

## **Master Syllabus**

### ***Department of Geography***

#### **GEOG 121: Geography of the Cultural Environment**

##### **Course Description**

Geography of the Cultural Environment utilizes qualitative methods to investigate relationships between human culture and the environment. Spatial processes that bring about cultural diversity and change are stressed as well as the role of human activity in producing cultural landscapes. Special emphasis is placed on the formations of cultural landscapes over time and the current impact of Globalization on cultural landscapes.

##### **Course Objectives**

This course uses a mix of modified lectures, writing assignments, and primary source and textbook readings in order to meet the UCC-21 Tier 1 Humanities domain course requirements as described in the following course specific learning objectives. The UCC-21 cognitive skills listed above will be accomplished via the course objectives. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Evaluate important themes and theories in cultural geography
- Describe geographical patterns of culture and recognize the great diversity of cultural perspectives
- Apply theories of human-environmental relationships to culture regions to explain differing cultural landscapes
- Analyze various ways of defining culture and addressing human-environmental relationships
- Explain methods and sources that geographers employ to examine culture at various geographical scales
- Describe the impact of globalization on cultural landscapes and human-environmental relationships

##### **Course Rationale**

Cultural geographers use a humanistic approach to study people's relations with nature, their geographical behavior, as well as their feelings and ideas in regard to space and place. Methodologies include: empirical observation or "reading" of the cultural landscape as text; analysis of the historical layers that indicate sequent occupance in the cultural landscape; and investigation of sense of place through human behavior, literature, art, film and other forms of cultural production.

This course is well suited for inclusion in the Humanities Domain of UCC-21 because:

1. The course enables students to observe and interpret a variety of cultural phenomena from a spatial perspective including religion, music, language, folklore and politics at varying scales of inquiry and change over time. This inherently interdisciplinary approach emphasizes observational and interpretive techniques drawn from cognate fields in the humanities and focuses on eliciting meaning from cultural landscapes
2. The course starts from the premise that all humans are by definition experienced in their own cultures at local, regional, national and global scales

As a Tier 1 domain course, students are encouraged to reflect upon experiences in their own culture as a basis for gaining some insight into other cultures Experience → Information (E → I), so they are able to make cross-cultural comparisons. Students will then apply geographical perspectives to interpret these patterns in spatial variation Information → Knowledge (I →K).

This course provides a learning environment for students to achieve the (E→I) transformation through active learning pedagogies, appropriate theme, concept, and theory based lectures, and primary source and textbook reading materials. These pedagogies assist students to:

- Apply a geographical perspective anchored in the recognition that individual experiences are connected to culture at multiple scales
- Describe culture behaviors from a variety of cultures, including their own, that will allow students to build spatial comparisons
- Compare how cultures approach their relationships with the environment with different perspectives

Based on these pedagogies, students are able to learn 2 of the 3 cognitive skills associated with the (E→I) transformation:

- Observe components of cultural landscapes and describe how they relate to geographical concepts
- Describe or explain the diverse ways of understanding human-environmental relationships (environmental perception, landscape as text, and cross-cultural comparison)

This course also provides a learning environment for students to achieve the (I→K) transformation through active learning based pedagogies. These pedagogies assist students to:

- Apply a geographical perspective to a variety of cultural phenomena
- Analyze human-environmental relationship issues from a variety of theoretical perspectives
- Compare various information sources on a single human-environmental issue

Based on these pedagogies, students are able to learn 3 cognitive skills associated with (I→K) transformation:

- Analyze data, events, cultural landscapes and cultural production to discover geographical patterns
- Describe geographical perspectives on the relationship between culture and the environment
- Communicate when appropriate, knowledge in either written, oral, or graphic form

### **Course Content and Format**

The course divides into two interdependent sections. The first section concerns theory and introduces students to geographical perspectives in the form of the five themes of cultural geography. Various theories, approaches and concepts applied to cultural phenomena and human-environmental relationships are presented in the context of these major themes. In section two these themes are applied to a number of aspects of culture and human-environmental relationships.

#### **SECTION ONE: THEMES IN CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY**

1. Regions
  - a. Formal
  - b. Functional
  - c. Vernacular
2. Diffusion
  - a. Expansion
  - b. Hierarchical
  - c. Contagious
  - d. Stimulus
3. Cultural Ecology
  - a. Environmental Determinism
  - b. Possibilism
  - c. Environmental Perception
4. Cultural Interaction
  - a. Spatial Models

- b. Sense of Place
- 5. Cultural Landscapes
  - a. Landscape as Text
  - b. Symbolic Landscapes

## SECTION TWO: APPLICATION

1. Geographies of Difference
2. Geography of Religion
3. Geography of Language
4. Political Geography
5. Ethnic Geography
6. Agricultural Geography
7. Cultural Geography of Globalization

The course format consists of modified lectures, class discussions, and in-class activities. Students will engage with each other and with the instructor on a regular basis.

### **Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**

Student learning outcomes will be assessed based on multiple choice exams, short in-class writing assignments, and lengthier out of class, project-based assignments designed to measure both UCC-21 content/knowledge and cognitive transformations. Multiple choice exams and short in-class assignments are based on modified lectures as well as videos. The longer out of class writing assignments require application of the themes of cultural geography to real situations in the cultural realm. Several different instructors teach this course and the department will attempt to standardize both course content and methods of assessment as much as possible. Below are some possible assessment methods for each learning outcome.

UCC-21 Cognitive Skills Addressed in GEOG 121	Example of Assessment Methods
<b><i>Experience → Information</i></b>	
1. observe components of cultural landscapes and describe how they relate to geographical concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in-class activities that involve the observation of the cultural landscape (presented in modified lectures, videos) through multiple choice exam questions and written assignments</li> <li>• application-based multiple choice exam questions and written assignments that require students to relate geographical concepts to various cultural landscapes</li> </ul>
2. describe or explain the diverse ways of understanding human-environmental relationships (environmental perception, landscape as text, and cross-cultural comparison)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in-class activities that involve the observation of cultural phenomena (modified lectures, videos) through application-based multiple choice questions and written assignments</li> <li>• application-based multiple choice exam questions and written assignments that require students to compare human-environmental relationships and landscapes across cultures</li> </ul>
<b><i>Information → Knowledge</i></b>	
1. analyze data, events, cultural landscapes and cultural production to discover geographical patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in-class activities that require students to use a variety of sources (including maps) in order to draw conclusions about cultural phenomena at various geographical scales</li> <li>• written assignments that involve the analysis and comparison of various sources for cultural phenomena</li> <li>• application-based multiple choice exam questions that require students to analyze a variety of sources (including maps) in order to arrive at the correct answer</li> </ul>
2. describe geographical perspectives on the relationship between culture and the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in-class activities that require students to use geographical perspectives to arrive at conclusions about differing relationship between human culture and the environment</li> <li>• written assignments that require students to use geographic themes to analyze current and past cultural geographies and their relationship with the environment</li> </ul>
3. communicate when appropriate, knowledge in either written, oral, or graphic form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• written assignments requiring students to use themes from cultural geography to analyze issues regarding the impact of globalization on human-environmental relationships and cultural landscapes</li> <li>• in-class written activities requiring students to briefly reflect on the real-world applications of concepts and themes they have encountered in lecture, readings, observations, videos, websites and other sources.</li> </ul>

### **WISER+ Designation**

This course will not carry a Wiser+ designation

## **Course Assessment**

The instructors for this course will use student performance on specific classroom tasks as the primary source of UCC-21 assessment data. Individual instructors will identify exam questions, in-class and out of class writing assignments that measure the seven learning outcomes outlined in the assessment of student learning outcomes section. The demonstration of these outcomes will be reported by every instructor as percentages of students who have mastered each cognitive skill in their classes. Each instructor will then compile summary data to demonstrate the degree, expressed as a percentage, to which students have demonstrated the Experience → Information and Information → Knowledge transformations. This summary data will be submitted to the UCC subcommittee along with samples of the assignments used to generate the data. The first year's data will be used to establish a baseline to help the department determine if course changes are needed to better facilitate core curriculum objectives.

## **Faculty Qualifications for Domain Courses**

Geography as a synthesizing discipline spans all three domains. The discipline is divided into two broad areas of study, physical geography, cognate with the natural sciences, and human geography. Most of the sub-disciplines within human geography use social science methods of inquiry. Cultural geographers, however, stress humanistic methods in their approach including landscape interpretation, investigations of sense of place, environmental perception, and ethnographic techniques.

## **Supplemental Rationale or Other Statement**

Not applicable