

Geog 306

Geography of Canada

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Office: DTB B210

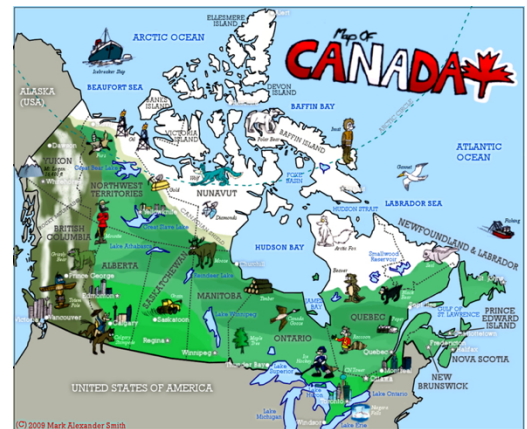
Office hrs: W 10-12 am

Policies:

1. Late policy – 10% penalty per day late for 3 days (for assignment). Contact instructor before Midterm if you must miss (for legitimate, documented reason). Zero tolerance for late final exams.
2. Plagiarism and unauthorized use of an editor – 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.

Course Overview

Beyond a mere description of the geography of this vast country, the course encourages students to hone their critical thinking skills as we grapple with daunting Canadian social and environmental challenges. We begin with an overview of the country's physical geographic setting. We then turn to the complex relationship between people and their environment, exploring the influence of the physical landscape historically and presently on Canadians (e.g. settlement, culture, economics) and, in turn, has been shaped and remade by humans. As part of this latter discussion we explore the political cultural context of so-called “natural hazards”, “environmental issues”, and “climate change.” Then, in the context of the 150th Anniversary of Confederation, we examine the political process of nation building and some of the deep faultlines that divide the country socially including Indigenous-Non-Indigenous and Left-Right. We do not shy away from difficult, controversial subjects including White Nationalism and ongoing settler colonialism. Intending neither to be a patriotic celebration nor a cynical denunciation of the country, this course is sure to inspire important new ways of seeing “Canada” and being “Canadian”.



Assessment

1. **Midterm** (25%) Oct 19
2. **Op/Ed Assignment** (30%) - Short, informed opinion piece on a Canadian issue (details will be provided in class). Outline due Oct 5, optional draft due Nov 2, final version due Nov 30.
3. **Final Exam** (30%) – Take home exam given on Nov 30 and due on Dec 7.
4. **Participation** (15%) – consists of quality of contribution to class room and / or online forum discussion, field trip attendance AND attending 2 relevant events during the term, writing up and submitting a short well-written overview of the event, 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 is no text book for this course. Instead mandatory readings will be posted on the Moodle site. Reading - and engaging with the readings (highlighting, underlining, taking good notes etc.) – is essential for your enjoyment of and success in this course.

Notes on learning expectations

If some countries have too much history, we have too much Geography.

- Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada (1921-30, 1935-48)

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. the ability to manage time and to accept constructive criticism; effective written and oral communication, critical thinking*, problem solving, empathic listening, ethical reasoning, and organizational skills; and perseverance, initiative, and care.
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 am more concerned with you to developing into a successful, caring citizen. Keep in mind employers are 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 and how Canadian issues are your issues.
4. *Note: critical thinking is often misrepresented as cynical, pessimistic, or “being against things”. It should rather be understood in terms of healthy skepticism with received wisdom recognizing that certain things could /should be made otherwise. It involves 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 country (and world).

Tentative Schedule of Classes

Sept 7, 11	Introduction	Sept 7 – First Class Sept 11 – Op / Ed Assignment Introduced
Sept 14,18	Unit 1: Physical Setting	
Sept 21,25, 28, Oct 2, 5, 12,16	Unit 2: Human / Environment Interrelationships	Sept 28 – Campus Cultural History Field Excursion Oct 5 – Op/Ed Outline due
Oct 19		Midterm
Oct 23, 26,30, Nov 6,9, 20,23,27	Unit 3: Canada at 150 – Nation Building & Division	Nov 2 – Op/Ed Version 1 due (optional) Nov 13– No class
Nov 30		Op/Ed due Final Take-Home exam administered (due Dec 7)

Until the lion learns to speak, the tales of hunting will be weak.

- K'Naan – Somali-Canadian Rapper

“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.

Geography Department website: <http://geog.uvic.ca>
Undergraduate Advisor: Dr. Phil Wakefield – geogadvisor@uvic.ca