GEOGRAPHY 318: Explanation in Geography
Tuesdays 2.50-5.50pm

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Office hours: Tues. noon-2.00pm, Thurs. noon -2.00pm, and by appointment

Course Prospectus Spring 2010

Geography 318 addresses ontological and epistemological aspects of explanation in geography. We examine explanation from the standpoint of various philosophies of science, reviewing dominant explanatory forms, as well as alternatives, such as those from the positions of positivism, phenomenology, structuralism, realism, Marxism, postmodernism and feminism. We also try to improve basic graduate skills of writing, editing, oral presentation, argument. Geography 318 is one of the core classes in the Geography graduate program. You are expected to participate fully (including speaking frequently, clearly, coherently and audibly during discussion), do all the reading, and present effectively, coherently and precisely.

Requirements: 1 short essay; one longer essay at the end of the semester; you will lead several class discussions; you will give a lecture. You will be graded on all these requirements. Discussions with numbers (eg 3A) are led by members of the class.

Readings with name of “Theorist” are from Key Thinkers on Space and Place ed Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin and Gill Valentine. All readings that are not in Peet MGT are on Cicada.

January 19 – Session 1. Introduction: What is Geography, What is Theory?

General introduction to the course. Definitions of “Geography.” Definition of “Theory”

Reading: MGT Ch. 1, pp. 1-11.

January 26 – Session 2. History of Geographical Thought

Reading: MGT Ch 1, pp 11-33.

February 2 – Session 3. Positivist Explanation, Scientific Method and Post-Positivist Critique

Introduction to positivism and logical positivism, post-positivist criticisms

Readings:
Re-read MGT, ch. 1, pp. 19-31
R.J. Johnston Philosophy and Human Geography London: Edward Arnold pp. 11-51.
Discussion 3A What is Positivism? What are the main criticisms of positivism?
(Note: A member of class is assigned this set of readings on which to lead a discussion.
(You all should do all the readings, but the discussion leader reads them in detail).
**Discussion leader:** Do not try to lead discussions on each reading separately.
Present the general themes emerging from all the readings put together. Pick out
2-3 leading themes. Lead discussions on these leading themes. Everyone else
should come to class with at least one idea they want to discuss.
(A) R. Keat and John Urry 1982 “Positivist philosophy of science” pp. 9-26 in *Social
Theory as Science* Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston
(A) D. Gregory *Dictionary of Human Geography* “Positivism.”
(A) A. Giddens, “Positivism and its Critics” in T. Bottomore and R. Nisbet, *A History
of Sociological Analysis* pp. 237-86.
(A) David Harvey, *Explanation in Geography* Chapters 3-6 pp. 27-83.
(A) “Brian Berry” “Waldo Tobler” in *Key Thinkers*

Discussion 3B “The Paradigm Concept in Geography
(B) R. J. Johnson, “Paradigms and Revolution or Evolution?” in Agnew et. al., pp. 37-53.
(B) A. Mair, “Thomas Kuhn and Understanding Geography” *Progress in Human
(B) D. Stoddart, “The Paradigm Concept and the History of Geography” in Stoddart,
*Geography Ideology and Social Concept* pp. 70-80.

February 9 – Session 4 Existentialism, Phenomenology and Existential Phenomenology
Readings:
MGT, pp. 34-47
(A) R. Waterhouse, *A Heidegger Critique* pp. 3-111
(A) M. Heidegger, *Being and Time* pp. 1-12
**Discussion 4A “Heidegger and Existential Phenomenology”**

(B) J. Pickles, *Phenomenology, Science and Geography* pp. 1-38, 89-137
**Discussion 4B “Phenomenological Geography”**

February 16 – Session 5 Humanistic Geography
Readings:
MGT, pp. 47-66
(A) Leonard Guelke, “Problems of Scientific Explanation in Geography” *The Canadian
**Discussion 5A “The Phenomenological/Idealist Critique of Scientific Geography”**

(B) Edward Relph, *The Phenomenological Foundations of Geography* Department of
(B) Edward Relph, Place and Placelessness - Everyone Read Ch. 3 (“The Essence of Place”) and Discussion leader read entire book

**Discussion 5B “The Phenomenology of Place”**

(C) Y. Fu Tuan, “Space & Place” excerpt in Agnew pp. 444-57
(C) John Pickles, Phenomenology, Science and Geography pp. 154-170 “Towards an Understanding of Human Spatiality”

**Discussion 5C “Lifeworld, Space and Place**

**February 16:** First essay question set: “What is “Theory”? Compare the positivist and phenomenological notions of “explanation”. What direction did each take geographical thought and research? Which do you find more theoretically productive? Why?

No more than 10 pp. double-spaced 12pt due by **February 23**.

**February 23 and March 2 Sessions 6 and 7 Explanation as Ideology: Marxism, Structuralism, Structural Marxism**

Readings:
Peet, Ch. 3, pp. 67-92; Ch. 4 pp. 112-133; R Peet, Geography of Power Ch 1, pp 1-27
Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach” in K. Marx et. al. On Historical Materialism pp. 11-13

(A) Martin Seliger *The Marxist Conception of Ideology: A Critical Essay* 1977 Ch. 2 pp. 23-45
(A) Carl Boggs, “Ideological Hegemony and Class Struggle” in *Gramsci’s Marxism* pp. 36-54

**Discussion 6A “Ideology and the Critique of Science”**

(B) Paul Ricoeur, “Althusser’s Theory of Ideology” in G. Elliot *Althusser: A Critical Reader* pp. 44-72
(A) “Manuel Castells” in Key Thinkers

**Discussion 6B “The Althusserian Conception of Ideology”**

(C) David Harvey “Population, Resources and the Ideology of Science” *Economic Geography* 50 (1974) pp. 256-277
(C) R. Peet “The Development of Radical Geography in the United States” in Radical Geography.

(C) “Mike Davis” “David Harvey” “Neil Smith” “Edward Soja” “Michael Watts” in Key Thinkers

Discussion 7A “Radical Geography”

(D) Henri Lefebvre, “Plan of the Present Work” in H. Lefebvre, The Production of Space pp. 1-67

“Henri Lefebvre”

Discussion 7B “Lefebvre and the Production of Space”

March 9 No Class, Mid-Semester Break (Prepare 10-minute lecture for March 30)

March 16 Session 8 Realism, Critical Realism, Structuration, Locality Studies

Readings:
MGT, Ch. 4, pp. 147 – 193

(A) Andrew Sayer 1984 Method in Social Science Hutchinson, Ch. 3 and 4 pp. 79-136 and Ch. 9 pp. 211-34.

(A) Cloke et. al., Ch. 5 “Realist approaches in human geography” pp. 132-69

(B) “Andrew Sayer”

Discussion 8A: “Critical Realism as Scientific Method in Geography”

(B) Cloke et. al., Ch. 4 “Structuration Theory” pp. 93-131

Discussion 8B: “Structuration in Geography”

(C) P. Cooke “The contested terrain of locality studies” Ch. 30 in Agnew et al., 476-491

(C) K. Cox and A. Mair 1989 “Levels of abstraction in locality studies”


© “Anthony Giddens” , “Derek Gragory”

Discussion 8C: “Locality Studies in Geography”

March 23, 30 Session 9 and part of 10: How to Give an Academic/Public Presentation

Prepare a 10 minute talk as though you were presenting a formal, academic paper at the AAG. Or give the paper you are presenting at AAG. Do not use power point for at least the first 5 minutes. Class will consist of presentations, class criticisms, and suggestions for improvements.

Rest of Session 10 How to publish. How to get a job. How to get tenure.

April 6 – Session 11 Poststructuralism/Postmodernism and Geography

R. Peet, MGT pp. 194-216.
Stephen Best and Douglas Kellner Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations (read on one theorist in particular)

(A) D. Harvey “Postmodernity” in D. Harvey The Condition of Postmodernity pp. 39-65.
(A) D. Harvey “The Experience of Time and Space” in D. Harvey, The Postmodern Condition pp. 201-307

Discussion 11A “Postmodernism and its Discontents

(B) M. Foucault, “Space, Knowledge and Power” in P. Rabinow ed. The Foucault Reader 239-256.
Michel Foucault” “Arturo Escobar”

Discussion 11B “Foucault: Knowledge as Power”

(C) C. Minca, Postmodern Geography Ch 1 The Postmodern Turn by Michael Dear, Ch 9 Postmodern Temptations by C. Minca and ch 10 Paradoxes of Modern and Postmodern Geography by V. Guarrasi.

Discussion 11C Fragments of Postmodern Geography

April 13 No Class – AAG Conference. If you are attending the conference, attend one session critically, take notes on the papers, the presentational styles, the competency etc and report to class on your return

April 20 – Session 11 Feminist Critiques of Modern Science
Reading:
MGT, pp. 247-269.

(A) Evelyn Fox Keller, “Feminism and Science” in Women, Knowledge and Reality pp. 175-188.
(A) D. Harraway, “Situated Knowledges…” Ch 6 in Agnew et al, pp. 108-128
(A) “Donna Harraway”
April 20  **Second Paper Set**

The second paper is on the following topic: “Using the case of a major piece of research on a topic you have in mind (eg your dissertation), write what might constitute the philosophical and social-theoretical introduction, outlining the place of the research in its wider intellectual context, and the contribution to theoretical knowledge you might make”. Paper is due May 11 in R. Peet mailbox, Geography Office.

April 27 – **Session 12 Feminist Geography**

Reading:
MGT, pp. 270-291.
(A) Gillian Rose Feminism and Geography (pages to be assigned)
(A) Liz Bondi, “Feminism, Postmodernism and Geography: Space for Women?” in McDowell and Sharp pp. 73-82.
(A) Linda McDowell, Geography, Identity and Place Ch. 1 pp. 1-33, Ch. 9 pp. 224-248
(A) Judith Butler” “Doreen Massey” “Gilian Rose” in Key Thinkers
Discussion 12A “Feminism and the Geography of Women”