical paradigms within an historical and social context. A central concern is the relationship between the academic and professional practice of geography within the present era of globalization and beyond.

**Optional Texts:**

☐ Paul, R. And L. Elder (2006)

*The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking*. Foundation for Critical Thinking:  
CA

- ❑ Weiner, E. (2008)  
*The Geography of Bliss*. Hachette: New York
- ❑ Postrel, V. (1998)  
*The Future and its Enemies: the Growing Conflict Over Creativity, Enterprise and Progress*. The Free Press: New York

### **Topic Outline:**

- ❑ Why geography? Introduction and overview
- ❑ Geography defined: what is your definition of geography?
- ❑ Mapping geography: seeing the discipline and your place in it
- ❑ Excellence in geographic research: how is it determined?
- ❑ Geography's traditional traditions: geography yesterday and today
- ❑ Science, knowledge and wisdom: paradigm shifts, ideology, epistemology, methodology and philosophy
- ❑ Physics or landscape? Process and form in physical geography
- ❑ Critical necessity or unnecessary criticism? the status of human geography
- ❑ Globalized sustainability or sustainable globalization? The status of environmental geography
- ❑ Self-reflection: geography as lifelong learning

### **Structure and Evaluation:**

The educational paradigm adopted in the course is that of inquiry-based learning which uses both problem-based and active learning methods. To facilitate these learning styles, the course adopts a highly interactive structure with a large component of small-group interaction and workshop exercises. Emphasis is placed upon the development of skills (e.g. oral and written presentations, awareness, problem-solving, dispute

resolution, group interaction) as well as the specific content of the subject matter. The course structure is specifically intended to facilitate **independent learning**.

Grading in the course is based on four components:

1. *Defining Geography*
2. *Your Network of Excellence*
3. *Reflective Course Map*
4. *Exam*

### ○ **Assignment 1: Defining geography, 20%:**

#### **Assignment Scope:**

For this assignment you will be asked to define geography. Simply, what is the meaning of geography to you? While the parameters of this assignment are straightforward, the assignment will require you to spend a considerable amount of time questioning what the definition of geography is to you. Submitted in the form of a [Prezi](#), your assignment should include:

- Your definition of geography
- A graphic representation of the discipline and your location within the discipline
  - Consider: How could geography be articulated into a metaphor?
  - Where would the several categories of geography be?
    - What would connect them?
  - Where would you be located, as an undergraduate student?
    - What is your role/place in this discipline?
- A discussion of "the leading edge" of your field (Max. 1000 words)
  - What is at the forefront of research in your field?
    - What is new?
    - What is innovative?
  - This discussion is not an essay, rather, connect your Prezi to the leading edge
    - consider adding this discussion in a frame or series of frames in Prezi
    - what resources might illustrate or support your presentation?

#### **Structure, Due Date and Evaluation:**

- Develop a Prezi at <https://prezi.com>.
- Use a Prezi to answer the questions above and your own questions that will arise

from considering what geography means to you.

- **Length:**
  - This assignment will be made up of a Prezi which addresses the questions above.
  - The “length” of each assignment will vary.
  - The length is not as important as making sure you address the questions fully; it is more important that you explain your ideas than if you make it long.
  - Nevertheless, your discussion of the leading edge does not need to be longer than 1000 words.
- You must publish your Prezi (make it “Public”) before you submit.
- Submit the public URL to OWL. If you forget this step your Prezi will not be able to be viewed by others and not graded.
- **Evaluation:** This assignment is worth 20% of your final course grade.
- **Due: January 27, 2017**

## ○ **Assignment 2: Your network of geographic excellence, 20%:**

### **Assignment Scope:**

This assignment asks you to consider the meaning of excellence. Use your own definition of excellence and then reflect upon your understanding using geography. You will be focusing on one source which best illustrates excellence in geography to you. This source can be an article, a book, or a blog, but you are not limited to the sources mentioned here. You will concentrate on the following elements:

- What criteria do you use to define the meaning of excellence in geographic research?
  - Consider our class discussion of excellence
- Which single article/book/blog from your university exposure constitutes excellence?
  - Why?
- Develop a referral network from your seminal work.
  - What are the characteristics and dominant traits of your network?
  - This referral network summary will consider the implications of contemporary networking.
    - Who is (or is not) referencing this source?
    - Why?

- Is the amount of citations important?
- How does this referral network affect your definition of excellence?
- Is the referral network specific or general, popular or mainstream, well known or relatively unknown?
- Is the scope broad or narrow?
- Consider some of these terms while considering your source.
- Is the network used by your source similar or different to the network itself has created?

### **Structure, Due Date and Evaluation:**

- Length:
  - Your assignment can be in an essay format OR you may also choose to create a Prezi.
  - The essay should be 1000-1500 words. Single spaced or double spaced.
  - The Prezi should be roughly the same length but this word count is just a guideline for the Prezi.
- Submit online to OWL using as a Word file, PDF, or Prezi URL. Just as with Assignment #1, make sure you make your Prezi public before submitting the URL to OWL.
- **Due: Friday, March 3, 2017 on OWL**
- **Evaluation: This assignment is worth 20% of your final course grade.**

### **○ Assignment 3: Reflective Course Map: mapping your meta-cognition, 20%:**

#### **Assignment Scope:**

For this assignment you will be asked to reflect on each of the classes you have attended throughout this course. By using a construct map, you will reflect upon your own metacognition within the course. In other words, this assignment requires you to understand your own thought processes and reflect upon your learning from the course. You will concentrate on the following elements:

- What you have learnt about your chosen discipline?
- What have you learnt about how you learn?
- What have you learnt about your university degree?

This assignment requires you to concentrate on linking the classes you attended and reflect on your learning. Answering: "what I know now that I did not know before", as a consequence of taking this course is imperative in this assignment. For example, has your understanding of geography changed since the first assignment, which asked you to define geography? How? Why? What classes/topics influenced your learning?

### **Structure, Due Date and Evaluation:**

- Create your construct map using the software of your choice. Submit online to OWL as a jpeg or png image or as a PDF file.
- This assignment is worth 20% of your final course grade.
- **Due: Friday, April 7th, 2016 on OWL**

### **○ Final Exam, 40%:**

- Held after the completion of the course, the final exam covers all materials introduced during the term.
- The exam structure focuses on creative thinking and critical awareness developed through the course.
- The exam is closed book. No aids are permitted.
- No electronic devices will be allowed during the examination.
- Provisionally scheduled **April 9-30, 2017**

### **Caveats:**

- The professor reserves the right **not to grade** any material submitted after its due date without his prior approval.
- The course is specifically designed to provoke participants to question, assess and formulate their thinking, beliefs, ideology and/or philosophy: a premium is placed on the development of thought rather than reliance upon pre-existing opinion. However, it is not a requirement of the course that students agree with or subscribe to the beliefs, ideology and/or philosophy of the professor.

### **A statement on Academic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

Students in geography are expected to conduct themselves in a polite and civil manner. Students are reminded of the University Code of Conduct for Students:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

### **Support Services**

- Registrar Services: <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>
- Student Development Services: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

### **UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness:**

- [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf)
- Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf) under the Medical Documentation heading
- Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.
- Students with special accommodation will write make-up tests and examinations administered by the department on Fridays during respective periods of fall and winter terms. To prevent prior disclosure, the format and contents of make-ups may differ substantially from the scheduled test or examination

### **Mental Health**

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at

Western to assist you. Please visit <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for more information on these resources and on mental health.

### **Western's commitment to accessibility**

The University of Western Ontario is committed to achieving barrier free accessibility for persons studying, visiting and working at Western.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.