Geography 480: The Geographic Perspective

Class Meetings
Wednesdays 6:00 – 8:30 PM; 204 Gunter Hall.

Instructor
Dr. Matthew E. Ramspott; meramspott@frostburg.edu
Office: 207 Gunter Hall; 301-687-4412.
Department Office: 301-687-4369

Office Hours
• Monday & Wednesday 10:00 -11:00; Tuesday 9:00-11:00; Friday 11:00 – 12:00
• Other times are available by appointment, or usually whenever my door is open!

Required Book

Suggested Book

Other Materials
A variety of required readings will be available on reserve in the library, as class handouts, or via the Internet.

Course Description (from the catalog)
The historical development of geographic thought with an emphasis on how geographers structure research questions. Prerequisite: senior standing and 18 hours of geography completed.

Informal Course Description
This course covers the development of geographic thought from Classical times up through the present day. Students will become familiar with the variety of philosophical and methodological shifts that have characterized geography as the discipline developed and differentiated itself from other fields of study in the sciences and the humanities. Students will gain exposure to intellectual schools of thought and paradigmatic debates by reading, analyzing, and discussing representative examples of geographic scholarship from various perspectives. Students will also gain a broad sense of the history of the discipline and of many notable contributors to geographic thinking, learning about the roots of the modern discipline. The course will conclude with discussion of the various facets of geographic thought today, and where geography may be headed in the future.

Course Logistics

Readings
Throughout the course students will engage in reading and class discussions. Participation in all class activities is crucial and will be reflected in your grade. You are expected to read the assigned material before coming to class each week.

Class discussions
Students will be expected to attend and participate in all class discussions. To receive full credit for class participation, you must contribute to the discussion. During the first half of the semester, most discussions will be led by the instructor.

Student-Led Class Discussions
During the class periods for weeks 11, 13, 14, and 15 (see schedule below), students will have the opportunity to co-lead a class discussion, with students working together in groups of two to present an article and direct the discussion. This exercise will be worth up to 20 points (one half) toward your class participation score.
The readings for this exercise will be drawn from the recent geographic research literature. A sign-up sheet listing specific articles to choose from will be distributed at the appropriate time. If there is a specific article you are interested in doing, please see the instructor to have it approved and added to the list. Note that one of your written synopses (see below) should be completed based upon the article that you co-present to the class.

**Class Activities**
Occasional short activities will be assigned outside of class. To receive full credit for class participation, these assignments must be completed in a timely fashion.

**Synopses**
Students will complete six written synopses as the semester progresses. One of these should be based on the article that you present in class in the last few weeks of the term. One of them can (at your option) be based on a presentation that you attend during the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) taking place in Washington, DC on April 14-19. Your other four synopses will be based on specific approved readings from the assigned reading list, denoted with “**” in the reading list below.

Each synopsis should be approximately one half to one full page, single spaced. The synopsis should state the thesis or argument of the reading, and summarize the main points (using quotes with page numbers given). You should find ways to relate the reading to concepts covered in class. Include the full bibliographic citation at the top of each synopsis. You will need to complete three synopses from the approved readings before the midterm exam and three synopses from the approved readings assigned after the midterm. **Your first three synopses are due on March 3. Your last three synopses are due on May 5.**

**Exams**
There will be two exams, one at midterm and one at the end of term. Exams will consist of short essay identification questions, more extensive comprehensive essay questions, and a small number of multiple guess, diagram, or problem solving questions. The focus will be on demonstrating your knowledge of the various scholars, methods, philosophies, concepts, processes, and ideas discussed in class and in the assigned readings. To study for the exams, you should focus on understanding and integrating the concepts and on developing illustrative examples. You will need to put examples into context and draw comparisons and contrasts in order to do well on the exams. **Exams are scheduled for March 10 and May 19.**

**Written Research Report**
Students will complete a research report on a chosen topic, subject to instructor approval.

- The subject of the report should be either a review of work by a prominent geographer or a review and analysis of a particular school of geographical thought.
- The report must go beyond the readings covered in class and delve more extensively into research articles or monographs.
- The report should contain a clear statement of an original theme or idea that is supported by examples from your reading and research.
- The report should:
  - provide synthesis and critical analysis of the individual’s work or the school of thought you have chosen
  - draw connections to the time period in which the work was produced
  - make contrast and comparison to other schools of thought or prominent geographical thinkers
  - comment on the relevance of the work to geography as it is practiced today.
- The report must contain proper citations and references, and should be written with attention to spelling, grammar, organization, and smooth transitions.
- The report should end with a concise concluding section that summarizes the main points.

More specific information about the format and guidelines for the report will be discussed/distributed in class. **The due date for the report will be Tuesday, May 11 (the last day of regular classes).**
Course Web Page
My faculty web page, http://faculty.frostburg.edu/geog/meramspott/, contains a link for GEOG 480 which connects to a variety of relevant Web-based materials. I will refer to this Web page occasionally to direct you to materials of interest. I will also maintain a Blackboard page for GEOG 480; look there for postings of exam grades, and important class announcements.

Course Grading
Your grade in the course will be based upon two (2) exams, six (6) synopses, class participation, and the written research report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Synopses (6) @ 5 points each</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams (2) @ 100 points each</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Report</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>320</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Grading Scale

- 288 – 320 (90 – 100%) A Superior
- 256 – 287 (80 – 89%)  B Good
- 224 – 255 (70 – 79%)  C Satisfactory
- 192 – 223 (60 – 69%)  D Passing, but less than Satisfactory
- <192 (<60%) F Failing

Grades of NC, CS, or I are not available.

NO extra credit is available for this class

Class Workload and Expectations
To succeed in this course, you must shoulder the responsibility of completing the assigned readings and spend some time thinking critically about what you are reading. This class is intended to be an open exchange of ideas. For this exchange to be worthwhile and productive, you must become conversant in the terminology that is germane to the discussion. This is not a small task, but it is made possible by reading and studying the material in the assigned chapters from the textbook and other required readings. You will be expected to come to class ready to discuss and critically review the material that has been assigned. Your exams will also assume a general working knowledge of the material discussed in class as well as in the reading.

Policy on Attendance
Attendance of all class sessions is crucial to success in the class, and is mandatory. The work in this course builds progressively throughout the semester, and class attendance is vital to avoid falling behind. There is no allowance for deadline extensions or extra credit. As your instructor, I am always available for individual consultation outside of class time. However, special allowances cannot be made for making up unexcused absences. I am much more likely to be amenable to making allowances when notified of an expected absence ahead of time. Any unexcused absence will result in a deduction of 5 points.

If you are absent for any reason (excused or unexcused), you are still accountable for the material assigned and presented that week. You will receive a grade of zero (0) for any exams or project due dates that are missed without a valid excuse. If circumstances arise that cause you to miss an exam or a due date, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor in a reasonable and timely manner in order to avoid being assigned a failing grade.

Procedures for University Closings
If the University postpones or cancels classes because of the weather or other reason, material scheduled for that day will be covered in the next scheduled class meeting. If class is canceled on a day with a scheduled exam, the exam will be given during the next scheduled class meeting.
Policy on Disruptive Behavior
Disruptive behavior is defined as behavior that interferes with the learning environment of your fellow students. Disruptive students will be ejected from the class at the discretion of the instructor, according to University policy. Chronic interruptions or tardiness will be considered disruptive behavior.

Phones, Blackberries, iPods, and similar devices MUST be SWITCHED OFF during class! Please be considerate in your adherence to this policy! I will be forced to regard repeated interruptions as flagrantly disruptive behavior. Phone use or texting during tests will be regarded as cheating.

Policy on Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty includes any form of cheating or plagiarism. The University policy on this matter, which can be found in the *Pathfinder*, is very clear and very unforgiving.

I will adhere to a zero-tolerance policy regarding cheating or plagiarism. Faculty members in the Department of Geography may refer cases of intentional plagiarism to the Judicial Board. The Board has the authority to impose sanctions as severe as expulsion.

Plagiarism Guidelines
Please make careful note of the class handout detailing strategies for avoiding plagiarism.

Scheduled Class Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>27-Jan</td>
<td>Class Intro; Library Research Tips; Geography Defined</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3-Feb</td>
<td>Geography Foundations -- Ancient Times &amp; Middle Ages</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10-Feb</td>
<td>Geography Foundations -- Renaissance &amp; Age of Exploration</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>17-Feb</td>
<td>Geography Foundations -- Modern Beginnings</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>24-Feb</td>
<td>19th and early 20th century: Geography Evolves</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3-Mar</td>
<td>Determinism &amp; Possibilism</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10-Mar</td>
<td><strong>Midterm Exam</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>17-Mar</td>
<td>No Class: Spring Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>24-Mar</td>
<td>Regional and Landscape Geography</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>31-Mar</td>
<td>Quantitative Geography and the Modern Synthesis</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>7-Apr</td>
<td>Paradigms and Revolutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>14-Apr</td>
<td>No Class: AAG Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>21-Apr</td>
<td>Geography as a Modern Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>28-Apr</td>
<td>Positivism, Humanism, Behavioralism, and Structuralism</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>5-May</td>
<td>New Trends &amp; Ideas, Geography Re-Defined</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>May 19</td>
<td><strong>Final Exam: 6:00 - 8:30 PM</strong></td>
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--Last Day to Withdraw with a “W” is Friday, March 26.
--Course Schedule is subject to change. Notice will be given of changes that occur.

Important Dates to Remember
March 3 – First three synopses due
March 10 – Midterm Exam
April 7 – student led discussions begin and continue through the end of term (schedule and reading list TBA)
May 5 – Last three synopses due
May 11 – Written report due
May 19 – Final Exam
**Required Reading List**

*Geography History & Concepts* refers to the required textbook:


Other reading materials have been placed on reserve at the library, or are otherwise available as noted.

This list is subject to change. Notice of any changes will be given.

** Denotes a reading assignment approved for use in one of your synopses. You must complete three of your six synopses before the midterm exam.

**Week 1**


**Week 2**

- *Geography History & Concepts* Chapter 1

**Week 3**

- *Geography History & Concepts* Chapter 2

**Week 4**

- *Geography History & Concepts* Chapter 2 (continued)

**Week 5**

- *Geography History & Concepts* Chapter 2 (continued)

**Week 6**

- *Geography History & Concepts* Chapter 2 (continued)

**Week 7**

- Midterm Exam

**Week 8**

- Spring Break: No Class
Week 9


Week 10

- **Geography History & Concepts** Chapter 3

Week 11

- **Geography History & Concepts** Chapter 4

Week 12

- **AAG Meeting: No Class**

Week 13

- **Geography History & Concepts** Chapter 4 (continued)

Week 14

- **Geography History & Concepts** Chapter 5
- **Additional Reading (TBA)**

Week 15

- **Geography History & Concepts** Chapter 6