

GEOG 9121B – Digital Landscapes

Course Outline: Section 001 - Winter 2019

1. Course Information

1.1. Classroom Location:

Wednesdays 2-4pm
SSC 2322E

1.2. Contact Information:

Instructor: Agnieszka Leszczynski
Office: SSC 2413
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-2pm, or by appointment
Phone: 661-2111 x80161
Email: aleszczy@uwo.ca

The Department of Geography strives at all times to provide accessibility to all faculty, staff, students and visitors in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519-661-2147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

More information about "Accessibility at Western" is available at: <http://accessibility.uwo.ca>

2. Calendar Description

This seminar explores the various ways in which digital assemblages such as platforms, smart objects, and 'the cloud' materialize across, produce, and are produced by a range social, spatial, ecological, and urban landscapes. We will engage with a broad range of current works drawing on a diverse array of empirics, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks to examine landscapes such as smart cities, cloud ecologies, sensory environments, the cultural geographies of digital infrastructures, and the political landscapes – and possibilities – of the 'Internet of Things'.

2 hour seminar, 0.5 course

3. Required Books

- Blum A (2012) *Tubes: A Journey to the Centre of the Internet*. Harper Collins.
- Gabrys J (2016) *Planet Earth: Environmental Sensing Technology and the Making of a Computational Planet*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Greenfield A and Kim N (2013) *Against the Smart City*. Do Projects; available as a Kindle e-book via Amazon.
- Hu T (2016) *A Prehistory of the Cloud*. MIT Press.
- Mattern S (2017) *Code and Clay, Data and Dirt: Five Thousand Years of Urban Media*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Parrika J (2015) *A Geology of Media*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Peters JD (2016) *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media*. University of Chicago Press.
- Ratti C and Claudel M (2016) *The City of Tomorrow: Sensors, Networks, Hackers, and the Future of Urban Life*. Yale University Press.

- Rosenbalt A (2018) *Uberland: How Algorithms are Rewriting the Rules of Work*. University of California Press.
- Starosielski N (2015) *The Undersea Network*. Duke University Press.
- Tufekci Z (2017) *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. Yale University Press.

4. Course Objectives

- Engage with the most recent debates and literatures relating to the intersections of digital media, content, and infrastructures and their material, cultural, social, and political landscapes.
- Identify a range of intellectual traditions, disciplinary approaches methodologies, and empirical subjects/objects that inform the breadth of approaches to researching and theorizing digital landscapes.
- Foster a positive, welcoming, and supportive atmosphere for substantive scholarly exchange and debate.

5. Learning Outcomes

- Identify and analyze the role of digital technologies, media, content, and infrastructures in the creation and reproduction of social and physical environments, ecologies, institutions, structures, and spatialities.
- Reflect critically on discourses, theories, and methodological approaches to digital technologies in social science, media studies, and digital humanities research.
- Understand digital media, infrastructures, and content productions as spatially situated and simultaneously spatializing (i.e., as produced by and productive of environments, institutions, infrastructures, and political arrangements).

6. Evaluation

Evaluation Component	Percentage of Course Grade	Assignment Schedule
Seminar Participation	35%	Weekly
Seminar Facilitation	15%	TBD (one seminar in the semester)
Seminar Paper	50%	Due on the last day of class, Wed April 3 rd
Outline & working bibliography	7.5% of paper grade	Due February 27 th (after reading week)

Seminar participants will be expected to come to seminar having completed the readings, and be prepared to meaningfully participate in discussions and discussions through constructive and positive engagement with their peers. Seminar participants will also be responsible for convening one of the weekly seminars (a seminar of their preference; every attempt will be made to ensure participants are able to convene the seminar of either their first or second choice).

The **seminar paper** is to be on a topic of participants' choosing that connects to the themes of the course – digitality & landscapes – both broadly. While the term 'landscapes' is used with significant latitude in this course, all of the readings prefigure landscapes in the spatial sense (materially existing, having spatial extent, having implications for spatiality and/or the organization of space,

and/or highlighting the specificities of particular places). Seminar papers should likewise espouse this expansive though still meaningful interpretation of 'landscapes'. The seminar paper will synthesize major themes and debates in academic literatures beyond the seminar reading list, advance an identifiable argument, and engage in a scholarly conversation in ~5000 – 6500 words (excluding refs). A 1-2 page outline that identifies a prospective topic, working thesis, and relevant literatures is due the seminar after reading week (February 27), and is worth 7.5% of the final paper grade. Bullet points are not only allowed but encouraged where appropriate (for the outline).

Students are **REQUIRED TO COMPLETE & RECEIVE A PASSING GRADE OVER ALL COMPONENTS** of this course. There are no exceptions to this. In other words, failing to meaningfully participate in the seminar will mean that a student will be unable to receive a passing grade in the course. Extra assignments to improve grades will **NOT** be accepted.

Grades will not be adjusted on the basis of need. It is important to monitor your performance in the course. Remember: You are responsible for your grades in this course.

7. Seminar Schedule

Week 1 | January 9 | Defining the digital, defining landscapes

- what is technology?
 - Hands J (2011) *@ is for Activism: Dissent, Resistance and Rebellion in a Digital Culture*. Pluto Press.
 - Chapter 1, "Technology and Activism".
- what is 'the digital'?
 - Lunenfeld P (1999) Screen Grabs: The Digital Dialectic and New Media. In Lunenfeld P. (ed), *The Digital Dialectic: New Essays on New Media*. The MIT Press: xiv-xxi.
 - Chayko M (2018) *Superconnected: the internet, digital media, and techno-social life*, 2nd ed. SAGE.
 - Chapter 1, "Superconnectedness."
 - Chapter 2, "Creating the Internet Age", up until the section 'Early Online Networking' on pp 29.
- what is 'the virtual' / virtuality?
 - Hayles NK (1999) The Condition of Virtuality. In Lunenfeld P. (ed), *The Digital Dialectic: New Essays on New Media*. The MIT Press: 69-94.
- there are no such things as digital landscapes
 - Graham M (2013) Geography/Internet: ethereal alternate dimensions of cyberspace or grounded augmented realities? *The Geographical Journal* 179(2): 177-182.
 - Leszczynski A (2019) [Digital] Spatialities. In Ash J, Kitchin R and Leszczynski A (eds.), *Digital Geographies*. SAGE: 13-23.

Week 2 | January 16 | Physical Landscapes I: Environmental geologies

- Parrika J (2015) *A Geology of Media*. University of Minnesota Press.

Week 3 | January 23 | Physical Landscapes II: From geology to the city

- Mattern S (2017) *Code and Clay, Data and Dirt: Five Thousand Years of Urban Media*. University of Minnesota Press.

Week 4 | January 30 | Smart Cities I: Digital utopias

- Ratti C and Claudel M (2016) *The City of Tomorrow: Sensors, Networks, Hackers, and the Future of Urban Life*. Yale University Press.

Week 5 | February 6 | Smart Cities II: Digital dystopias

- Greenfield A and Kim N (2013) *Against the Smart City*. Do Projects; available as a Kindle e-book via Amazon.

Week 6 | February 13 | Algorithms & The City

- Rosenbalt A (2018) *Uberland: How Algorithms are Rewriting the Rules of Work*. University of California Press.

Week 7 | February 20 | READING WEEK

- **No seminar this week.**

Week 8 | February 27 | Infrastructures I: Internet landscapes

- Blum A (2012) *Tubes: A Journey to the Centre of the Internet*. Harper Collins.

Week 9 | March 6 | Infrastructures II: Cultural landscapes

- Starosielski N (2015) *The Undersea Network*. Duke University Press.

Week 10 | March 13 | Infrastructures III: Sensory landscapes

- Gabrys J (2016) *Planet Earth: Environmental Sensing Technology and the Making of a Computational Planet*. University of Minnesota Press.

Week 11 | March 20 | Cloud Landscapes I: Histories

- Hu T (2016) *A Prehistory of the Cloud*. MIT Press.

Week 12 | March 27 | Cloud landscapes II: Ecologies

- Peters JD (2016) *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media*. University of Chicago Press.

Week 12 | April 3 | Political landscapes

- Tufekci Z (2017) *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. Yale University Press.

8. University Policy Regarding Illness

8.1. Illness

Please visit the link to the university policy for more information.

<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=> - Page 12

If you feel that you have a medical or personal concern that is interfering with your work, you should contact your Instructor, Graduate Program Administrator, Supervisor, or SGPS.

8.2. Attendance

Attendance at and participation in seminars is mandatory.

9. Scholastic Discipline for Graduate Students

For the complete policy and regulations see:

http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/regulations/13.html

10. Procedures for Appealing Academic Evaluations

Students may appeal an academic decision or ruling in accordance with the appeal procedures set out below. Students have a right to appeal to their graduate programs and, if unsuccessful, to the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies). Some decisions may be appealed further to the Senate Review Board Academic. The Vice-Provost's rulings in academic matters are final unless overturned or modified on appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic (SRBA).

For the complete policy and regulations see:

http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/regulations/13.html

11. Support Services

11.1. Support Services

Student Support Services can be reached at: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Services can be reached at: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

11.2. Short Absences

If you miss a class due to minor illness or other problems, check your course outline for information regarding attendance requirements and make sure you are not missing a test or exam. Cover any readings and arrange to borrow the missed lecture notes from a classmate.

11.3. Extended Absences

If you expect to be away from campus for an extended amount of time, please make prior arrangements with your course instructors and/or supervisor. A reminder that attendance at seminars is mandatory.

For the complete policy on registration, see:

http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/regulations/4.html

11.4. Academic Concerns

If you are in academic difficulty, it is strongly recommended that you see your Graduate Program Administrator, Supervisor, or SGPS.

12. Important Dates:

January 7: Classes resume

January 15: Last day to add a second term half or full course

February 18: Family Day – Department Office Closed

February 19-22: Spring Reading Week (No classes; Department Office open)

March 7: Last day to drop a second terms full or half course without penalty

April 9: Classes end

April 11-30: Final Examination Period

April 19: Good Friday

April 21: Easter Sunday

April 22: Easter Monday

13. Other Information

For a list of Graduate Regulations please visit:

http://www.grad.uwo.ca/current_students/regulations/index.html

For The University of Western Ontario Senate Regulations, please see the Handbook of Academic and Scholarship Policies at:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/index.html

Email Policies: Please respect the fact that Professors receive multiple emails from students and will deal with those emails in a fair, organized and timely manner. Please ensure the subject line contains the name, number and section of the course in question.