

**Geography 801**  
**Scope and Method in Geography**  
**Fall 2007**

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**HSS 279 415/338-1439**  
**Hrs: MTu 1-2, Tu 6-7, W 2-3 or by appt**

This seminar serves as an introduction to graduate study in geography. Nature and historical development of our field; scope and method of contemporary American geography (themes, concepts, methods, models and problems); professional and scholarly ethics; grad program logistics; strategies for successful completion of Masters work.

**Readings:** Irene L. Clark, *Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertaton* (2007)  
 Numerous articles accessible as .pdf files via the iLearn Course Page.

**Grading:** 100 points scale based on attendance (15), online and in-class contributions (10), short assignments (45), and lit review/theoretical framework (30.)

**Class format:** Seminar discussion, presentations, online exchange.

- **Discussants** read of the week's assigned materials well in advance. They synthesize the readings and draw out major issues/controversies. (This may necessitate background research/reading.) They prepare a 500-word discussion providing critical insight into the main ideas presented, comparing and contrasting them with other ideas, and identifying questions and insights useful in framing class discussion, and **post it on iLearn by noon on the prior Saturday**. They guide the seminar discussion, ensuring we address all discussion points and that everyone contributes.
- **Respondents** (half of the remaining participants each week) write a **thoughtful 250-word response** to the posted discussions, identifying additional discussion points, and **post it on iLearn by 6 pm Monday**.
- **Everyone** completes all reading assignments, reads discussants' and respondents' postings in advance, and comes to class prepared to participate in thoughtful discussion.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Topic, Readings &amp; Presentations</b>	<b>Due</b>
Aug 28	<b>Introductions and planning; Geography's Traditions</b>	
Sept 4	<b><u>A Field of Study called Geography</u></b> <b>William L. Pattison</b> , "The Four Traditions of Geography" <b>Susan Cutter et al.</b> , "The Big Questions in Geography" <b>Clark</b> , Chapters 1-3	<b>Journal Annotation due</b> (journal presentations)
Sept 11	<b><u>Defining and Tackling a Question</u></b> <b>SFSU Geography theses:</b> Read two of your choice <b>Clark</b> , Chapters 4-6 <b>Paul N. Edwards</b> , How to Give an Academic Talk	<b>Anatomy of a Thesis due</b> (discussion)
Sept 18	<b><u>Identity</u></b> <b>Cindi Katz</b> , "Social Formations: Thinking about Society, Identity, Power and resistance" (KCIG) <b>Sarah A. Radcliffe</b> , "Latin American Indigenous Geographies of Fear" <b>Bernard Nietschmann</b> , "The Nietschmann Syllabus: A Vision of the Field" <b>Clark</b> , Chapters 7-10	<b>Spotlight on a BIG Idea due</b> (presentations begin)  Guest: Suzanne Holguin re: Human Subjects Protocol Approvals
Sept 25	<b><u>Scale</u></b> <b>Tim Burt</b> , "Scale: Upscaling and downscaling in physical Geography" (KCIG) <b>David W. Smith</b> , Urban Food Systems and the Poor in Developing Countries	(Big Idea presentations continue)

Oct 2	<b><u>Place</u></b> Noel Castree, “Place: Connections and Boundaries in an Interdependent World” (KCIG) Jennifer Wolch, “Green Urban Worlds”	(Big Idea presentations continue)
Oct 9	<b><u>Models, Systems and Cycles</u></b> Barbara A. Kennedy, “Physical systems: environmental systems and cycles” (KCIG) John Thornes & Glen McGregor, “Cultural Climatology” (CMPG)	(Big Idea presentations continue)
Oct 16	<b><u>Hazards and Vulnerability</u></b> Jayajit Chakraborty & Marc P. Armstrong, “Assessing the Impact of Airborne Toxic Releases...” Susan Craddock, “Disease, Social Identity and Risk....” Mark Monmonier, “Floodplains, by Definition”	<b>Professional Cameo due</b> (presentations begin)
Oct 23	<b><u>Collaborative Evening: Vetting Proposals</u></b>	<b>Lit Review Proposal due</b> (Cameo presentations continue)
Oct 30	<b><u>Restoration</u></b> Will Graf, “Damage Control: Restoring the Physical Integrity of America’s Rivers,” B.L. Zimmerman & R.O. Bierregaard, “Relevance of the Equilibrium Theory of Biogeography...to Conservation”	(Cameo presentations continue)
Nov 6	<b><u>Meaning: An Evening with SFSU Geography Faculty</u></b>	
Nov 13	<b>Final Presentations</b>	
Nov 20	<b><i>Thanksgiving Break</i></b>	
Nov 27	<b>Final presentations</b>	<b>Draft LitReview due to classmates</b>
Dec 4	<b>Final presentations</b>	<b>Email comments due in return</b>
Dec 11	<b>Final presentations</b>	<b>Lit Review/Framework paper due</b>
Dec 18	<b>Concluding dinner</b>	

**Note on Authorship and Scholarly Ethics:** In accordance with University policy, *all written work you submit must be your own*. Any part/aspect of your written work that represents previous work or thought by others must be *explicitly acknowledged* in an *appropriate citation*. Paraphrase rather than quoting in full, wherever possible; even sources of paraphrased ideas need to be cited.

I prefer in-text citations with references listed in full bibliographic format at the end of the paper. I recommend following using format guidelines established by *The Professional Geographer*, available by following the link on my website. If you’re ever unsure when/whether/how to cite a source, please ask.

**Journal Annotation: due September 4 (1 page, copies for all; 5 points)**

Select one of the following journals and review (in the library or online):

*Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography*  
*Applied Geography*  
*Association of American Geographers Annals*  
*Cartography & Geographic Info. Science*  
*Earth Surface Processes & Landforms*  
*Economic Geography*  
*Environment & Planning*  
*Environmental Management*  
*Geographical Journal*  
*Geographical Review*  
*Geography*  
*Geomorphology*

*Internatl Journal of Remote Sensing*  
*Journal of Climate*  
*Journal of Biogeography*  
*Journal of Geography*  
*Journal of Historical Geography*  
*Journal of Latin American Geography*  
*Journal of Political Ecology*  
*Photogrammetric Engineering & Rem. Sensing*  
*Political Geography*  
*(The) Professional Geographer*  
*Progress in Human Geography*  
*Progress in Physical Geography*  
*Urban Geography*

**Examine multiple issues and prepare a 5-minute talk conveying the following information:**

- Publisher, frequency of publication, intended audience
- Mission/primary purpose of the journal
- Types of articles included: a few typical/illustrative titles
- Thematic, systematic or regional focus
- What the world is like, as seen through this journal

**Anatomy of a Thesis: due September 11 (about 2 pages; 10 points)**

Select two Masters Thesis in Geography from the J. Paul Leonard Library, catalogued under SFSU: Department of Geography as Author.

Look through them thoughtfully, read the introductions & conclusions and scan the rest.

Examine maps, tables and illustrations.

In a succinct review of each thesis, address the following questions:

- What was the title (and why was this chosen?)
- Which faculty members served on the committee; rationale?
- What did the student set out to accomplish? (Was there a central question/a problem statement?)
- What methods did the student use in research and analysis?
- Do you believe s/he successfully accomplished the goals of the study? Why/why not?
- What are the component parts of this thesis?
- What role did maps & tables play in the study?
- How did the writers handle citations for text and graphics?
- What do you feel were the strengths and weaknesses of this thesis, and why?
- How has this exercise affected your perception of the thesis effort?
- What would Irene Clark (author of *Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation*) have to say about this thesis?
- What would you want to ask the author of this thesis?

**Spotlight on a Big Idea: due September 18 (Reference list, handout copies for all; 15 points)**

Select a Big Idea like those on the list below, with my advance approval.  
Develop a “spotlight presentation” explaining the Big Idea succinctly to your classmates.  
Use visuals/graphics in a 10-minute presentation; strive for simplicity and clarity.

- Define this Big Idea.
  - Where and when did it originate?
  - Whose names are associated with it?
  - How and when did it come into Geography?
- How does it influence the scope and method of geographic research?
- Is it especially utilized in a particular subfield/research area?
- What are the key terms/concepts associated with this Big Idea? Please illustrate appropriately with words or graphic images.
- What especially intrigued you about this Big Idea?
- What should the rest of us remember about it?

**Central Place Theory**  
**Dependency Theory**  
**Dependency Theory**  
**Dynamic Equilibrium**  
**Fordism/PostFordism**

**Humanistic Geography**  
**Island Biogeography**  
**Logical Positivism**  
**Modernism/Postmodernism**  
**Neocolonialism**

**Queer Theory**  
**Spatial Autocorrelation**  
**Structuralism/Postructuralism**  
**Time-Space Compression**

**Professional Cameo: due October 16 (4-5 pages, handouts for all; 15 points)**

Select a geographer and secure my approval. (It’s extremely helpful if your geographer is either very well-published or quite dead.) Trace the evolution of this geographer's **ideas** as evidenced by publications, employment and memberships. Assess her/his **salient contribution(s) to the field**.

- Your paper should be in active (not passive) voice; it should convey an interesting narrative, not just a litany of dates and accomplishments.
- Include an **abstract** and a **reference list** that includes all sources cited.
- Prepare a **handout** including the geographer’s name and life-dates, a brief passage that conveys the tone/nature of his/her work, a selected bibliography of important works, and a photo/image (if available.)
- Prepare a 10-minute presentation conveying this geographer’s importance and contributions.

**Note:** Like all remaining assignments for this class, your Profile must be **fully referenced**. You may use any consistent citation and referencing format (with documentation); unless you have a preferred alternative, I recommend using the Professional Geographer stylesheet, accessible from my website at <http://bss.sfsu.edu/wilkinson/>

## **Literature Review/Development of Theoretical Framework: due Dec 11 (12-15 pages, 24+6 points)**

This assignment is a head start on thesis research, because when you've done one lit review the next will be much easier. In contrast to your thesis, however, this assignment requires you to **focus on work by geographers** and scholars published in geographical journals.

The purpose of this assignment is to explore how literature relating to your interests has been developed within geography, how this evolution of scholarly research has shaped the kinds of questions geographers ask and the way they ask and attempt to answer these questions.

**The assignment:** explore the development of geographic inquiry on a on a question, concept, process or issue of your choice, with my advance approval.

- What are the key works? Who are the key individuals and what did each contribute to this literature?
- How were their studies carried out (question, location, scope, method?) Has work involved controversies or competing models/approaches? What direction(s) does contemporary research seem to be heading?
- What theoretical framework(s) are most commonly utilized in these studies? (A theoretical framework is the way scholars frame and approach a research topic. It defines what questions are asked, the objectives and methodology. It is an especially critical part of a social science thesis. For example, in researching natural hazards, a **political ecologist** would focus on an assessment of **vulnerability**, examining livelihoods and identifying what categories of people are most vulnerable to hazards (or a particular hazard) and what makes them vulnerable (or not). A **feminist political ecologist** would further assume that gender is a critical variable in the assessment of vulnerability. Note here that the theoretical framework would be a discussion that would apply to all disasters; the lit review itself might focus on geographers' investigations of flood hazards.
- Develop a **succinct research proposal** for a thesis-scale project:
  - Identifying the theoretical framework that will guide your work
  - Review the relevant geographic literature.
  - Identify a research question and hypothesis arising from the literature and your observations.
  - Propose methods for data collection and analysis.
  - Include in-text citations of all sources; confirm that full citations of all referenced works appear in your bibliography.

### **Steps:**

- **Proposal due by/before October 23.** Include a working title, a statement indicating why you believe this **question, concept, process, issue or model** is worth investigating, a candid assessment of your interest and preparation to handle this subject, and a preliminary bibliography including relevant works by at least three scholars published in geographical journals (2 points)
- **Good-quality draft due to two classmates for review by/before November 27.** (2 points)
- **Thoughtful critical response due to classmates by/before December 4.** Use the rubric posted on iLearn, and provide narrative comments and edits. *Cc: me to get credit!* (2 points)