GGS 689 Seminar in Geographic Thought and Methodology
Fall 2017, Wednesdays, 4:30-7:10 Nguyen Engineering Building 1108
Professor David Wong
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Office Hours: Weds 3-4pm, or by appointment

Course Description: This is a graduate seminar focusing on research in Geography. The primary objective is to provide an overview of current geographic thoughts and research methodologies. The secondary objective is to assist students to develop a research proposal. Primary modes of learning include reading, preparing presentations and leading discussions, in-class discussions and writing assignments-exercises. Materials cover major approaches in contemporary Geography and some common research methodologies for geographical studies. Students should expect to expose to thoughts and methods beyond their comfort zones.

Required Texts:

Additional references:

Grading:
1) 30% Presentation and Leading Discussion
2) 20% Participation
3) 25% 3 summaries (5% each) and 2 exercises (5% each)
4) 25% Research proposal (5-8 pages)

# All submissions should be double-spaced, include page numbers, and use Times New Roman in 12 point font with 1 inch margin for all sides.
1) Each student will be randomly assigned to one chapter in the required texts, an article or a set of articles (identified as A# in the syllabus) on a related topic. In the assigned week for that chapter/article(s), the student should prepare a 20-25 minutes presentation. The presentation should summarize pertinent ideas of that chapter/article(s), critically evaluate the ideas and raise substantive issues in geographical and social research. After the presentation, the student should also lead an open discussion session of approximately 20 minutes (prepare questions and/or statements to guide the discussion). Presentation and discussion will be evaluated according to a set of rubrics to be provided later.
2) Non-presenting students are expected to (1) read the assigned chapter of the week; (2) read the additional material of the week, if available; and (3) participate in class discussion. Students will be evaluated by the instructor and their peers according to their levels of preparation, participation and constructive contributions to the discussion, based on their readings of course material.
3) Part II in GJ includes nine chapters covering issues on data gathering and analysis in nine areas or types of data in geographical research. Author of each chapter also provides exercises at the end of the chapter. Each student should select three chapters. For the first chapter, student should choose a chapter in an area that he/she is very familiar with. The second chapter should be on a topic that the student is somewhat familiar with or barely knows about. The third chapter should be on a topic completely unfamiliar with. (1) Provide a two-page summary for each chapter, including an assessment on and justification of the likelihood that the data or method discussed in the chapter will be or will not be useful in own research. (2) Complete the exercises of any two of the three chosen chapters. Submit all these (3 summaries and 2 exercises) as one document on November 15.

4) Develop a research proposal on a topic of your interest. Present a 75-100 words summary of your research to your fellow classmates and the professor for comments and critique on September 13 (5%). Develop the idea more fully over the semester. Submit the proposal on November 29 (20%). Suggested structure of the proposal will be provided later.

Final Grading Scale: A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), F (69 and Below)

Policies/Student Conduct: As a graduate course, attendance is expected. You are also expected to come to class prepared by critically reading and evaluating the material, and make connections to readings in other weeks. You should be prepared with comments, questions, and/or views of the material. You must use your Mason email account (@gmu.edu) for all course communications. All academic accommodations for documented disabilities must be arranged through the Office of Disability Services (http://ods.gmu.edu/).

All students are required to be familiar with and adhere to the George Mason University Honor Code and the Mason Values of Academic Integrity which can be found in the Office of Academic Integrity or online at (http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/). Failure to abide by the code could result in failure of this course and dismissal from the University.
Course Outline and Readings (Subject to change):

August 30
Introduction to course and semester, TC Ch. 1 Introduction

September 6
Library (Joy Suh -Library resources and how to find journal articles in geography)
TC Ch. 2 Early Geographies
TC Ch. 3 The Emergence of Modern Geography


September 13
Present the 75-100 words research summary in class (submit to Blackboard before class). Be prepared to discuss area or field of your research. What are your academic interests? What is the focus of your study?

September 20
TC Ch. 4 Thinking About Regions
TC Ch. 5 Spatial Science and Quantitative Revolution


September 27
GJ Ch. 2 Theorizing Our World
GJ Ch. 3 Observing Our World

October 4
GJ Ch. 4 Measurement and Interpretation
GJ Ch. 5 Operational Decisions

October 11
GJ Ch. 6 Sampling Our World
GJ Ch. 23 Analyzing Meaning


October 18
TC Ch. 6 Humanistic Geographies
TC Ch. 7 Marxist Geographies


October 25
TC Ch. 8 Feminist Geographies
TC Ch. 9 Postmodernism and Beyond


November 1 – No Class (conference)

November 8
TC Ch. 10 Toward Poststructuralist Geographies
TC Ch. 11 Relational Geographies


November 15
TC Ch. 12 More-than-Human Geographies
TC Ch. 13 Geography’s Exclusions


November 22 – No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

November 29 ? GJ 16-22

December 6
GJ Ch. 24 The Politics and Ethics of Research