

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

GEOGRAPHY OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION  
REVOLUTIONS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

GEOGRAPHY 301  
FALL 201X  
SCIENCE HALL 350  
TR 11:00-12:15 PM  
CREDITS: 3

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DESCRIPTION

“Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography.”  
— Edward Said (1993: 7)

The past fifteen years mark a period of intense global economic, social, and political upheaval. Further, the past five years have seen the rise of several widespread revolutionary movements: from the Arab Spring to the Occupy! Movement; from Hong Kong’s Umbrella Revolution to the U.S. protests in the wake of the killings of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and many others; and from this week’s oil protest camps at Standing Rock to next week’s national prison strikes. Not only were these struggles political, they were also deeply *spatial*. On the one hand, political struggles ‘*take place*’ by responding to local conditions of inequity, oppression, and exploitation. On the other hand, their political projects often *make space* by reinventing local social relations.

This course explores geographic approaches to the theoretical, practical, and political dimensions of social movements. It introduces classic and contemporary perspectives on political organizing, collective action, and social change, paying particular attention to the socio-political production of space and the spatial conditions of social and political life. We will ground our study of key radical and revolutionary trajectories of political philosophy and social theory by interrogating the practical and spatial problems of contemporary social struggles ranging Tahrir Square to Zuccotti Park, and from Wisconsin’s Capitol Building to the streets of Ferguson, MO. Along the way, we will review a variety of techniques and strategies for researching and studying spaces of social movements and the principle social divisions contributing to political oppression, exploitation, and social inequality in the contemporary political and economic scene. How should we understand the spontaneous emergence of conflict, revolt, and political struggle? How might we read these forces in the creation of new spaces? Through lectures and discussion, this module will equip students with the theoretical, conceptual and methodological tools necessary for understanding and analyzing issues concerning social change and social inequality in contemporary societies.

## COURSE READINGS

REQUIRED ARTICLES: Readings for this course will be available on electronic reserve via Learn@UW — <https://learnuw.wisc.edu/>

RECOMMENDED READING:

*Dictionary of Human Geography* (Available on MADCAT)

Peet, R. (ed.) 1977 *Radical Geography: Alternative Viewpoints on Contemporary Social Issues*. Chicago: Maaroufa Press.

Blunt, A. and Wills, J. 2000 *Dissident Geographies: An Introduction to Radical Ideas and Practice*. Essex: Pearson.

## CURRENT EVENTS

It is strongly recommended that you:

- 1) Consult the large variety of academic journals devoted to the study of pertinent contemporary political struggles and uprisings, radical organizing, and the politics of dissent.

Geography journals: *Antipode*, *ACME*, *Gender, Place and Culture*, and *Human Geography* address many of the course themes directly, but many of the top geography journals will also regularly feature such discussions.

Other journals: *New Left Review*, *Rethinking Marxism*, *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, *Mobilization*, *Radical Philosophy*, *Working USA*, *Anarchist Studies*, amongst many others.

- 2) Explore the various alternative news resources available online:

*Independent Media Center* — [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org)

*Madison Indymedia* — <http://madison.indymedia.org>

*Democracy Now!* — [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org)

Z Net — <http://www.zmag.org/znet>

- 3) Several websites publish the works of thinkers whom we will discuss in class:

Libcom (Marxist and anarchist archives) <[www.libcom.org](http://www.libcom.org)>,

Marx 2 Mao (Marxist archives) <[www.marx2mao.com](http://www.marx2mao.com)>,

Post-Marxist and post-structuralist archives <[www.after1968.org](http://www.after1968.org)>, Situationist International <<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/index.html>>,

Zapatista Archives <<http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/zapatista.html>>.

These resources should be used for exercises in the course, to complement lecture material, and as resources for finding topics for your final papers.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Geography 301 is designed to give you exposure to arguments and approaches for addressing the intersections of space and social movements. You will be required to

complete one **major research paper** that critically examines a contemporary (preferably ongoing) social movement from the perspective(s) of the major course themes. Specifically, your research topic should assess a movement or struggle in terms of the relationships between space, social organization, and social change. This writing assignment requires that you make effective use of the library resources on campus, and is structured to encourage you to continue to develop and refine your skills as a critical thinker and writer, with an aim toward 1) finding the nuance in debates and current events, and 2) crafting clear and convincing arguments. We will address the conventions of academic scholarship and social science research during the semester, so please be very attentive to this throughout the research and writing process. While web research may provide a good place to start to get ideas, all writing assignments should engage scholarly articles and/or books. With the exception of 'primary' resources, any bibliography that is web-focused will be downgraded.

In addition to the major writing assignments, there will be a series of smaller assignments given in lecture and section. These will include '**research collective presentations**' that explore a contemporary radical collective, cooperative, or movement – these can be based upon observation of a Madison-based project if the collective so desires.

The **midterm** will consist of essay-style questions, as well as some short-answer questions regarding key concepts and is designed to aid in your preparation for the final paper.

Throughout the semester, please read the course materials *prior* to the class for which they are assigned and attend all lectures. I expect students to be active during lectures, asking questions, and responding to the questions I ask of you. I realize that students may occasionally miss a lecture or section; however, regular attendance and active participation in discussion are critical for success in this course and will be considered in evaluating student performance.

I will email you periodically with updates and reminders about scheduling issues, readings, and other assignments. You are responsible for checking your email regularly and reading these updates as they may contain information important for completion of course assignments. If you are not a regular email devotee, at a minimum please check your email account at the beginning and end of each week.

Please note that I will *not* distribute copies of my Powerpoint course slides via Learn@UW or email. I will, however, distribute study guides just prior to the mid-term exam, as well as relevant handouts throughout the term. The rationale for this policy is to structure the course so that your note-writing abilities are enhanced, and to encourage you to come to class (as the slides only convey some of the content from the lecture). If you missed content on a particular slide, or didn't understand something from lecture, please ask for clarification during the lecture, via email, or during my office hours.

*I am always open to feedback, or calls for assistance or advice. Please come to my office hours or make arrangements to meet in my office if there is anything about the course you would like to discuss.*

## GRADING

94-100 = A  
89-93 = AB  
84-88 = B  
79-83 = BC  
70-78 = C  
60-69 = D  
Below 60 = F

Your final grade will consist of the following components:

<u>WRITING ASSIGNMENTS</u> (45%)	
Essay Proposal	5%
Essay	40%
<u>EXAM</u> (30%)	
Midterm Exam	30%
<u>DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES</u> (25%)	
Presentations and Research Collectives	15%
Attendance and participation	10%
<u>TOTAL</u> 100%	

### *Note:*

Late papers will suffer a 10% reduction per day unless unavoidable circumstances arise. In the case of illness, family emergency or other similar circumstance, please contact me. Specific instructions regarding the assignments will be distributed in class.

Please be aware that if you miss lecture for any reason, *you* are responsible for the material covered.

Please also note that the UW policy on academic honesty states that students can be expelled for one case of cheating or plagiarism. If you have any questions about citation or more general questions regarding your academic rights and responsibilities please do not hesitate to ask me.

## SCHEDULE OF EXAMS AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

MIDTERM EXAM: March 12th, 350 Science Hall  
ESSAY PROPOSAL: Week 8  
RESEARCH COLLECTIVES: End of Semester  
FINAL ESSAY: Week 17, day TBD

## SCHEDULE

*Readings will be available on E-Reserve at Learn@UW. Schedule subject to change.*

September	6 <sup>th</sup> - 8 <sup>nd</sup>	Wk 1	COURSE INTRODUCTION: GEOGRAPHY & SOCIAL CHANGE
	13 <sup>th</sup> - 15 <sup>th</sup>	Wk 2	ORGANIZING FROM BELOW: THE CRITIQUE OF STATISM AND AUTHORITARIANISM SELECTIONS FROM: Blunt & Wills, Bakunin, Kropotkin
	20 <sup>rd</sup> - 22 <sup>th</sup>	Wk 3	THE FACTORY FLOOR: LABOR AND (ANTI)-CAPITALISM SELECTIONS FROM: Marx, Blunt & Wills
	27 <sup>th</sup> - 29 <sup>th</sup>	Wk 4	POLITICAL ORGANIZING & VANGUARDISM SELECTIONS FROM: Lenin, Althusser, Harvey
October	4 <sup>th</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup>	Wk 5	MADE, NOT BORN: TERRITORIES OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY SELECTIONS FROM: Blunt & Wills, Hooks
	11 <sup>th</sup> - 13 <sup>th</sup>	Wk 6	DECOLONIZING GEOGRAPHY STRUGGLES FOR REPRESENTATION AND CIVIL LIBERTY SELECTIONS FROM: Bloom and Martin, Pulido, Nelson, Bunge
	18 <sup>rd</sup> - 20 <sup>th</sup>	Wk 7	THE LABORATORY OF POWER: POSTSTRUCTURALISM SELECTIONS FROM: Chomsky, Foucault
	25 <sup>th</sup> - 27 <sup>th</sup>	Wk 8	CATCH-UP, REVIEW, & MIDTERM
November	1 <sup>th</sup> - 3 <sup>th</sup>	Wk 9	THE INTERNATIONAL ENCUESTRO: NAFTA, ZAPATISMO, AND ANTI-GLOBALIZATION SELECTIONS FROM: Marcos, Grubacic, Starhawk
	8 <sup>th</sup> - 10 <sup>th</sup>	Wk 10	EXPANDING THE FLOOR OF THE CAGE: NEW ANARCHISM AND THE NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: SELECTIONS FROM: Graeber, Holloway, Day, Freire
	15 <sup>st</sup> - 17 <sup>nd</sup>	Wk 11	FROM ITALY TO ARGENTINA: WORKERISM, AUTONOMISM, HORIZONTALISM Berardi, Virno, Fortunati, Hardt & Negri, Sitrin, Read
	22 <sup>th</sup> - 24 <sup>th</sup>	Wk 12	THANKSGIVING RECESS – NO LECTURE NOV. 24 <sup>th</sup>
	14 <sup>th</sup> - 16 <sup>th</sup>	Wk 13	CONTEMPORARY STRUGGLES (Research Collectives)
	21 <sup>st</sup> - 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Wk 14	CONTEMPORARY STRUGGLES (Research Collectives)
December	29 <sup>th</sup> - 1 <sup>th</sup>	Wk 15	CONTEMPORARY STRUGGLES (Research Collectives)
	6 <sup>th</sup> - 8 <sup>th</sup>	Wk 16	CONTEMPORARY STRUGGLES (Research Collectives)
	13 <sup>th</sup> - 15 <sup>th</sup>	Wk 16	RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS