**Geography 301 – *Cultural Geography***

**Spring 2014 – Condon 105**

Ryan Burns Lecture: T/R 9:30-11:20

Smith Hall 422 Office hours: T/R 11:30-1:00

rlburns@uw.edu (and by appointment)

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“There’s no such thing as culture…” -Don Mitchell

“[T]he social order is not a social order at all. Rather it is a sociotechnical order. What appears to be social is partly technical. What we usually call technical is partly social. In practice nothing is purely technical. Neither is anything purely social. And the same may be said for the economic, the political, the scientiﬁc, and the rest.” -John Law

# I. Course Description

This course delves into how the idea of "culture" comes to be embedded in everyday geographies, and then shapes lived experiences. We will consider multiple theoretical lenses for looking at the ways in which cultures are constructed, maintained, and contested through space- and place-making processes. Geographers look at "culture" to understand the ways these geographies are used as tools of inclusion or exclusion, as sites for resistance, and sites for power relations. We will look at many perspectives on how this happens and critically examine the effects of these processes. Importantly, we will not take the idea of “culture” for granted, instead critically analyzing the term by asking through what means, and through whom, “culture” emerges and is reiterated.

Technology increasingly plays a major role in the making of cultural geographies, and is a common medium through which spaces and places are experienced. In this course we will consider many conceptual lenses, but ground those lenses in our experiences with spatial technologies. The course will consider "apps," "crowdsourcing," "digital humanitarianism," and "smart cities," among other new ways cultural geographies are produced and encountered in our everyday lives.

There are no formal prerequisites for this course, but students are likely to get more out of it if they come prepared to develop their critical thinking, analytical, and oral/written communication skills.

# II. Learning Objectives

The course is designed to help you develop:

* An understanding of the many different ways in which “culture” is understood and analyzed by geographers;
* The ability to engage with many different theoretical lenses on what constitutes and reproduces “culture”;
* A deeper appreciation of the connections between geographic concepts (e.g., spaces/places, representation, scale, landscape) and cultural construction and contestation;
* Skills for thinking critically about the ways technology and “culture” come to be intertwined.

# III. Format

We will meet each week Tuesday and Thursday for 2 hours (well, 1.83) each day, for a total of just over 3 ½ hours in class each week. Most of this time will be devoted to class discussion. Because of my intended focus on class discussion, please come prepared to discuss the week’s readings interactively. Some of this time will be spent in lecture, but “lecture” in the sense of providing some initial thoughts and summaries for course discussion. **Please note:** Coming prepared for class means spending time outside of the lecture, reading and *reflecting critically* on the readings. ***This process takes time!*** Make sure you allow yourself enough time for this.

# IV. Required Texts

Course readings will be drawn primarily from Don Mitchell’s cultural geography textbook, combined with journal articles and scanned excerpts from geography dictionaries. You should pick up a copy of Mitchell’s *Cultural Geography* from the UW bookstore. Full citations for the required readings are shown at the end of this syllabus, and all non-textbook readings will be available through the Library’s electronic reserves system (<http://eres.lib.washington.edu>). The password for the Geog 301 e-reserves page will be announced in class.

Other (non-required) resources:

Atkinson, D., P. Jackson, D. Sibley, N. Washbourne (eds.), 2005, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts*. New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.

# V. Assignments, Activities, and Grading

Geography 301 Assignments and Weighting

1. Reading summary (40 points)
2. Site visit write-up (x2, 10pts 1st, 30pts 2nd) (40 points)
3. Exam 1 (100 points)
4. Exam 2 (100 points)
5. Class discussion contribution (20 points)
6. Literature review (100 points)

*Total: 400 points*

Final grades for the course will be assigned based upon the following scale:

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| --- | --- |
| **Points** | **Grade** |
| 378 – 400 | 4.0-3.9 |
| 356 – 377 | 3.8-3.5 |
| 342 - 352 | 3.4-3.2 |
| 332 – 341 | 3.1-2.9 |
| 306 – 328 | 2.8-2.5 |
| 292 - 305 | 2.4-2.2 |

|  |  |
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| **Points** | **Grade** |
| 274 – 288 | 2.1-1.9 |
| 260 – 273 | 1.8-1.5 |
| 245 – 256 | 1.4-1.2 |
| 218 – 244 | 1.1-0.9 |
| 200 - 217 | 0.8-0.7 |
| Below 200 | 0.0 |

# VI. IMPORTANT NOTICES

## Prepare yourself to succeed in this class:

Review the syllabus and all assignment instructions carefully. Attend class and participate in discussions regularly. Check your UW email account– this is where I will send any electronic class announcements. When you are confused about course material or expectations – ask questions! Asking questions well in advance of an assignment due date will increase the likelihood that I can help.

## Be responsible class members.

No surprises here: treat one another with respect. When it comes to discussing a concept like “culture,” it’s easy to accidentally say things that may offend others; please be attentive to how others may interpret your arguments, and be respectful. Turn off your cell phone. Listen to each another. Welcome any guests we may have in class. Be a resource for your classmates. Threatening behavior of any kind will be handled according to the University’s Student Conduct Code: http://www.washington.edu/students/handbook/conduct.html. I tend to be stricter with classroom expectations than many of your other instructors: please arrive to class on time, attendance will be taken, and I will not tolerate disruptive or distractive behavior in class.

## Complete assignments and exams on time.

To be fair to your classmates who do their work in a timely fashion, unless a documented medical or personal emergency arises, any work turned in late will be penalized 10% of the total score per day that it is late. That is, 10% for 1 day late, 20% for 2 days, and so on. Extensions on papers or incompletes will not be granted unless exceptional circumstances require it and prior arrangements have been made. Everyone is expected to take the exams during class time on the day they are scheduled. See me in extreme cases of medical or personal difficulties.

## Be honest.

Academic dishonesty, including but not limited to plagiarism, cheating, or submitting academic work that has previously been submitted (without citation or previous permission of instruction) will be penalized. If you have questions about what might constitute a violation of the policy, please see me or review the materials available online at: http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm. Academic dishonesty will be handled according to the University’s Student Conduct Code: http://www.washington.edu/students/handbook/conduct.html. We will have an in-class briefing on how to cite/reference, when to cite/reference, and why to cite/reference.

## Students with special needs

If you know of any factors in your life that may hinder your ability to learn up to your potential in this course, please let me know. If these factors are recognized disabilities under the ADA, please register with Disability Resources for Students (DSR) and bring your letter of accommodation to me as soon as possible so that we develop a plan to accommodate your needs. DSR can be contacted at: 448 Schmitz Hall; Phone: 206-543-8924 (V), 206-543-8925 (V/TTY), 206-616-8379 (FAX); or E-mail: uwdss@u.washington.edu

# VII. Schedule

# *Readings are subject to change at any time! I’ll do my best to notify the class when such changes occur, but the most reliable way of staying up to date is to attend lecures.*

# Topic 1 – April 1 & 3: Course Intro / Cultural Geographies Intro – What is culture?

Reading:

* Mitchell, D: 3-17 (part of Ch 1).
* (Optional) Mitchell, K. 1999. What’s Culture Got to Do with It? *Urban Geography* 20(7): 667-677.

**April 8 & 10 – Site visit**

***No class April 8 & 10; see “Site Visit” instructions***

**Topic 3 – April 15 & 17 – Struggling with and for culture**

***April 15th – first draft of site visit report due***

Key concepts: cultural struggle, landscape

Readings:

* Mitchell, D: 91-119 (Ch 4).
* Brown, M., L. Knopp. 2008. Queering the Map: The Productive Tensions of Colliding Epistemologies. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 98(1): 40-58.
* (Optional) Burns, R. 2014. Moments of Closure in the Knowledge Politics of Digital Humanitarianism. *Geoforum* 53(2): 51-62.

**Topic 4 – April 22 & 24 – The right to the city**

Key concepts: identity and difference, empowerment, the urban

Readings:

* Harvey, D. 2003. The Right to the City. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27(4): 939-41.
* Zukin, S. Whose Culture? Whose City? 77-83.
* Graham, S. 2005. Software-sorted Geographies. *Progress in Human Geography* 29(5): 562-580.

**Topic 5 – April 29 & May 1 – National cultures**

***May 1 – in-class exam (Midterm)***

Key concepts: nation, territory

Readings:

* Mitchell, D: 259-284 (Ch 10).
* Perkins, C., M. Dodge. 2009. Satellite Imagery and the Spectacle of Secret Spaces. *Geoforum* 40(4): 546-560.

**Topic 6 – May 6 & 8 – Race and ethnicity**

***May 8 – second site visit write-up due***

Key concepts: race/ist geographies, inequality

Readings:

* Mitchell, D: 230-258 (Ch 9)
* Crutcher, M., M. Zook. 2009. Placemarks and Waterlines: Racialized Cyberscapes in Post-Katrina Google Earth. *Geoforum* 40(4): 523-534.
* (Optional) Pulido, L. 2000. Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California.

**Topic 7 –May 13 & 15** – **Representation and gender**

Key concepts: representation, gendered spaces

Readings:

* Mitchell, D: 199-229 (Ch 8)
* Smith, M. 2013. Gender and the Geoweb: Divisions in the Production of User-generated Cartographic Information. *GeoJournal* 78: 981-996.
* Chambers, B. 2012. The All-too-familiar Harassment against Feminist Frequency, and What the Gaming Community Can Do about It. *The Mary Sue*. http://www.themarysue.com/the-all-too-familiar-harassment-against-feminist-frequency-and-what-the-gaming-community-can-do-about-it/ (last accessed 20 March 2014). Note: feel free to follow any of the links provided here, as some of them are quite good; but use your discretion, as some contain graphic images.
* (Optional) MacMillan, D. 2012. The Rise of the “Brogrammer.” *Bloomberg Businessweek Technology*. http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-03-01/the-rise-of-the-brogrammer (last accessed 8 August 2013).

**Topic 8 –** **May 20 & 22** – **Gender (pt. 2) and sexuality**

***Guest lecture by Stefano Bettani on May 20!***

Key concepts: sexuality, spaces of/for desire

Readings:

* Mitchell, D: 171-198 (Ch 7)
* Mazièresad, Antoine, M. Trachmanb, J.-P. Cointeta, B. Coulmontc, C. Prieurd. 2014. Deep Tags: Toward a Quantitative Analysis of Online Pornography. *Porn Studies* 1(1-2): 80-95.
* (Optional) Craine, J., and S. Aitken. 2004. Street Fighting: Placing the Crisis of Masculinity in David Fincher’s Fight Club. *GeoJournal* 59:289–296.

**Topic 9 –** **May 27 & 29** – **Class and political economy of culture**

Key concepts: political economy, production/consumption

Readings:

* Mitchell, D: 66-88.
* Streeck, Wolfgang. 2012. Citizens as Customers: Considerations on the New Politics of Consumption. *New Left Review* 76: 27-47.

**Topic 10 –** **June 3 & 5** – **Bringing it all in together**

***Literature review due by June 5th, 5:00 pm***

Key concepts: intersectionality

Readings:

* Mitchell, D: 287-294
* McDowell, L. 2008. Thinking through Work: Complex Inequalities, Constructions of Difference and Trans-national Migrants. *Progress in Human Geography* 32(4): 491-507.
* (Optional) Valentine, G. 2007. Theorizing and Researching Intersectionality: A Challenge for Feminist Geography. *The Professional Geographer* 59 (1):10–21.

**June 7-13 – Final exam**

***Exam 2 – take-home exam made available online***