



---

Course Outline  
**GEOGRAPHY OF CANADA**

---

*In grateful acknowledgement of the L'kwungen & W̱SÁNEĆ peoples upon whose territories we are able to live and learn.*

**Lecture:** M/Thur 13:00-14:20 in Cornett Building (COR) B129

**Office hours:** M 15:00-17:00 in DTB B210

**Contact:** Cam Owens [camo@uvic.ca](mailto:camo@uvic.ca)

\* Please review this course's outline and resources on [Brightspace](#) before reaching out. I receive a high volume of messages and am often not able to respond immediately. I will aim to reply within 24 hours (not including weekends). *Please do not leave important matters to the last minute.*

### Course Description

This course invites both geographers and non-geographers to explore the value of geographic inquiry with a focus on Canada. Using diverse resources—maps, readings, videos, podcasts, artwork, and music—we delve into the complexities of Canada's peoples and places, in the past and the turbulent present. The course is organized into three major units:

1. **Introduction to Geography & Canada:** This unit introduces the course, the value of civics education and the study of geography. It gets us looking at maps and examining fundamental physical and human geographic dimensions of the country and its place in the world.
2. **Physical Setting: Landscape & Implications:** In this unit, we explore Canada's physical landscape and examine its implications in terms of natural hazards, settlement patterns, and development. We will critically analyze the colonial settlement processes that led to the systemic displacement and marginalization of Indigenous communities. Additionally, we will explore how Canada's landscapes, along with its people and places, are represented and interpreted through art and music.
3. **Cultural & Political Setting: Unity & Division:** In this final unit, we explore the challenges of uniting Canada's vast and diverse population while addressing historical and contemporary faultlines of division. Key topics include nationalism and the institutions and mythologies that sustain it, regionalism, Indigenous-Crown relationships, populism and political polarization, and class divisions, exemplified by the housing crisis.

Geog 306 fosters a deeper understanding of Canada's geography, equipping students with critical tools to engage thoughtfully with its diverse landscapes, cultures, and challenges in an ever-changing world.

### Brightspace

You will access the [Brightspace](#) site for important announcements, to submit assignments, and to access information handouts, instructor slides, readings, your grades, and other stuff. Guidance for navigating Brightspace is [available](#).

## **Textbook, readings, and other learning materials**

This course does not rely on a singular textbook. Instead, Geog 306 draws on a diverse range of materials, including videos, podcasts, music, art, government documents and websites and scholarly and popular readings. All required materials will be accessible online, typically posted on Brightspace.

Students are expected to thoroughly engage with these materials and bring relevant notes or copies to class for discussion and activities. Active engagement is essential for success in this course. The materials will be assessed through periodic assignments, quizzes, and/or the final exam.

Merely skimming or passively consuming the materials will not suffice. To move the content from short-term to long-term memory, it is critical to mark up, highlight, take notes, and reflect critically while reading, watching, or listening. Dedicating time and effort to this process will significantly enhance your understanding and overall success in the course.

## **Learning Outcomes**

1. Recognize the value of geographic inquiry by applying geographic concepts and approaches—both scientific and artistic—to understand Canada's context and its connections to broader global issues.
2. Develop a nuanced understanding of human-environment relationships, appreciating their complexity and significance to personal, and socio-ecological challenges.
3. Critically engage with diverse materials—maps, readings, videos, podcasts, music, and artwork—to analyze and reflect on Canada's physical and cultural landscapes.
4. Analyze Canada's identity and faultlines, examining centrifugal and centripetal forces that work to unite and divide Canada's vast and diverse population
5. Develop a robust sense of responsibility and an informed understanding of what it means to be a citizen through critical engagement with the country's historic and contemporary social, environmental, and political issues
6. Cultivate skills in research, critical analysis, and persuasive communication by writing an op/ed piece to effectively explore and present a contemporary Canadian issue.
7. Foster habits of discipline, focus, and intentionality, developing skills like organization, confidence, empathy, and dedication that support success in academics and beyond.

## **Geography Department Info**

- Geography Department website: [uvic.ca/socialsciences/geography/](https://uvic.ca/socialsciences/geography/)
- Geography Department Chair: [geogchair@uvic.ca](mailto:geogchair@uvic.ca)
- Geography Undergraduate Advising: [geogadvising@uvic.ca](mailto:geogadvising@uvic.ca)

## Evaluation

You will be evaluated on the following required elements all accessed through Brightspace.

Item	Due date(s)	Mark
<b>Discussions</b> - Students will engage in Brightspace discussions by posting thoughtful and insightful contributions on course-relevant topics and meaningfully engaging with at least one classmate's post.	Jan 13(4%), Jan 27 (7%), Feb 24 (7%), Mar 17 (7%)	25%
<b>Assignment 1 - Settlement &amp; Displacement</b> – Written assignment where students research a settlement pattern or development case study in Canada and then respond to resources on Indigenous displacement	Feb 10	15%
<b>Assignment 2 – Canadian Issue Op/Ed</b> – Short, persuasive written assignment presenting an informed opinion on a Canadian issue.	Apr 3 (outline due Mar 10)	25%
<b>Final Exam</b> – details to follow	Apr (TBD)	30%
<b>Engagement</b> - Students' positive contributions to the class will be assessed, with a self-assessment component to encourage reflection and active participation.	Throughout	5%

## Grading System

As per the Academic Calendar:

Grade	Grade point value	Grade scale	Description
<b>A+</b> <b>A</b> <b>A-</b>	9 8 7	90-100% 85-89% 80-84%	<b>Exceptional, outstanding and excellent</b> performance. Normally achieved by a minority of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectation and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.
<b>B+</b> <b>B</b> <b>B-</b>	6 5 4	77-79% 73-76% 70-72%	<b>Very good, good and solid</b> performance. Normally achieved by the largest number of students. These grades indicate a good grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area balanced with satisfactory grasp in the other area.
<b>C+</b> <b>C</b>	3 2	65-69% 60-64%	<b>Satisfactory, or minimally satisfactory.</b> These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter.
<b>D</b>	1	50-59%	<b>Marginal</b> Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter.
<b>F</b>	0	0-49%	<b>Unsatisfactory</b> performance. Wrote final examination and completed course requirements; no supplemental.
<b>N</b>	0	0-49%	Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.

## Tentative Schedule of Topics

(see Brightspace for a more complete, up to date schedule including readings)

Weeks	Topics	Tasks & due dates (before class)
<b>Unit 1 – Introduction to Geography &amp; Canada</b>		
1 – Jan 6-9	Course intro, on civic education, Geography - “the study of the world” Mapping games	
2 – Jan 13-16	“The Great White North”: Intro to Canada, Canadians, & our place in the world	Discussion 1: Introduce yourself & geographic connections (Jan 13)
<b>Unit 2 – Physical Setting: Landscape &amp; Implications</b>		
3 – Jan 20-23	“Some countries have too much history, we have too much geography”: Canada’s physical geography	
4 – Jan 27-30	Acts of God?: Climate crisis, “natural” hazards & disasters in Canada	Discussion 2: “Natural” disasters (Jan 27)
5 – Feb 3-6	“Watching cities rise before me”: Settlement & development patterns “Looking for a place to happen”: Canada’s setting through music	
6 – Feb 10-13	“Our home on native land”: Settlement & displacement	Assignment 1: Settlement & Displacement (Feb 10)
7 – Feb 17-21	Reading week: No classes	
<b>Unit 3 – Cultural &amp; Political Setting: Unity &amp; Division</b>		
8 – Feb 24-27	“True patriot love”: Canadian history, national identity & mythology	Discussion 3: Musical Geographies (Feb 24)
9 – Mar 3-6	“Faultlines”: Divisions in Canada “Land Back”: Indigenous/Crown Faultline, reconciliation, & resurgence	
10 – Mar 10-13	“Maîtres chez nous”; Historical divides, Québec sovereignty and Western Alienation	
11 – Mar 17-20	“F—k Trudeau: Populism & polarization in Canada	Discussion 4: “No Way Out but Back” (Mar 17)
12 – Mar 24-27	“Far Too Canadian”: Class division & the housing crisis	
13 – Mar 31-Apr 3	Campus walking tour exploring local history, geography Wrap up: Looking back, looking forward	Assignment 3: Canadian Issue Op/Ed (Apr 3)
April (TBD)	Final Exam	

## Additional Course Information and Policies

### Academic Integrity

It is every student's responsibility to be aware of the university's policies on [academic integrity](#), including policies on cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized use of an editor, multiple submission, and aiding others to cheat. If you have any questions or doubts, talk to me, your course instructor. For other resources on writing see the [Centre for Academic Communication](#).

### Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a documented disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the [Centre for Accessible Learning](#) (CAL) as soon as possible. The RCSD staff is available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let us know your needs, the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

## Artificial Intelligence Usage

### Understanding AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to systems designed to mimic human intelligence, such as natural language processing or problem-solving. Tools like ChatGPT can generate human-like responses, assist with editing, or provide ideas and outlines based on prompts. While these tools are effective at synthesizing information and generating content quickly, they have significant limitations. AI can produce articulate but factually incorrect or misleading responses, lacks critical thinking and contextual understanding, and cannot replace rigorous research or original thought. Additionally, AI tools often rely on pre-existing data, which means they may fail to provide up-to-date, accurate, or nuanced insights, especially on complex topics.

### Using AI Effectively and Ethically

In this course, you are encouraged to explore AI as a learning tool or assistant, but you must do so responsibly and ethically. Here's how you may use AI:

- **Effective Uses:** Structuring outlines, brainstorming ideas, drafting initial thoughts, and receiving editing suggestions for clarity and grammar.
- **Ineffective Uses:** Solely relying on AI for research, using it to generate final submissions, or accepting its outputs without verification, as AI cannot replace academic rigor or provide the depth required for this course.

### Guidelines for Using AI

1. **Academic Integrity:** All AI-assisted work must be your own. You must review, revise, and critically engage with any material AI helps you produce. Directly passing off AI-generated work as your own is a violation of academic integrity and will result in consequences as outlined by the university's policies.
2. **Citing AI Use:** If you use AI tools, you must clearly document their contributions. For example, if you used AI to draft an outline or edit a draft, include a brief note or citation explaining how you used it.
3. **Critical Evaluation:** AI can produce convincing but incorrect or incomplete responses. It is your responsibility to verify all information, cross-check with credible sources, and ensure the accuracy and reliability of your work.

### **Course Experience Survey**

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. The survey is accessed via MyPage and can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.

### **Expectations of Behaviour**

I will do everything I can to create an effective, engaging learning environment. I invite you to be part of something special. Please be punctual, respectful, compassionate, and attentive.

### **Intellectual Property**

According to the university's Intellectual Property Policy (GV0215), professors and instructors are the authors of their original course materials, lecture notes, and lecture presentations. Accordingly, they own the copyright in these materials. A lecture constitutes an instructor's intellectual property. A student must get permission to record the lecture from their instructor. Any material for the course (e.g., lecture notes, PowerPoints, syllabus, including a recording of a lecture) is made solely for the use of the student registered in the course for research and private study only. These materials must not be posted online or shared with other students without the instructor's permission. In some cases, a student with a perceptual disability will be eligible for an academic accommodation to record a lecture. Please visit the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) website for more information. You should be aware that there are policies and legislation regarding academic accommodation. Should you have any questions, please contact the Copyright Office.

### **International Students**

The University of Victoria offers a number of resources to support international students as they pursue their studies. UVic's [International Centre for Students](#) is the primary office supporting international students on campus at the university-wide level and provides various supportive program through the [UVic Global Community Initiative](#), including a Mentorship Program and Conversation Partner Program. For academic advising-related questions, students in the Geography Department are also encouraged to meet with the Geography Undergraduate Advisor ([geogadvising@uvic.ca](mailto:geogadvising@uvic.ca)) as well as an academic advisor in the [Academic Advising Centre](#) early in their studies to help map out a plan to declare a major and complete university program requirements. Other resources include the [Centre for Academic Communication](#) and the [Math and Stats Assistance Centre](#). International students are also encouraged to contact the International Student Liaison in Geography (Prof. CindyAnn Rose-Redwood, [cindyann@uvic.ca](mailto:cindyann@uvic.ca)), who can assist in making connections with other international and domestic students in the Geography Department and share opportunities for getting involved in departmental activities more broadly.

## **Positivity & Safety**

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive and safe learning and working environment for all its members.

## **Self-Care**

A note to remind you to take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone.

Counselling Services - *Counselling Services can help you make the most of your university experience. They offer free professional, confidential, inclusive support to currently registered UVic students.* [uvic.ca/services/counselling/](http://uvic.ca/services/counselling/)

Health Services - *University Health Services (UHS) provides a full service primary health clinic for students, and coordinates healthy student and campus initiatives.* [uvic.ca/services/health/](http://uvic.ca/services/health/)

Centre for Accessible Learning - *The CAL staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations* [uvic.ca/services/cal/](http://uvic.ca/services/cal/). *The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.*

Elders' Voices - *The Office of Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement (IACE) has the privilege of assembling a group of Elders from local communities to guide students, staff, faculty and administration in Indigenous ways of knowing and being.* [uvic.ca/services/indigenous/students/programming/elders/index.php](http://uvic.ca/services/indigenous/students/programming/elders/index.php)

## **Sexualized Violence Prevention & Response**

UVic takes sexualized violence seriously, and has raised the bar for what is considered acceptable behaviour. We encourage students to learn more about how the university defines sexualized violence and its overall approach by visiting [uvic.ca/svp](http://uvic.ca/svp). If you or someone you know has been impacted by sexualized violence and needs information, advice, and/or support please contact the sexualized violence resource office in Equity and Human Rights (EQHR). Whether or not you have been directly impacted, if you want to take part in the important prevention work taking place on campus, you can also reach out:

Where: Sexualized violence resource office in EQHR; Sedgewick C119

Phone: 250.721.8021

Email: [svpcoordinator@uvic.ca](mailto:svpcoordinator@uvic.ca) Web: [uvic.ca/svp](http://uvic.ca/svp)

## Study / Learning Tips

1. **Leverage Self-Testing:** The latest research strongly indicates that the most crucial aspect of effective studying is testing yourself soon after encountering new material (see Huberman Lab podcast link below). Self-directed test-taking right after learning can significantly enhance your ability to learn, apply, and retain new knowledge. Simply reviewing notes without self-testing is far less effective.
2. **Limit Distractions:** Create a study environment with minimal distractions. Turn off notifications, set a specific study time, and use tools like noise-canceling headphones to maintain focus.
3. **Use Active Learning Techniques:** Engage with the material actively by summarizing concepts in your own words, teaching them to someone else, or discussing them in study groups.
4. **Chunk Study Sessions:** Study in focused, manageable chunks of time (e.g., 25–30 minutes) followed by short breaks. This approach, often called the Pomodoro Technique, helps maintain concentration and prevents burnout.
5. **Set Clear Goals:** Break down your study sessions into specific, achievable goals. Knowing what you aim to accomplish helps keep you on track and provides a sense of progress.
6. **Use Multi-Sensory Learning:** Engage multiple senses while studying. For example, read aloud, create diagrams, or use flashcards. Combining visual, auditory, and kinesthetic inputs can enhance memory retention.
7. **Apply the Material:** Find ways to apply what you're learning to real-life scenarios or problems. This contextualizes the information and makes it more memorable.
8. **Prioritize Sleep:** Ensure you get sufficient sleep, as it's vital for memory consolidation and cognitive function. Aim for 7–9 hours of quality sleep per night to support learning.
9. **Stay Hydrated:** Keep yourself hydrated throughout the day. Dehydration can impair cognitive function, so make water a constant companion during study sessions.
10. **Practice Mindfulness Meditation:** Incorporating short mindfulness meditation sessions can help improve concentration, reduce stress, and enhance memory. Even just 5–10 minutes of focused breathing can be beneficial.

*Reference: For more on these study strategies, see the Huberman Lab Podcast episode: [“Optimal Protocols for Studying & Learning”](#).*