GEOGRAPHY 801

Seminar in Geographic Thought and Methods

Fall Semester, 2012                      Dr. R.W. Widdis (randy.widdis@uregina.ca)
Office:                                 CL 325.2
Tel:                                     585-4242
Office Times:                           T, R  3:00-4:30 p.m.

Class Times:   T R 10:00-11:15 a.m.

Marks:

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<td>Essay</td>
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<td>Seminar Presentation</td>
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<td>Class Discussion</td>
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Preamble: This is a lecture and seminar course that examines a number of different approaches to and debates within the study of geography. The emphasis will be on understanding these approaches and debates not simply as the result of methodological developments but rather as the product of philosophical reflections that transcend the artificial and historically specific confines of any one discipline.

Topics:

1. “Deconstructing” Science
   - science and scientific explanation (mechanistic outlook, definitions, facets of scientific enquiry)
   - the relation of sensory to cognitive experience (handling “what is out there”, protocol data and construct fields, necessity/causation, the role of theory, the three domains)
   - the testing of theory: construction of paradigms (induction and deduction, Hempel’s deductive-nomological model, Hempel’s inductive-probabilistic model, verification, Popper and falsification, Kuhn’s distinction between “normal” science and scientific “revolutions”, paradigm shift)

Required readings:


2. Description and Positivism
   - three features of traditional descriptive regional approach (inductivism, uniqueness, ambiguity towards time)
   - classical and logical positivism (five claims of classical positivism, logical positivism’s distinction between analytic and synthetic statements, five criticisms of positivism, five positivist counter-arguments)
- evolution of positivism in geography (Kurt Schaefer, limited generalizations in human geography, quantitative revolution, the position of theory)
- the behavioural backlash (behavioural geography, Kirk’s behavioural and phenomenal environments, criticisms directed towards positivist spatial models, various kinds of process-oriented geography)
- the movement away from positivism

3. Humanism
- definitions (humanism and humanistic, ontology)
- beginnings in geography (Humanistic Geography, 1978)
- existentialism (Sartre)
- phenomenology (Husserl)
- examples in geography
- conclusions

Required readings:

4. Structuralism, Marxism and Realism
- origins (post-war French philosophy, Levi-Strauss, Piaget)
- Marxism (historical materialism, mode of production, class cleavages, goals, dialectic, criticisms, applications in geography)
- structuration theory (Giddens, applications in geography)
- critical realism (Bhaskar, applications)
- criticisms and conclusions

Required readings:

5. Student-Led Class Discussions

6. Some Trends, Debates, Issues and Questions in Physical Geography

a) Major Trends in Contemporary Physical Geography
b) How has Physical Geography Evolved During the Last Century?
c) The Role of Theory and Philosophy in Physical Geography
d) Concepts of Time and Space in Physical Geography

Required readings:

7. Some Debates, Issues and Questions in Human Geography

a) Post-Whatever Geography (postmodernism and post-structuralism)
b) Feminist Geography/Geography and Gender
c) Rethinking Regions and the Local/Global Dichotomy

Required readings:

8. The Quest for Unity in Geography
Look at the different ways that geographers have tried, and at times failed, to facilitate a dialogue between different ways of approaching nature and culture.

Required readings:

9. Geography and GIS

Required readings:

10. Research Examples (based on the work of various faculty members)

11. Student Seminars

N.B. Take-home exams are due Monday December 10th