

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
University of Toronto

GGR 254: GEOGRAPHY OF THE USA

Instructor: Patrick Vitale
Office: Sidney Smith Hall, Room 5068
Office hours: Mondays, 5:00-6:00 or by appointment
Email: patrick.vitale@utoronto.ca
Class time: Mondays, 6:00-8:00
Class location: Bahen Centre (BA) 1160

Teaching Assistant: Robert Kopack
Office: Sidney Smith Hall, 620A (basement)
Office hours: Mondays 10:30-12:30
*****Robert will not hold office hours on the week of October 14 or November 11*****
Email: robert.kopack@mail.utoronto.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Rather than presenting an overview of the regional geography of the United States, this course considers how violence has been a unifying force in the making and evolution of the geographies of the United States. By tackling a number of the most difficult issues facing the United States at a variety of geographic scales, we will consider four important questions: 1) What is violence and what does it have to do with the geography of the United States?; 2) how are the United States and its regions formed through inequality and violence?; 3) how and why are spaces created that allow the movement of some people and things, while they restrict the movement of others?; and 4) how are places and regions defined, who defines them, who and what is excluded in the process, and what does violence have to do with it?

OBJECTIVES

Through an examination of various geographies of violence, you will develop a broad understanding of the geography of the United States, including the political, cultural, economic, and historical geography of different regions. You will also develop an understanding of some of the main concepts in human geography and many of the key forces shaping the United States.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assignment #1 (due on September 30)	20%
Assignment #2 (due on November 25)	35%
Mid-term test (October 28)	15%
Final examination (a two-hour exam held during the exam period)	30%

TEXTBOOKS AND READINGS

There is a significant amount of reading for this class. You should plan to allot at least five hours every week for reading. I selected each of the readings in the hope that they will be both illuminating and captivating. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I have. It is essential that you read all of the readings before the day that they are assigned. If you do not do the

readings you will not do well in the course. The assignments and exams are based entirely on the readings and lecture material.

There is one mandatory textbook that you will need to purchase. It is a popular paperback and available at the University bookstore or online for very reasonable prices.

- Hedges, Chris, and Joe Sacco. *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*. New York: Nation Books, 2012

All other readings are available online either through the University of Toronto Library or other websites. You can access these readings by following the URLs on the syllabus. These URLs link to the journal or book and you will still have to navigate to the required reading using the bibliographic information provided on the syllabus. You can also find these URLs on the blackboard. In order to access many of these readings you will need to be logged onto a computer that is connected to the University of Toronto network.

ASSIGNMENT #1 (20%) (due at the beginning of class on September 30)

Film, Book, Video Game, Television, Music, or Media Review.

For this assignment you will write a short, pithy, and readable review that examines a film, book, video game, TV show, piece of music, or other form of media and what it tells us about the role of violence in the shaping and making of the United States. This review should not be a summary of the piece of media you are reviewing. Rather you should present a critical reading of that media that uses it as a springboard to address the larger themes of this course.

MID-TERM TEST (15%) (October 28)

This short test of slightly more than an hour will test your understanding of course materials in the first six weeks of the course. I will distribute a study sheet of key terms that could appear on the test.

ASSIGNMENT #2 (35%) (due at beginning of class on November 25)

Report on a Violent Geography.

For this assignment you are to report on a violent geography related to the United States of your choosing. Not only should you provide an analysis of this geography, but you must also explain how it was shaped by violence *and* how it is connected to some of the themes of the course.

You are also welcome to pursue alternative means of pursuing the above questions, such as making films, artwork, graphic novels, songs, pamphlets, posters, etc. However, if you wish to choose an option besides a traditional paper you must meet or correspond with me or the TA beforehand so we can approve your project.

FINAL EXAM (30%) (during the exam period)

This exam will test your knowledge of all of the materials covered in the course. It will be a two-hour exam held during the exam period and will include essays and short answer.

NOTE ON WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS AND LATE WORK

- The assignments in this course are of limited length because I want you to invest a significant amount of time refining your writing. I will evaluate all assignments based on

the quality of your analysis and your ability to communicate in a clear, grammatically correct, and stylistically innovative way. If you need help editing your work please visit a writing center or drop by during office hours at least one week prior to the assignment's due date. I also encourage you to find someone to help proofread your writing.

- Turn in all work in paper form at the beginning of the class or in the drop box located outside of the Geography main office (Sidney Smith Hall, Room 5047). If you are handing your assignment in late, you must submit *both* the paper version (in the dropbox) *and* electronically via email. You can only turn in a late assignment during business hours, between 9am and 4:30pm, Monday – Friday. Late work will be marked down 5 percentage points per day, not including Saturday and Sunday (E.g., something submitted Friday -10% and Monday -15%). Except in cases with appropriate documentation, work turned in more than seven calendar days after the due date will not be accepted.
- You must inform me immediately when circumstances prevent you from writing a term test or submitting an assignment. This should be no later than one week from the test or due date. You must provide an original copy of a U of T medical form (see : <http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca/>) or other documentation of non-medical emergencies. For non-medical emergencies, please contact your college registrar, who may be able to provide you with a letter documenting your situation. Failure to comply will result in a grade of zero.
- With regard to a missed midterm test, you will be given the opportunity to sit the test at a later date (TBD) only if you present a valid medical documentation or a letter from your registrar. All other missed tests will be given a 0.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- Course attendance is mandatory. I will post slides on Blackboard, but these slides will not be useful if you do not attend class.
- If you wish to use a laptop or electronic tablet to take notes in the course please sit in the front ten rows of the class. You are only to use these tools for taking notes and your computer should not be connected to the Internet. If Internet use becomes a problem I will exclude laptops and tablets from the classroom.
- You may make an audio recording of the course, but should ask my permission before doing so. I ask that you make audio recordings only for your own use, not for distribution.
- Use of all other electronic devices is prohibited. This includes phones, smart phones, cameras, etc. If there is an exceptional reason for using one of these devices please contact me.
- Instructor-student contact typically occurs in the classroom and during office hours. Email contact is limited to questions requiring simple yes - no answers, making appointments, and dealing with emergency situations. Please come to office hours or make an appointment if you wish to discuss matters related to the class.
- I have high expectations of you as a student and you should have the same expectations for me as an instructor. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions about the class please feel free to contact me.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is an academic offense at the University of Toronto. Plagiarism is quoting (or paraphrasing) the work of an author (including the work of fellow students) without a proper

citation. Students also should not be submitting any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought, without first discussing with the instructor. Please consult the “Rules and Regulations” section of the Arts and Science Calendar (www.artsandscience.utoronto.ca/ofr/calendar/rules.htm) for further information and check the ‘How not to plagiarize’ website at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

ACCOMMODATION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> Please feel free to communicate with me about how I can help create a classroom that works for you.

TOPICS AND READINGS

September 9. Introduction: What is violence? What are violent geographies?

Suggested readings:

- The short essays by Patrick Bigger, Raju Das, and Harold Perkins available here: <http://antipodefoundation.org/2013/05/20/explosive-geographies/>
- Farmer, Paul. “On Suffering and Structural Violence: a View from Below.” *Daedalus* 125, no. 1 (1996): 261–283. <http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/367583>

September 16. The Colonial Past, the Colonial Present

- Hedges, Chris, and Joe Sacco. *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*. New York: Nation Books, 2012 (pages xi-57).

September 23. Wilderness and the Frontier

- Turner, Frederick Jackson. “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” In *The Frontier in American History*, 1–38. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1921. <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/turner/chapter1.html>
- Cronon, William. “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature.” In *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, edited by William Cronon, 69–90. New York: W.W. Norton, 1995. http://www.williamcronon.net/writing/Trouble_with_Wilderness_Main.html

September 30. The making of the border

- Nevins, Joseph. “A Beating Worse Than Death: Imagining and Contesting Violence in the US-Mexico Borderlands.” *AmeriQuests* 2, no. 1 (2005). <http://ejournals.library.vanderbilt.edu/ojs/index.php/ameriquests/article/view/64>
- Finnegan, William. “The Deportation Machine: Annals of Immigration.” *The New Yorker*, April 29, 2013. <http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/374829>

October 7. Death, violence, and uses of the border (Assignment #1 due)

- Hedges, Chris, and Joe Sacco. *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*. New York: Nation Books, 2012 (177-223)

Suggested readings:

- Mitchell, Don. "Work, Struggle, Death, and Geographies of Justice: The Transformation of Landscape in and Beyond California's Imperial Valley." *Landscape Research* 32, no. 5 (2007): 559–577. <http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/367489>
- Wright, Melissa W. "A Manifesto Against Femicide." *Antipode* 33, no. 3 (2001): 550–566. <http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/367741>

October 21. The Atlantic economy, slavery and Jim Crow

- Rediker, Marcus. "History from Below the Water Line: Sharks and the Atlantic Slave Trade." *Atlantic Studies* 5, no. 2 (August 2008): 285–297. <http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/374828>

October 28. The ghetto and mass incarceration (Mid-term test)

- Wacquant, Loïc. "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration." *New Left Review* 13 (2002): 41–60. <http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/367743>

Suggested Reading:

- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. "Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography." *The Professional Geographer* 54, no. 1 (2002): 15–24. <http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/367747>

November 4. Deindustrialization and the rise of the rustbelt

- Hedges, Chris, and Joe Sacco. *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*. New York: Nation Books, 2012 (pages 59-113).
- Solnit, Rebecca. "Detroit Arcadia: Exploring the post-American Landscape." *Harper's Magazine*, July 2007. <http://harpers.org/archive/2007/07/detroit-arcadia/>

Suggested readings:

- Sugrue, Thomas. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. (Chapters 1-3). <http://go.utlib.ca/cat/8019962>
- Lynd, Staughton. "The Genesis of the Idea of a Community Right to Industrial Property in Youngstown and Pittsburgh, 1977-1987." *Journal of American History* 74, no. 3 (1987): 926–58. <http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/367745>

November 18. The Coalfield Wars and the making of Appalachia

- Hedges, Chris, and Joe Sacco. *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*. New York: Nation Books, 2012 (115-175).

Suggested reading:

- Andrews, Thomas G. *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008. <http://go.utlib.ca/cat/8203742>

November 25. Violence and the suburban bubble (Assignment #2 due)

- Sugrue, Thomas. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. (Chapter 9, 231-58). <http://go.utlib.ca/cat/8019962>

December 2. America's Nuclear History: An overview of selected Cold War Geographies, guest lecture by teaching assistant Robert Kopack

- Barnes, Trevor J and Matthew Farish. "Between Regions: Science, Militarism, and American Geography from World War to Cold War." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, no. 4 (2006): 807-26.
<http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/377877>

December 4. Guantanamo and the body

- Letter from Ahmed Zaid Salim Zuhair (August 15, 2008).
http://humanrights.ucdavis.edu/projects/the-guantanamo-testimonials-project/testimonies/prisoner-testimonies/zuhair_letter_20080815.pdf
- Griswold, Eliza, "American Gulag: Prisoners' Tales from the War on Terror." *Harpers Magazine*, September 2006. <http://humanrights.ucdavis.edu/projects/the-guantanamo-testimonials-project/testimonies/prisoner-testimonies/american-gulag-prisoners2019-ales-from-the-war-on-terror-by-eliza-griswold>
- Orzeck, Reecia. "Hunger Strike: The Body as Resource." In *Body/State*, edited by Angus Cameron, Jen Dickinson, and Nicola Smith, 31–50. Burlington: Ashgate, 2013.

The term "United States", when used in the geographical sense, is the contiguous United States, the state of Alaska, the island state of Hawaii, the five insular territories of Puerto Rico, Northern Mariana Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa, and minor outlying possessions.[1] The United States shares land borders with Canada and Mexico and maritime borders with Russia, Cuba 48 112. How Geography Gave the US Power. Geography of the United States. All 50 U.S. states summarized (Geography Now!) How the Geography of the US is Weirder Than You Think. United States Physical Geography. Transcription. This video was made possible by Squarespace. Build your professional web presence for 10% off by going to squarespace.com/Wendover. Equality of States. Main ones: Puerto-Rico and Virginia islands. Philadelphia first unofficial capital of the USA> the main land mass of the USA includes the 48 states. There are 2 separate states of Hawaii in the Pacific ocean and Alaska which occupies the north-western part of the North Amer.Continent. The capital of the USA is Washington which is the District of Columbia. The official lang.is English. National anthem: the Star Spangled Banner (since 1931). The United States is a nation in the Western Hemisphere. It consists of forty eight contiguous states on the North American continent; Alaska, an enormous peninsula which forms the northwestern most part of North America, and Hawaii, an 48 Forty-eight of the States are in the single region between Canada and Mexico; this group is referred to, with varying precision and formality, as the "continental" or "contiguous" "United States", and as the "Lower 48".