Overview
What is geography? Is geography a science? How can one get a PhD is a discipline that most people understand to be a body of knowledge that involves only map memorization? What are the unifying concepts and concerns of geography, if there are any? How do understandings of physical and human geographers differ, and how might they be similar? How will geography fare in the future in both the academy and society? Should geography aim to become more socially and politically relevant, and if so, how?

As a modern academic discipline, geography began in the late 1800s as an experiment to combine understandings of the natural and social sciences in a single discipline. Geography maintains enormous diversity in terms of its research topics and paradigms, ranging, for example, from field studies of river geomorphology to postmodern theoretical debates about scale. Today geography, like all disciplines, is faced with increasing specialization as knowledge production expands. Some argue that with this specialization the “two halves” of geography, physical geography and human geography, rarely interact and might more profitably go their separate ways. Others maintain that the very core of the discipline is the study of society-environment interactions, and that knowledge and theoretically-informed practice that synthesizes across the nature/society divide is needed now more than ever.

In addition to familiarizing students with geography’s intellectual history and evolution, the objectives of this course are to: (1) introduce students to major theoretical developments and debates in the discipline, (2) encourage each student to pursue an in-depth understanding of at least one area within the discipline, and (3) develop and refine students’ ability to read and write critically. The course is structured around four primary areas within the discipline: physical geography, human geography, nature and society geography (a.k.a. environmental geography), and cartography and geographic information sciences (GIS).

The course is meant for geography graduate students and graduate students in related fields who want to learn more about a discipline that has integrated natural and social sciences for more than a century.

Topic outline
Jan 6 Introduction to theory and practice in geography
Jan 13 Physical geography: nature, science, explanation
Jan 20 Physical geography: theory and philosophy
Jan 27 Human geography: spatial science, behavioralism, humanism, structuralism
Feb 3 Human geography: feminism, postmodernism, poststructuralism
Feb 10 Environmental geography: possibilism, the Berkeley school, cultural ecology
Feb 17 Environmental geography: political ecology, constructed nature(s)
Feb 24 Cartography & GIS: considerations of power
Mar 3 Cartography & GIS: uses of GIS and visualization
Mar 10 The future of an (engaged [?]) discipline

Readings
Each day of class has corresponding readings that must be completed before that class session. These are designed to anchor classroom discussions but they will not limit possible discussion topics. As this is a 4-unit graduate course, the expectation is that everyone will read thoroughly and come to class prepared to discuss the material. That means reading critically, and having questions, points of disagreement, connections with other readings, and so on in mind, and raising those issues during class discussions. If you have any reservations about participating in class discussions, speak to me privately.
Requirements and evaluation
Discussion leadership (15%)
Each student must facilitate discussion for two class sessions (see sign-up sheet). Facilitation involves posing provocative questions, connecting people’s comments, presenting background to the subfield under discussion, and/or creating and leading relevant activities. Discussion leaders must coordinate efforts before class.

Participation (15%)
Participation grades reflect attendance and critical engagement during class sessions. My expectations are that students will read critically; come to class and pose questions, discuss points of disagreement; and make connections with other readings and material.

Reflection papers (15%)
A 250-500 word response paper is required on the readings of at least four class sessions. You must reflect on one to three of the readings to gather your thoughts and be prepared for discussion. These are due on SmartSite two hours before class starts and are graded as done/not done. Discussion leaders are exempt for their sessions.

Term paper (45%)
A term paper focused on a prominent geographer is required. The paper must be 3,000-3,500 words in length and be double-spaced and set in a serif font. The paper requires three stages: (1) an outline, due by class on Jan 27; (2) a rough draft of your paper for peer review, due by class on Feb 24; and (3) the final paper, due by class on Mar 10. More details on paper requirements will be provided under the Assignments section of SmartSite.

Peer review (10%)
Term paper drafts will be exchanged in class on Feb 24. Each student will be responsible for reviewing another student’s paper. These reviews are due in class on Mar 3. Review using electronic methods (e.g., track changes in Word) or paper (written comments) is acceptable, but either way I need to see evidence that it has occurred. More details on what is required for peer review will be provided on SmartSite.

Required readings
The required texts, listed below, are available in the campus bookstore and are on reserve in Shields Library. Readings not in the texts are available as PDFs on the course website. Recommendations on further readings are also on the course website.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required texts (shorthand notation for reading assignments in parentheses)</th>
<th>Price on Amazon</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ PDFs available by week on the course website. (*)</td>
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Jan 6 — Introduction to theory and practice in geography
Jan 13 — Physical geography: nature, science, explanation

Practice

Jan 20 — Physical geography: theory and philosophy

Practice

Jan 27 — Human geography: spatial science, behavioralism, humanism, structuralism
GUEST: Professor Emerita Janet Momsen

Practice

Feb 3 — Human geography: feminism, postmodernism, poststructuralism

Practice
Feb 10 — Environmental geography: possibilism, the Berkeley school, cultural ecology

Practice

Feb 17 — Environmental geography: political ecology, constructed nature(s)

Practice

Feb 24 — Cartography & GIS: considerations of power

Practice

Mar 3 — Cartography & GIS: uses of GIS and visualization

Practice

Mar 10 — The future of an (engaged ?!) discipline

Practice