

Fall 2015
W R 3:30-4:50
CLE A303

Geog 309

Geography of BC

Dr. Cam Owens
camo@uvic.ca

Office: DTB B210

Office hrs: M 3-5 pm

Course Overview

This course introduces students to the physical and human geographies of British Columbia. Conflict or struggle is central to the province's social experience recognized in persistent disputes around such matters as resource exploitation, environmental protection, Indigenous sovereignty, immigration, and urban development. Through engaging lectures, class discussions, videos, our text, and a reading of the acclaimed story "The Golden Spruce" by John Vaillant, this course will carefully analyze historic and present struggles critically interrogating the values and assumptions of different groups vying to define our province and its future. Students should leave with a more sophisticated appreciation both of the field of critical geography and of the province of BC.



Policies:

1. Late policy – 10% penalty per day late for 3 days (for assignment). Contact instructor before Midterm or Quiz if you must miss (for legitimate, documented reason). Zero tolerance for late final exams.
2. Plagiarism – zero tolerance (see UVic's [academic integrity policy](#))
3. Accessibility – please meet with instructor and the [Resource Centre for Students with a Disability](#) early if you may need accommodation
4. Do your part to ensure an engaging classroom. Be punctual, respectful, compassionate and attentive.

Assessment

1. **Midterm** (25%) Oct 14th
2. **Golden Spruce Quiz** (15%) Nov 2nd
3. **Assignment** (20%) In a group of 2-4 you will undertake an assignment concerning revising and refining the text (to be discussed in class).
4. **Final Exam** (25%) – Take home exam given on Dec 3 and due on Dec 10.
5. **Participation** (15%) – consists of quality of contribution to class room and / or online forum discussion AND attending 2 relevant events during the term, writing up and submitting a short well-written summary of what you learned and how it related to class.

Note on marks: A-level marks (80%+) reflect exceptional (beyond expectations), outstanding, or at least highly competent efforts. B+/B level marks (73-79%) reflect good or at least acceptable efforts (usually above the class average). B-/C+ level marks (65-72%) represent average efforts, showing some understanding but deficient in some way. C/D level marks (50-64%) represent passable but largely insufficient efforts, while F marks (<50%) represent failing the course.

Course readings

There are two mandatory course texts and additional readings will be posted on the CourseSpaces site. Reading - and engaging with the readings (highlighting, underlining, taking good notes etc.) – is essential for your enjoyment of and success in this course. Coming to class unprepared is a waste of time for you and everyone else (and it makes things really boring).

1. McGillivray, B. 2011. *Geography of British Columbia: People and Landscape in Transition*. Vancouver: UBC Press
2. Chambers, N. 2015. *Saving Farmland: The Fight for Real Food*. Rocky Mountain Books

Education is the ability to perceive the hidden connections between phenomenon.

- Vaclav Havel

Notes on learning expectations

1. Think deeply about why you are here and what you want to get out of your experience at UVic in the short time you'll be here. Use this time wisely to develop marketable skills and good habits - e.g. effective written and oral communication, critical thinking*, problem solving, empathic listening, organization, perseverance, and initiative.
2. I consider such skill development and good habit formation as being at least as important as content mastery in this course. While I want you to learn important things about Canada's geography, I also want you to develop particular skills and habits. Keep in mind employers are much more concerned with your skills and habits than your marks.
3. Effective learning involves recognizing how the course material is directly relevant to your life – in this case how your own story is weaved into the story of Canada and Canadians.
4. *Note: critical thinking is often misrepresented as cynical, pessimistic, or “being against things”. In this class it should rather be understood in terms of healthy skepticism with received wisdom recognizing the world could / should be otherwise; ceaseless, piercing questioning of status quo “common sense”; trying to make important linkages and connections; recognizing and evaluating multiple perspectives and the values and assumptions underlying each (including our own); evaluating evidence and arguments (while recognizing power relations in knowledge claims), arriving at defensible positions on issues and working towards a more respectful, inclusive, just, and fair world (or country in this case).

Tentative Schedule of Classes

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration... into the logic of the present system... or becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

- Paulo Freire

Week 1	Sept 7 – No class	Sept 10 – Introduction
Week 2	Sept 14 – Mapping BC; Assignment Introduced (CH 1)	Sept 17 – Video: Bog in My Backyard
Week 3	Sept 21 – BC Physical Setting (CH 2)	Sept 24 – BC Physical Setting
Week 4	Sept 28 – Climate Change and Natural Hazards (CH 3)	Oct 1 – Climate Change & Natural Hazards
Week 5	Oct 5 – Cultural Geographies (Colonialism) (CH 4)	Oct 8 – Cultural Geographies (Colonialism)
Week 6	Oct 12 – NO CLASS	Oct 14 – MIDTERM
Week 7	Oct 19 – Cultural Geographies (Asian Diffusion / Racism) (CH 6)	Oct 22 – Cultural Geographies (Asian Diffusion / Racism)
Week 8	Oct 26 – Cultural Geographies (First Nations) (CH 5)	Oct 29 – Cultural Geographies (First Nations)
Week 9	Nov 2 – The Golden Spruce ; Quiz	Nov 5 – The Golden Spruce
Week 10	Nov 9 – NO CLASS	Nov 12 – Resource Geographies (CH 8-12, 15)
Week 11	Nov 16 – Resource Geographies	Nov 19 – Resource Geographies
Week 12	Nov 23 – BC's Economy Beyond the Staples Trap	Nov 26 – Tourism Geographies (CH 14)
Week 13	Nov 30 – Urban Geographies (16) – Term Project Due	Dec 3 – Urban Geographies / Wrap Up

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

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, 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.

