Research Proseminar

Spring, 2002
16:450:603:01 (index 69539)
Wednesdays, 1:10-4:10 PM, LSH B-120, Livingston Campus
Elvin Wyly
Assistant Professor
Department of Geography and Center for Urban Policy Research
B-244 Lucy Stone Hall
Office hours: Wednesdays, 8:00-11:00 AM, and by appointment
Phone 445 4861, email wyly@rci.rutgers.edu

Texts

All available at Livingston College Bookstore


Additional readings will be available in class.

Evaluation

The course grade is based on evaluation of three separate aspects of performance: seminar participation, assignments, and a final proposal. These three facets are weighted equally. Incomplete grades will not be assigned, except in cases of genuine emergency. Course requirements are course requirements: assignments must be submitted on time and according to specifications.

Course Objectives

This seminar is designed to introduce first-year graduate students to the production of geographical knowledge. It’s a puzzling phrase, and I use it deliberately to draw attention to the variety of tasks we will undertake in the course. Among those of us who embark on advanced study in geography, there is a wide range of personal and professional goals, areas of interest and specialization, and methodological preference and expertise. Moreover, each of us is at a different point on our professional trajectory -- and the direction...

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1 This text is out of stock at Oxford University Press until January 27, 2002. The volume will probably not be available at the bookstore until mid-February.
of our path in the future is never entirely predictable. A few of us will apply our geography education as members of the professoriate; others will contribute to public service as scientists in international organizations, or Federal, state, or local government; others will find greater reward (and greater risk) as freelancers, Enron executives, neo-imperial explorers, dot-com venture capitalists, or geo-spatial target marketing gurus. Some geographers manage to follow several of these paths, and a few manage them at the same time. But we all share a set of foundational principles and practices by which we create and share new geographical knowledge. In this course, we engage the geographical tradition by doing three things: developing a research agenda and a detailed proposal in our chosen area of specialization; analyzing selected methodological and theoretical debates that shape contemporary geographical inquiry; and understanding the social and institutional dynamics of becoming a professional geographer in an evolving societal and academic context.

**Deliverables**

Seven assignments are required, each of which will be assembled into a final research proposal. Each of these assignments is designed to provide experience in developing separate components of proposals, while also allowing flexibility and autonomy in the selection of a research topic to advance a particular line of inquiry in the scholarly literature.

Do not succumb to stress or panic. I understand that some of you may not be settled on a research topic, and that this may be your first time preparing a formal proposal. That's fine. If you're not sure what to do, use this as an opportunity to describe one option for your research path; you can always change it later, or simply set it aside and write another. The key point is to learn how to design a research agenda that contributes to the production of geographical knowledge. The only way to learn how to write proposals is to write proposals.

A central principle of our work in this seminar involves peer review. On several of your submissions, you will receive formal, written feedback from your peers; I will serve as an editor and moderator, adjudicating and synthesizing different comments and suggestions. Copies of every one of your submissions must be circulated to all participants in the seminar. Timing, not the medium, is the message. I would prefer that you bring low-tech, simple copies on the day of our seminar meeting, but you may also distribute submissions by email, snail mail, carrier pigeon, slingshot, or any other medium. What matters is that you distribute materials on time, and in a way that makes it easy for your reviewers to do their tasks. An imperfect or incomplete submission is better than no submission at all; if you aim for perfection before sharing your work with colleagues, you will not get any useful feedback (by that time, either you've achieved perfection [meaningless in most understandings of the culture of science] or you're too emotionally committed or tired to accept constructive criticism).

All materials should be prepared in a consistent format, typed double-spaced with a 12-point font and 1-inch margins all around. If you circulate your submissions by email, save your file in alternative formats (e.g., *.rtf) to facilitate cross-platform compatibility.

**Schedule and Readings**

January 23. **Introduction.** Course purposes, core principles, scope, and expectations.


**Distribute “The Problem Problem.”**

January 30. **Writing.**


**“The Problem Problem” due.**

**Distribute guidelines for Problem Statement.**


**Problem Statement due.**

February 13. **Peer Review.** Principles of scholarly peer review. How proposals are reviewed by funding agencies. How articles and books are reviewed and judged for publication.


**Peer review of Problem Statement due.**

**Distribute guidelines for Preliminary Bibliography.**

February 20. **Research Ethics.** Guest presentation by Brenda Ruotolo, Sponsored Programs Administrator, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.


**Preliminary Bibliography due.**

**Distribute guidelines for preliminary research design.**

February 27. **Money.** Guest presentation by Teresa M. Delcorso, Program Development Specialist, FAS Dean’s Office.


**Annotated Bibliography due.**

March 6. **Thinking Like a Geographer.** A short, painless introduction to methodological pluralism in geography. Pervasive (and problematic) methodological dualities.


**Peer review of Annotated Bibliography due.**  
**Preliminary Research Design Due.**

March 13. **Ethnographic Research Methods:** “Queer/ed Ethnographies and Multi-Sighted Informants.” Guest presentation by Jasbir Puar, Department of Women’s and Gender Studies/Department of Geography.


**Peer review of Preliminary Research Design due.**  
**Distribute guidelines for Literature Review.**

[March 20. Spring Break.]

March 27. **Quantitative Methods.** Recent trends in quantitative geographical analysis. Dualisms of quantitative/qualitative and physical/human geography.


**Literature Review due.**

**Distribute guidelines for Methodology Statement.**

April 3. **Research Methods in Climatology.** Guest presentation by David A. Robinson, Chair, Department of Geography.

Readings to be announced.

April 10. **Mapping your Progress.** Taking stock, evaluating accomplishments, barriers, and alternative paths.


**Peer review of Literature Review due.**

**Methodology Statement due.**

April 17. **Geography in the Academy.** Scholarly principles of academic freedom and tenure. Institutional change. Career Trajectories.


*Peer review of Methodology Statement due. Distribute guidelines for Research Presentation.*


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**Wednesday, May 15: Final Proposal due.**