

Interuniversity Master's degree in Geography and Territorial Sciences
Politecnico e Università di Torino

Programme and calendar 2022-2023

Geography, theory and practice

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Objective

The course offers an introduction to critical geographical thinking, with particular reference to how it developed in the past decades in Anglophone Geography. The aim is to provide a concise, yet rich, introduction to a number of key concerns related to the critical understanding of space, place, scale and related processes. Key notions and approaches derived from political economy, relational spatial thinking, critical gender and race studies, political ecology will be presented and discussed. The course mixes frontal lectures with moments of in-depth reading of academic texts, as well as discussion of contemporary societal issues at the global scale. The final part of the module provides a glance at some of the most common qualitative research methods in Human Geography, analysing their ethical implications and the role of Academics in the (re)production of unjust spaces.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding. The students will acquire understanding of the main aspects of contemporary critical geographical thinking, its evolution and main debates. They will also acquire specific knowledge on debates related to urban inequalities, gender and racial injustice, critical relational thinking the use of qualitative methods in human geography.

Ability to apply knowledge and understanding. At the end of this course the student will be able to: analyse contemporary social and spatial phenomena intersecting multiple critical perspectives; they will be able to move within the international academic literature in the broader field of critical Human and Urban Geography; and they will acquire the basic skills set to write essays analysing contemporary social and spatial issue critically.

Autonomy of judgement. Students will learn how to question mainstream narratives related to key issues of our times including, but not limited to, uneven spatial development, entrenched gendered and racialised violence, and the role of the Academy in both questioning and reproducing injustice.

Communication skills. At the end of the course students will acquire the basic conceptual grammar, in the English language, needed to investigate space and spatial processes critically.

Learning skills. Students will acquire the capacity to independently work with critical theories and methods in Human Geography.

Teaching modality

The course lasts 54 hours (9 CFU), structured along 10 weeks, including frontal lectures, seminars and workshops. Please note that sessions will be live streamed, but not video-recorded. Slides will not be shared, unless for students with proven learning difficulties.

The different sessions are characterised as follows:

- *Core lectures* (On Mondays, 16:00-19:00, three-hour long each): To provide foundational

understandings around critical theory and practice of geographical thinking

- *Seminars* (On Tuesdays, 11:00-13:00, two-hour long each): Guided reading sessions, to offer the opportunity of engaging with key geographical writings and documentary taken from international scholarship. Seminars will be based on the provided key readings, and an additional reading list will be provided to students who are willing to expand on the subjects
- *Workshops* (At the end of the module, three-hour long each): To reflect, on a workshop-style fashion, on contemporary news, using the conceptual toolkit offered by the course

Examination modality

For attendees

You are expected to read *all* key readings, suggested for each lecture, which will be discussed during the live seminars. Alongside what is presented during the lectures, the readings will serve the basis for the two components of your examination:

- A 1.500-2000 words written essay, which will count for the 30% of the final grade, to be focused on one of the themes explored in the course. The workshops will provide students with ideas on what to focus and on how to structure their essay
- An oral examination, which will count for 70% of the final grade, to be focused on the themes and literatures explored in the course

For non-attendees

You are expected to read *all* key readings, suggested for each lecture and to integrate those with the following text:

Cresswell, T. (2013). *Geographic Thought*. Wiley-Blackwell: London

Your examination will be focused on two components:

- A 1.500-2000 words written essay, which will count for the 30% of the final grade, to be focused on one of the themes explored in the course, on the basis of the readings suggested
- An oral examination, which will count for 70% of the final grade, to be focused on the themes and literatures explored in the course, as well as on Cresswell's book

Program and reading lists

WEEK I) For a critical geography of space

- *Lecture, three hours* - Introduction to the course; The colonial substratum of geographical knowledge; The birth of critical geography: on the capitalist production of space; Overview of contemporary critical spatial approaches
- *Seminar, two hours*: Reading on capitalism and the production of space

Key readings:

Harvey, D. (1992) 'Social Justice, Postmodernism and the City'. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 16 (4): 588–601.

Massey, D. (1993). 'Power Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place'. In *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, edited by J Bird, B Curtis, T Putnam, G Robertson, and L Tickner. London: Routledge.

Peck, J., and A. Tickell. (2002) 'Neoliberalizing Space'. *Antipode* 34 (3): 380–404.

WEEK II) Thinking space relationally

- *Lecture, three hours* - Postmodern and post-structuralist geographies; Relational geographies and political ecologies; Power and biopower; Affects, atmospheres, ontologies
- *Seminar, two hours* - Reading of place, bodies and power

Key readings:

Amin, A. (2015). Animated space. *Public Culture*, 27(2), 239–258.

Lancione, M. (Ed.). (2016). *Rethinking life at the margins: The assemblage of contexts, subjects and politics*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group - ONLY the intro

Nash, C. (2000). Performativity in practice: Some recent work in cultural geography. *Progress in Human Geography*, 24(4), 653–664.

Philo, C. (2012). A 'new Foucault' with lively implications—or 'the crawfish advances sideways'. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 37(4), 496–514.

WEEK III) Uneven development

- *Lecture, three hours* - Understanding inequalities; Segregation, social justice, marginality, and banishment; Homelessness and the spatial construction of the 'other'
- *Seminar, two hours* - Readings on marginality and racial capitalism

Key readings:

Caldeira, T. (2009). Marginality, Again?!. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33(3), 848–853.

Roy, A. (2019). Racial Banishment. In *Keywords in Radical Geography: Antipode at 50th*. Wiley-Blackwell : London

Thieme, T. (2013). The “hustle” amongst youth entrepreneurs in Mathare’s informal waste economy. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 7(3), 389–412.

Wacquant, L. (1999). Urban Marginality in the Coming Millennium. *Urban Studies*, 36(10), 1639–1647.

WEEK IV) The spatial grammars of race and gender

- *Lecture three hours* - Approaching 'difference' critically; Thinking dis/possession; Feminist and queer spatial grammars
- *Seminar, two hours* - Readings on feminist geographies and race

Key readings:

Derickson, K. D. (2017). Urban geography II: Urban geography in the Age of Ferguson. *Progress in Human Geography*, 41(2), 230–244.

Hawthorne, C. (2019). Black matters are spatial matters: Black geographies for the twenty-first century. *Geography Compass*, 13(11).

Kern, L. (2020). *Feminists City*. Verso: London and New York - ONLY the intro

WEEK V) Elements of geographical thinking: A global urban world

- *Lecture, three hours* - A critical approach to the urban; Urban grounds; Comparative urbanism?; Southern urbanism
- *Seminar, two hours* - Reading on southern and global urbanism

Key readings:

Lancione, M., & McFarlane, C. (2021). Navigating the global urban. In M. Lancione & C. McFarlane (Eds.), *Global Urbanism* (1st ed., pp. 3–13). Routledge: London

Roy, A. (2011). Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35(2), 223–238.

Simone, A. (2001). Straddling the Divides: Remaking Associational Life in the Informal African City. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 25(1), 102–117.

WEEK VI) Elements of geographical thinking: Housing and the struggle for inhabitation

- *Lecture, three hours* - What is 'home'?; Eviction; Dis/possession; The 2008 'crisis'; COVID-19 and housing
- *Seminar, two hours* - Reading on geographies of housing and its struggles

Key readings:

Baker, A. (2020). From eviction to evicting: Rethinking the technologies, lives and power sustaining displacement. *Progress in Human Geography*, 030913252091079.

García-Lamarca, M. (2017). Creating political subjects: Collective knowledge and action to enact housing rights in Spain. *Community Development Journal*, 52(3), 421–435.

Fields, D. (2015). Contesting the Financialization of Urban Space: Community Organizations and the Struggle to Preserve Affordable Rental Housing in New York City. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 37(2), 144–165.

WEEK VII) Elements of geographical thinking: Rioting, protesting, organising

- *Lecture, three hours* - What is a 'riot'?; Urban activism; Resistance and utopic geographical thinking; 'Race riots in the US city'; 'Housing unrest in the EU city'
- *Seminar, two hours* - Reading on geographies of struggle

Key readings:

Amin, A. (2003). Unruly Strangers? The 2001 Urban Riots in Britain. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27(2), 460–463.

Askins, K., & Mason, K. (2012). Us and Us: Agonism , Non-Violence and the Relational Spaces of Civic Activism. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 14(2), 422–430.

Iveson, K. (2013). Cities within the City: Do-It-Yourself Urbanism and the Right to the City: Do-it-yourself urbanism and the right to the city. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(3), 941–956.

WEEK VIII) Qualitative methods in-&-out

- *Lecture, three hours* - Cultural turn and the challenge of ethics; The craft of observation: Ethnography and geography; Visual cultures: approaching text otherwise
- *Seminar, two hours* - Reading on ethnographic writing, and then collective exercise on how to write an academic essay in Geography

Key readings:

Butz, D., & Besio, K. (2009). Autoethnography. *Geography Compass*, 3(5), 1660–1674.

Lassiter, L. E. (2001). From 'reading over the shoulders of natives' to 'reading alongside natives,' literally: Toward a collaborative and reciprocal ethnography. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 57(2), 137–149.

Rose, G. (1997). Situating knowledges: Positionality, reflexivities and other tactics. *Progress in Human Geography*, 21, 305–320.

WEEK IX) What a geographer can do: the politics of geographical research

- *Lecture, three hours* - Encounters and representations; Participation, engagement, research-activism?; The undercommons;
- *Seminar, two hours* - Watching an activist-research collective documentary on racialised

evictions in Bucharest, Romania and collective reflection on engaged research

Key readings:

Lancione, M. (2019). Caring for the endurance of a collective struggle. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 9(2), 216–219.

Moten, F., & Harney, S. (2004). The University and the Undercommons. *Social Text*, 22(2), 101–115.

Vilenica, A. (2019). Becoming an accomplice in housing struggles on Vulturilor Street. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 9(2), 210–213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820619850352>

WEEK X) Preparing for the exam

- *Workshop , three hours* - Feedback on the course and planning for final essay
- *Workshop, three hours* - Planning for final essay

Recommended readings

The readings for each lecture, which are going to compose the basis for the exam, are listed above. Additional readings can be provided on each topic. The papers can be accessed in the course's folder (shared with students during the first lecture). Additionally, for students who'd like to have a manual of reference (mandatory for non-attendees) they can refer to:

Cresswell, T. (2013). *Geographic Thought*. Wiley-Blackwell: London

Office hours

On Mondays, 2pm-3:30pm, *previous appointment*. On-line or face-to-face available. To book an appointment, please visit: <https://app.simplymeet.me/michele-lancione> (choose 'student').

Notes

The 2022-2023 iteration of the module will commence on Monday 26th September and terminates on Monday 5th December.

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