

# Health Geography Capstone Seminar (GEOG -475) – Spring 2024

**Tues/Thurs 9:40-11:10 am, Humanities 404**

Instructor

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Email

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Office Hours and Location

Wed 9:30-11:30 am, 1:15-4:15 pm

Carnegie 103

## Course Description

A research seminar in which students conduct individual inquiry into problems in medical geography. Also known as health geography, this is a growing subdiscipline in geography that stands out for its theoretical debates, methodological diversity, and engagement with other disciplines from the natural and social sciences (e.g. biology, biomedicine, ecology, epidemiology, sociology, economics, anthropology, critical theory), while always grounded in the traditions of geographical inquiry. Topics and approaches to be covered include historical paradigms in medical geographic thought; international health and development; disease ecology; emerging infectious diseases; the social determinants of health; place or neighborhood effects; environmental justice; spatial epidemiology; and critical approaches to health, the body, and power. Since this is a seminar course we will also emphasize developing your skills in scholarly research and writing, as well as learning how to evaluate and integrate insights from different disciplines. Prerequisite(s): Permission of instructor. Completion of GEOG 256 prior is encouraged.

*This course counts for major in Geography; the CGH concentration; the Social Science distribution requirement; and the writing (WA) gen ed requirement.*

## Required Readings

The following **book** is **required**:

Perkins, Tracy. *Evolution of a Movement: Four Decades of California Environmental Justice Activism*. UC Press, 2022. Paperback ISBN: 978-0520376984 (also available through Macalester library as e-book).

Other required readings will be available via our course's Moodle site. Every week, I will give you specific reading assignments that are not fully detailed in the course outline (below)

## Class Format

In general, this class will be in a seminar style format, with very few lectures by the instructor. Thus, for most class meetings, my role as instructor is to facilitate a discussion. The purpose of discussion is to facilitate critical analysis of the academic work we're reading. In my opinion, the best discussions are those in which students: (1) listen to and learn from one another and build on what each other is saying; (2) focus discussion on understanding the main argument of each reading and breaking down and analyzing this argument to see if it makes sense; (3) make connections between readings and other course

materials; and (4) relate insight gained from reading and discussion to other texts or real life events. In sum, I want you to approach discussion as an ongoing scholarly debate in which we (as a community of scholars and learners) are attempting to advance our collective knowledge. Most days, one or two students from the class will play the role of discussion leader. Especially as the semester moves along, we will devote at least part of each our meetings to discussing and working on the final research project.

## Course Management Systems

This course does have a Moodle page, but I will be using Moodle sparingly (e.g., for submission of assignments). Instead, most resources in this class will be made available via Google apps (e.g. Google Docs), with a constantly updated [Course Outline](#) serving as the central node to connect to all the resources you'll need for the class, including readings, assignments, and other materials.

## Assignments and Grading

1. **Attendance and Participation.** See details further below.
2. **Discussion Leadership.** In a typical class meeting, two student discussion leaders will be assigned to facilitate each discussion of the day's readings. Given our schedule and the number of students, each of you should have three opportunities to lead discussion. Discussion leaders will be expected to summarize the main points of each reading and to have prepared discussion questions on more debatable aspects of each article. Discussion leaders will also be expected to delve (a bit) into recommended articles for a given day, share details about the authors' background, provide context for the day's assigned readings, and offer examples of applications of key theories and concepts. You will be evaluated primarily on the effort you put into preparing for the discussion, along with your skill in steering discussion, fostering conversation, and providing new insights into the material.
3. **Reaction Papers.** On a weekly basis, from weeks 1-10, you'll have the opportunity to write a brief reaction paper on the week's readings and discussion. The papers will be due on Friday at 5 pm of each week. Note that you do not have to write an essay every week, but you must complete 5 of them (out of 10 weeks available). The essays will be graded on content, style, and mechanics.
4. **Research Project.** Building on the themes, concepts, and methods from readings we discuss in class, you will write a major capstone paper (about 25-30 pages, double-spaced). Due to the size and importance of this project, and to avoid last-minute work, there are a number of intermediate assignments due throughout the semester, leading up to the final paper. During class meetings, we will also be setting aside time for discussion of issues related to the project, such as how to define a topic, how to formulate a research question, where to find sources, and so forth. This is the composition of your grade on the research project:
  - a. Research topic statement (2%)
  - b. Research project proposal (with preliminary bibliography) (3%)
  - c. Scoping review (4%)
  - d. Word budget outline (3%)
  - e. Office hours visit (**mandatory**, sometime between weeks 6-10) (3%)
  - f. Polished draft (10%)
  - g. Peer review (5%)
  - h. Oral presentation (10%) – Note that you are **required** to present your research at the MUGS (Midwest Undergraduate Geography Symposium) on Saturday, April 27.
  - i. Final draft (60%)

This is the breakdown of your overall course grade:

1. Attendance and Participation	10%
2. Discussion Leadership	15%
3. Reaction Papers (together)	20%
4. Research Project (all components)	55%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Course Policies

### Attendance and Participation

In this class, 10 percent of your grade derives from attendance and participation.

Attendance plays an essential role in learning, so you are warmly invited and expected to attend all class meetings. Attendance will be important not only for your learning, but also for our ability to build a community together and maintain a sense of connection and commitment to one another. Your presence in class matters. If you will not be in class for any reason, it is your responsibility to inform me in advance, or as early as possible, via email. It is also your responsibility to make up work you missed in your absence. In general, "participation" means speaking up, sharing your thoughts, and making yourself noticed in positive, productive, and supportive ways. It also means listening carefully and respectfully to your fellow students. It is important to remember that we all have different styles of expression. If you have not been able to participate in a class discussion for any reason but want to demonstrate your active engagement, please send me an email after class with a comment or an idea you had that you would have liked to share, but were not able to during class. Students with any concerns, questions, or need for consideration for flexibility should connect with me as soon as possible to determine an appropriate plan.

In-class discussions and anything not accounted for specifically as a graded assignment will be factored into your participation grade. Other ways to boost your participation grade include: coming to visit me in office hours, attending a relevant campus event (and writing a brief reaction paper to it), sending me links to articles or other resources that could be relevant for class, and so on.

### Come Prepared!

Being part of this class means being prepared to participate fully in each day's activities. Those activities are spelled out clearly in the course outline and I'll be giving you frequent reminders about what we'll be doing in class on a given day. Please make sure to do the readings or consult other resources before class. The quality of in-class discussion and group work depends on your doing the assigned readings in advance. Do not be surprised if I call on you, unannounced, for your thoughts about an assigned reading. Only occasionally will class periods be taken up by lecture, and even then, you'll have a much better understanding of the material if you put in the work ahead of time.

### Academic Integrity

As in every course, you will be expected to follow the college's policies on academic honesty: specifically, "Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty in their college work. Forgery, cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses and students found guilty of any form of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action." For more details, see the college's guidelines on Academic Integrity (link [here](#)).

## **Special Accommodations**

If you have a physical or learning disability that will require special accommodations, please contact me to discuss arrangements. All conversations will be confidential. You will also need to meet with a representative from Disability Services, which determines accommodations. They can be contacted here: [disabilityservices@macalester.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@macalester.edu) .

## **Communication**

You are welcome to come see me during my scheduled office hours. If you can't meet during those times, please send me an email or call my office and we'll schedule an appointment. In general, I answer emails within 24 hours. But I always prefer to discuss important matters in person, not electronically or by phone. Also, make sure that you check your email frequently, because I do send email messages – either from my own email address or via Moodle – frequently to the class.

## **Use of Electronic Devices in Class**

Laptops are permitted in class but only for note-taking and for activities in class when specifically indicated. When we are having a lecture, discussion, student project presentation, or similar activity, I expect everyone's eyes and attention to be focused on that activity. You definitely should not be browsing the web, checking email, doing your homework, and so on during these class activities. **The use of cell phones is strictly prohibited: no calling, texting or other uses of your cell phone during class time.** I am only asking for three hours of your time each week to focus deeply on the course subject matter, so please consider the classroom to be a screen-free zone, unless we're using devices specifically for class activities.

## **Recording Policy**

The Macalester College Classroom Recording (MCCR) policy sets forth community expectations regarding the recording (whether audio, video, or streaming) of class lectures, discussions, office hours, and other course-related activity. As an academic community, we value the free exchange of ideas and the privacy of community members. We are also committed to providing appropriate accommodations to students who require recorded lectures as an academic adjustment for documented disabilities. The MCCR policy balances the legitimate uses of classroom recording, the intellectual property of the faculty, and the privacy of individual students and faculty. The entire policy can be found [here](#). In short, the policy requires students to submit a completed Student Recording Agreement to the appropriate office (Disability Services for students with approved accommodations; Academic Programs and Advising for all others) prior to engaging in any type of recording. The faculty member who signed the Recording Agreement (or is notified by Disability Services that recording will occur as an accommodation) is responsible for notifying the class that recording will be occurring. The required Student Agreement Recording form is available [here](#).

## **Religious Observance**

Students may need to take part in religious observances that occur during the semester. If you have a religious observance/practice that conflicts with your participation in the course, please contact me before the end of the second week of the semester to discuss appropriate accommodations.

## **Health and Wellness**

You are encouraged to make your health and well-being a priority throughout this semester and during your career at Macalester. Taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academic experience. Remember that beyond being a student, you are a human being carrying your own experiences, thoughts, emotions, and identities with you. It is important to acknowledge any stressors you may be facing, which can be mental, emotional, physical, cultural, financial, etc., and how they can have an impact on your academic experience. I encourage you to remember that you have a body with needs. In the classroom, eat when you are hungry, drink water, use the restroom, and step out if you are upset and

need some air. Please do what is necessary so long as it does not impede your or others' ability to be mentally and emotionally present in the course. Outside of the classroom, sleeping, moving your body, and connecting with others can be strategies to help you be resilient at Macalester. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, please don't hesitate to contact me and/or find support from Health & Wellness Center. I have included contact information for health and wellness resources on the course Moodle page.

### **Inclusivity**

I am committed to providing a safe and equitable learning environment that welcomes and supports everybody. As learners and teachers, we all bring various experiences and life contexts to this course. These differences will emerge in class and be part of what we negotiate and benefit from as a developing community. I acknowledge that academic institutions have evolved within a historical context that privileges certain students over others, and in this classroom, we will do our best to be aware of how these inequities may manifest. I hope you will feel comfortable coming to us to express any concerns or suggestions; this is an iterative process that requires the collaboration of all.

### **Late work**

You must turn in your work on time. I will indicate due dates for every assignment, and you must respect them. Late work will be graded down 10% (or a whole letter grade) for each day after the due date. For other, extenuating circumstances (e.g. illness, accident, bereavement, religious observance, etc.), I will consider granting extensions on a case-by-case basis. Remember, for the weekly essay responses, you have five "bye weeks" that you can use, so you don't have to write an essay every week.

### **Turning in Assignments**

I will be using electronic submission for most assignments. For a given assignment, I will create a "dropbox" on Moodle that has a specific time that work is due (and the dropbox then "closes"). Please do not submit assignments via email or as "shared" documents in Google Docs.

### **Citation Style**

Unless otherwise specified, we will be using the APA (American Psychological Association) style for in-text citations and bibliography. Refer to the Purdue OWL resource on APA style citations [here](#).

**COURSE SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE (capstone seminar)**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>0</b>	15 (JANUARY) MLK DAY	16	17	18 FIRST DAY Introductions and Course Business	19
<b>1</b>	22	23 Key Concepts and Approaches	24	25 Qualitative, post- structural approaches	26 <b>Reaction paper 1</b>
<b>2</b>	29	30 SDOH: the view from social epidemiology	31	1 (FEBRUARY) Social medicine	2 <b>Reaction paper 2</b>
<b>3</b>	5	6 Place effects	7	8 Chicago Heat Wave case study	9 <b>Reaction paper 3</b>
<b>4</b>	12 <b>Project: Topic Statement due</b>	13 Deaths of Despair thesis	14	15 Discrimination and Health Disparities Guest, David Van Riper, Minnesota Population Center	16 <b>Reaction paper 4</b>  <i>Matt Jackson '92, Lanegran Day speaker</i>
<b>5</b>	19	20 Green Spaces and Health	21	22 Research Skills Workshop (meet at library)	23 <b>Reaction paper 5</b>
<b>6</b>	26 <b>Project: Proposal due</b>	27 Environmental Justice  <i>Dave Zirin '96, Sports Futurism talk</i>	28	29 Environmental Justice	1 (MARCH) <b>Reaction paper 6</b>
<b>7</b>	4	5 Environmental Justice	6	7 Environmental Justice	8 <b>Reaction paper 7</b>
SPRING BREAK (March 14-18)					

8	18	19 Carter talks about his own research projects	20 Project: Scoping Review due	21 Carter talks about his own research projects	22 Reaction paper 8
9	25	26 Student-led discussion	27	28 Student-led discussion	29 Reaction paper 9
10	1 (APRIL) Project: Word budget outline due	2 Student-led discussion	3	4 Student-led discussion	5 Reaction paper 10
11	8	9 Project work	10 <i>Geography Honors Day</i>	11 Project work	12
12	15	16 Project work	17	18 Project work	19 Project: Polished draft due
13	22	23 Oral presentations prep	24 Project: peer review due	25 Oral presentations prep	26 Present at MUGS (Midwest Undergraduate Geography Symposium), Saturday 4/27 →
14	29	30 Study Day	1 (MAY) Study Day	2 Final Paper Due	3

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Detailed, constantly updated course schedule available [here](#).