



GEOG 306 - Geography of Canada

FALL 2013 - COURSE INFO

Dr. Cameron Owens camo@uvic.ca (250) 721-7330
Office Hours: M 15:00-17:00 in room David Turpin Building (DTB) B210

Cam Owens, PhD (SFU), has a wide range of interests in the fields of political ecology, sustainable community development and critical pragmatic theory. He is originally from Alberta but now treasures living on the coast (in Vic West) with his wife, Kristi - a green building consultant and son Finn - an aspiring Jedi.

Course Schedule: M, R: 10:00-11:20 Room: COR B143



OVERVIEW

What is Canada? Who are Canadians? Would everyone agree on the answers to these questions? Would the answers change over time and space? (Why) do such questions matter? Beyond a mere description of the geography of this vast country, this course interrogates Canada both as an imagined (and contested) national place and a realm of diverse regions. We begin with an overview of the country's physical setting and implications for those who live, work and play there. We then turn to explore the different imaginaries, myths and ideologies deployed in attempts to make sense of this place and define the country's national identity and direction. Finally, we turn to explore evolving regional identification. Along the way we grapple with some of the key issues facing Canadians today and in the past. Intending neither to be bombastically patriotic nor treasonously cynical this course is sure to inspire important new ways of seeing "Canada" and being "Canadian".

REQUIRED READINGS

- **Texts:** There are no mandatory texts assigned for this class.
- **Readings:** Essential readings in the forms of journal articles, book chapters and other sources will be posted on the course Moodle site (<http://moodle.uvic.ca/>) and should be read thoroughly and brought to class. While readings are peripheral to learning in some courses, they are central to this one.
- **Reading effectively** is absolutely essential for success in this course. Be mindful that simply reading without engaging with the material (i.e. marking, highlighting, frequent re-reading, taking notes and critical reflection) is essentially useless (i.e. the material has no chance of moving from short to long term memory).
- **Note on Moodle:** You will access the Moodle site not only for required readings but also for important announcements, instructor notes, your grades and additional information.

COURSE POLICIES

Collegial Respect: Do your part to ensure a classroom environment conducive to learning. Arriving late, talking, texting, surfing the internet etc. all disrupt the flow of the class. Be respectful to the instructor and colleagues. Note that the instructor receives a high volume of emails and may not always be able to respond in a timely manner. Be sure to plan ahead. Being at university is a unique and fleeting opportunity. Be sure to make the most of it!

Late / Missing Work: If for a legitimate reason (e.g. verifiable serious illness or family emergency) you must miss the midterm you must notify the instructor **before** writing to make alternative arrangements. Failure to do so will result in a zero. Your (op/ed) assignment (initial draft and final version) will be accepted up to three days after the due date with a 10% penalty applied per day.

Withdrawal: For information regarding withdrawal from class, please see: <http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2011/FACS/UnIn/UARe/With.html> for dates and other information.

Academic Integrity: Please review <http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2011/FACS/UnIn/UARe/PoAcI.html> for university policy on academic integrity and useful information on avoiding plagiarism, falsifying results, cheating on assignments etc. Any form of academic dishonesty will result in an automatic "F" for that assignment or test and possibly the course for ALL individuals involved. Note: plagiarism detection software will be used in this class.

Accessibility: Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Resource Centre for Students with a Disability (RCSD) as soon as possible. The RCSD staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations <http://rcsd.uvic.ca/>.

ASSESSMENT

Students will be evaluated on the following required elements:

1. Participation: based on the quality of your contributions to class discussion, online "chat" (though Moodle) and extra-curricular involvement (20%) **2. Midterm Exam:** Oct 23 - multiple choice & short written answer questions covering material to date (25%) **3. Op/Ed Assignment:** opinion piece on a Canadian issue (to be discussed in class) - draft due Nov 13, final due Dec 1 (25%) **4. Final Exam** - take home exam distributed on Dec 1 and due Dec 8 (submitted to Geog 306 dropbox near DTB B205) (30%)

• **Note on Undergraduate Grading:** Grading practices and procedures are guided by University policies specified in the Calendar. The Department is concerned about the potential problem of **grade inflation** and wishes to ensure **equity in grading standards** among colleagues. In cases in which grades for a course are substantially outside normal ranges, the Chair may ask the instructor to justify or revise those grades. Instructors submit grades online, and those grades are available to students online as soon as they have been approved by the Chair. If the grades for a course are not available online, it means that the grades have not yet been approved by the Chair, and any grades posted elsewhere are unofficial and subject to change.

Students should pay particular attention to the qualitative indicators associated with each grade:

- **A+ (90-100%); A (85-89%); A- (80-84%):** Exceptional, outstanding and excellent performance. Normally achieved by a small group of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectation and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.
- **B+ (77-79%); B (73-76%):** Very good / acceptable work fulfilling expectations. These grades indicate a good or satisfactory grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area with no major weakness.
- **B- (70-72%); C+ (65-69%); C (60-64%); D (50-59):** Deficiencies in knowledge, understanding or techniques; Mastery of some relevant techniques or concepts lacking.
- **F (0-49):** Failing grade. Unsatisfactory performance.
- see <http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2012/GRAD/FARe/Grad.html>

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. To develop a more sophisticated understanding and critical appreciation for Canada's physical, political, historical and cultural geography exploring: the physical setting: characteristics, processes, regions; implications of the physical environment for human settlement, economic and cultural development; geo-physical hazards and human-environmental issues; pre and post colonial political geography and territorial evolution; core-periphery relationships and social faultlines: French vs. English; Aboriginal vs. Non-Aboriginal, New-comer vs. Oldtimer; Centralist vs. Decentralist, urban vs. rural and regionalization
2. To better recognize how national and regional identities are constructed, contested, re-worked and / or reproduced; in particular grappling with the role of myths and political ideology in Canadian identity formation (and to understand why such inquiry is valuable).
3. To enhance one's understanding of other key geographic concepts such as regionalization, sense of place, spatial interaction (e.g. migration, trade), human / environmental relationships and the contested representation of space drawing on cases from Canada
4. To develop critical thinking skills that transcend both naïvely optimistic and cynically pessimistic approaches: recognizing multiple perspectives and the values and assumptions underlying each (including our own), defining questions and problems, evaluating evidence and arguments and arriving at defensible positions on issues
5. To become empowered to develop and communicate one's comprehension of course material (through online chat assignment)
7. To be able to articulate and defend a clear and concise position on a Canadian issue (through Op/Ed assignment)
8. To further develop skills comprehending and retaining info from academic and other written sources as well as through visual art, music, poetry and video.
9. To develop a better appreciation of the importance of a critical environmental education for one's own well-being and civic responsibility (i.e. recognition of one's own linkages to problems and solutions).

GUIDING IDEAS:

1. In the end, everything in politics turns on the distribution of spaces. What are these places? How do they function? Why are they there? Who can occupy them? For me, political action always acts upon the social as the litigious distribution of places and roles. It is always a matter of knowing who is qualified to say what a particular place is and what is done in it. - *Jacques Rancière* (2003)
2. "A nation is a group of people who share the same illusions about themselves ... expressed in stories or core myths we tell about ourselves." - *Francis* (1997:10)
3. Profound aversion to resting once and for all in any one total view of the world and enchantment with opposing points of view, refusal to be deprived of the stimulus of the enigmatic. - *Friedrich Nietzsche*
4. There is only perspective seeing, only a perspective "knowing"; and the more affects we allow to speak about a thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity", be. - *Friedrich Nietzsche*

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1	Sept 1 - No Class	Sept 4 - No Class
Week 2	Sept 8 - Course Introduction	Sept 11 - Video: Postcards from Canada
Week 3	Sept 15- Physical Setting & Implications	Sept 18 - Op/Ed Assignment introduced
Week 4	Sept 22 - Physical Setting & Implications	Sept 25 - Physical Setting & Implications
Week 5	Sept 29 - Diversity & Identity	Oct 2 - Diversity & Identity
Week 6	Oct 6 - Diversity & Identity	Oct 9 - Diversity & Identity
Week 7	Oct 13 - No class	Oct 16 - Diversity & Identity
Week 8	Oct 20 - Diversity & Identity	Oct 23- Midterm
Week 9	Oct 27- Op/Ed Refresher	Oct 30 - Regions (overview)
Week 10	Nov 3 - Canada's Core	Nov 6 - Canada's Core
Week 11	Nov 10 - No class	Nov 13 - Atlantic Region Op/Ed draft due
Week 12	Nov 17 - The West	Nov 20 - The West
Week 13	Nov 24 - The North	Nov 27 - The North
Week 14	Dec 1 - Wrap-up / Op/Ed Final due & Take-Home Exam distributed (due Dec 8)	Dec 4 - No class

