

G309, Frontiers in Geography

Owen Dwyer, PhD

Department of Geography, IUPUI

Monday 2:30 - 5:15pm

Class meeting: Cavanaugh 203

Office: Cavanaugh 213c

Office hours: 1-2pm Tuesday and Thursday as well as by appointment

Phone: 274-8808

The best way to contact me is via the course mail function of Oncourse

Course Readings

The course reading packet will be available from me or it can be photocopied from originals on file with the department secretary. Purchased from me, the course packet will cost between \$15-\$20. Payment will be due near the end of the semester. Please, no cash; checks only. Make payable to Indiana University. In addition to the reading packet there is a required course handbook, Joe Schall's "Style for Students: A Manual for the Sciences and Engineering," McGraw Hill (1993). Finally, there is an optional textbook for those of you who can't get enough of this stuff: Arild Holt-Jensen's "Geography: History and Concepts. A Student's Guide" (3e), Sage Publishing (1999).

Course description

Geography 309, "Frontiers in Geographic Thought" is a three-credit course. Generally, the course is about geographic concepts. It is also a course in reading and writing in a geographically informed manner. As you may recall, the word "geography" is derived from the Greek "geo", meaning earth, and "graphos" meaning description or depiction. Thus, geography is the art and science of earth writing or drawing. In this course the focus is on earth writing (the "drawing" aspect, not to be neglected, is emphasized in the department's course offerings in cartography, visualization, and geographic information science).

The rationale for this emphasis on written communication is quite simple: effective reading and writing are fundamental elements of professional success. They are the basic skills you will rely upon in the future, no matter if you work in government, business, or education. Unfortunately, they also happen to be terribly difficult skills to develop. So, alongside the primary goal of acquiring geographic knowledge, you are embarking upon a course that will develop your reading and writing skills.

Importantly, the course emphasizes several principles of undergraduate learning, namely, the acquisition of core communication skills; critical thinking faculties; and intellectual depth in an academic discipline.

Communication skills are fostered via the written expression of geographic concepts as well as an emphasis upon careful reading and public speaking.

In-class debates and essays develop critical thinking skills by asking students to analyze geography's multiple research approaches and methodologies.

Finally, the course readings encourage an appreciation of the intellectual depth of geography by focusing on the field's history and philosophy.

During class

In general, G309 is a class wherein students are asked to do a lot of the thinking and talking. That said, I typically add my \$.02 worth. Some weeks we'll have an in-class debate. Other weeks we'll have a writing workshop -- more-or-less a discussion about the essays you've written. No matter what, I expect you to come to class prepared to think. Class participation is graded ... I'll let you know how, soon.

The price of admission and peer feedback

Before class you should check Oncourse for announcements and course mail -- occasionally the reading assignment will be shortened or changed. On the week we have a debate, there will be a "price of admission." This is a written exercise that asks you to demonstrate your mastery of the assigned readings before we debate them. I'll post the price of admission for each week at the Oncourse schedule as an attachment.

On the week we have a writing workshop, you are responsible for reviewing and completing a "peer feedback" assessment of a colleague's essay. Again, the guidelines for this peer feedback will be posted in the course schedule as an attachment.

Either a price of admission or a peer feedback form is due in my Oncourse mailbox before the beginning each class session, save our first meeting. There are seven price of admission assignments and each is worth four points, making up 24 percent of your grade. There are five peer feedback assignments and each is worth four points, making up 17 percent of your grade. Late assignments will be accepted but will be penalized a point.

In-class debates

Five in-class debates are scheduled. Your participation in each in-class debate is worth four points, for a total of 17 percent of your final grade. Check the schedule for the relevant dates and topics.

Post-debate essays

The post-debate essays will account for 17% of your grade. There will be a total of five essays, each of which is based on one of the five debates. Each essay is worth four points. Check the schedule for essay due dates.

The essays will be due approximately 72 hours after the in-class debate. The idea is that after completing the readings, the price of admission, and the in-class debate, your essay will be the opportunity to express yourself and show your command of the subject. Typically, essays end on the third of three, double-spaced, 12-point font, pages. The essays should be sent to my Oncourse mailbox as an attachment. Late essays will be accepted but they will be penalized one point.

You can use your notes and readings on these essays. You may not, however, give or receive aid on your essays. Doing so constitutes an instance of cheating. There is, however, one exception. You may visit the Writing Center and meet with a consultant to discuss your essay. This is hunky-dooory since the WC consultants typically don't know much about geography. They are there to help you write a coherent essay ... and that's what I want. I urge you to schedule your WC sessions now. You can reach the WC at the website below or at 274-2049 or stop by their office at Cavanaugh 427 to schedule a half-hour session.

Writing workshops

Five writing workshops will account for 17% of your grade. Your participation in each is worth four points. These workshops will be conducted in class. Writing workshops will be held the week after our in-class debates. Whereas the debates will focus on the content of our readings, the writing workshops will focus on your ability to express yourself.

Final examination

A final examination will worth eight points and account for 7% of your total grade. The format for the final exam is oral. I'll meet with each student at an agreed upon time. We'll discuss the course readings and I'll ask you to answer a series of questions. Each exam will last roughly thirty minutes and be scheduled during final exam week.

Rights and responsibilities

For my part, I will begin and end class on time. I will return all graded material to you by the following class period. I will be available for consultation during my scheduled office hours. If the scheduled times are inconvenient for you, make arrangements with me to meet at another time. Your grade in this course will be based upon the work you do. Information concerning your grade will be kept confidential.

Your responsibilities include the following. If you celebrate a religious holiday that is not recognized by the university and you will be missing class as a result, you must notify me in writing at the beginning of the semester. If you cannot attend class, it is your responsibility to get copies of the notes from one of your colleagues. My notes will not be available.

I will not tolerate cheating on the part of the small number of students who, for whatever reasons, choose to do so. The work you submit for grading must be your own. You may not give or receive aid on class assignments. Plagiarism or other forms of cheating will result in a failing grade for the course and a report being filed with the Dean of Students. You are referred to the IUPUI Student Code for further information.