

GEOG 494: Urban Field Studies

Fall 2011

Wednesdays 2.35-5.25, Burnside 426

Instructor

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Only for safety-related emergencies, and for students trying to find the group or professor in the field!

Course Description

This course introduces you to human geography fieldwork in the urban setting. We will explore current issues in social and cultural geography, urban studies and planning, using Montreal as our laboratory. This is a hands-on course – you will learn by trial and error.

In the classroom, we will focus on techniques for understanding the urban environment: questionnaires, interviews, observation, mapping and photography. Much of our class time will be spent in the field, putting these techniques into practice. As the semester progresses, the emphasis will shift towards students' own field research projects.

Course Goals

- To appreciate how knowledge is generated in human geography
- To understand how to devise a research question, and select appropriate methods to answer that question
- To gain skills and confidence in the use of specific geographic field methods, such as questionnaires, interviewing and observation
- To appreciate the economic, social and cultural processes that shape Montreal
- To develop team-working and problem-solving skills

Texts

You must purchase a notebook for use as your field journal. A spiral-bound, plain paper notebook of A5 or similar size is the most appropriate. You'll need space to sketch maps as well as write notes. A map of Montreal will also help – the free bus map (from a tourist office or STM) is a good option.

All required readings will be posted on WebCT.

The following textbooks are highly recommended, especially if you will be completing an Honours thesis, and are in the bookstore. While the required chapters will be posted on WebCT, other chapters will be useful as a reference. Copies are also available on reserve in the Social Science and Humanities Library.

Flowerdew, Robin and David Martin (Eds.) (2005), *Methods in Human Geography*. 2nd edition. Harlow: Prentice Hall.

Northey, Margot, David Knight and Dianne Draper (2009). *Making Sense – A Student's Guide to Research and Writing. Geography and Environmental Sciences*. 4th edition. Don Mills, ON, Oxford University Press

Assessment

Fieldwork plan	10%	Due: 5pm, Fri Oct 14
Research report	45%	Due: Start of class, Nov 30
Oral presentation	15%	In class on Nov 23 and Nov 30
Self- and peer evaluation	5%	Due: Start of class, Nov 30
Field journal	25%	Due: Start of class, Oct 12 and Nov 23

The fieldwork component of this class is a team project. It will require you to undertake several days of fieldwork in Montreal, outside of class time. More details will be given in class.

The fieldwork plan, research report and oral presentation are a group effort. Grading will take into account your individual contributions to the group products, based on your self-evaluation and the evaluations of your peers. The field journal must be your own work.

Fieldwork Plan

Due: 5pm, Fri October 14 in the Drop Box, 7th floor, Burnside Hall

Word limit: 1000 words (approx. 3-4 pages), excluding bibliography

Your group's fieldwork plan will provide the template for your field data collection efforts. It should set out your research question, discuss how that question sheds light on "bigger picture" issues, and show how you intend to answer that question. While your plan will almost certainly evolve as you proceed, it provides the starting point for your analysis. The fieldwork plan should include:

- A clear statement of your research question.
- Discuss why that research question is of interest. For example, does looking at gentrification on the Plateau contribute to theories of gentrification more broadly?
- What literature do you expect to use? Include a preliminary bibliography.
- Discuss what data you intend to collect and how, and why that approach makes most sense for your question.
- Discuss any challenges you expect to encounter.

This is a field course, so the emphasis must be on data that you collect yourself (primary data). However, you are encouraged to make use of secondary data from the census and other sources in order to complement your own data.

You will receive feedback on your fieldwork plan during individual consultation sessions on October 19.

Research Report

Due: Start of class, November 30

Word limit: 6,000 words (approx. 20 pages), excluding appendices

Your group's research report will organize and communicate the findings from your fieldwork, and place this in the context of the broader literature on the topic. The report should be structured as follows (see Flowerdew & Martin Ch. 17 for more details of what should go into each section):

- Title page and contents
- Abstract (about 250 words) – a succinct summary of the question and results
- Introduction – a broad overview that establishes the importance of your question, draws the reader in, and sets out your research questions and overall approach
- Literature review – places your work in the context of previous research on the topic
- Methods – explains and justifies your choice of methods, and details your data collection and analysis procedures
- Results and discussion (can be separate sections or combined) – presents your analysis, summary tables, charts, maps, statistical tests and interpretation
- Conclusion – presents your overall findings, answers the questions that you set out in the introduction, and offers ideas for future work
- References – a full list of all references, texts, and publications cited within the body of the report, using APA style (<http://www.mcgill.ca/files/library/APA.pdf>)
- Appendices – these might include questionnaires, interview questions and survey procedures, and tables and charts that amplify the summary results in the main text.

Oral Presentation

Nov 23 and 30 (sign-up in early November)

Time limit: 15 minutes, plus 5 for questions (strictly enforced!)

Your group will present your research problem, methodology and findings to the class, using appropriate visual aids such as Powerpoint. All members of the group should participate in delivering the presentation.

Self- and Peer Evaluation

Due: Start of class on Nov 30

Provide details on what you personally contributed to the three group assignments (fieldwork plan, research report and oral presentation), the data collection, and the overall organization of the group. Also provide a brief assessment of your fellow group members **and yourself** on the following criteria:

- Reliability (showing up on time for meetings, completing his/her parts of assignments on time)
- Contributing ideas and information
- Listening to and respecting the opinions and contributions of other group members

Templates for the evaluation will be distributed in November. These evaluations will be held in strict confidence, and will only be seen by the professor and TA.

Field Journal

Due: Start of class on Oct 12 and Nov 23

The field journal is your record of thoughts, sketches, questions and ideas. You should use it to respond to the assignments for each excursion, as well as for additional thoughts and ideas that you come up with during the excursions. You should also use a separate part of the journal for your group field research project. (The easiest way to do this is turn it upside down and start at the back.)

Your field journal must be legible. However, do not attempt to make it a polished piece of work! Notes rather than complete sentences are fine. Half-finished ideas, rough sketches, musings and questions that you pose but don't answer fully are all part of the fieldwork process, and your journal is the place for them.

If you miss a class, you will need to make up the in-class field assignment in your own time. The assignments will be posted on WebCT *after* the relevant class.

For ideas on what a field journal should include, see the following (posted on Web CT):

Northey, Margot, David Knight and Dianne Draper, 2009, "Doing Field Work and Writing About It," in *Making Sense – A Student's Guide to Research and Writing. Geography and Environmental Sciences*. 4th edition. Don Mills, ON, Oxford University Press. Chapter 9, pp 133-144.

Class Schedule

On many days, we will spend at least part of the class in the field – sun, rain or snow. You must come appropriately dressed, including comfortable footwear and waterproof clothing if necessary. You will need a pass or money for the Metro/bus, and on Day 1, money for the café.

On some days, we will meet in the field. You will have enough time to get to the meeting point if you leave McGill promptly at 2.25pm. We will remain in the field until the end of class (5.25pm), so plan accordingly if you want to make arrangements for directly after class.

This schedule is subject to change. Please look out for any changes to meeting times and locations, which will be announced by e-mail.

Class	Meet at	Topic	Activity	Required Readings (all posted on WebCT)
Sep 7	BH 426	Introduction Why fieldwork? Ways of generating geographic knowledge	Excursion: Cafe culture on St Laurent	
Sep 14	BH 426	Identifying a research problem	Excursion: Gay Village	Podmore, Gone Underground?
Sep 21	BH 426	Quantitative methods – surveys, sampling By 10am on Thurs Sep 22: e-mail project preferences to TA		Flowerdew & Martin Ch. 6 (questionnaires)
Sep 28	BH 426	Cognitive mapping Planning methods		Lynch, The Image of the City, Ch. 2 and skim Ch. 3 Boarnet et al., The Irving Minnesota Inventory to Measure Built Environments
Oct 5	Côte-Vertu Metro at 3pm	Planning and transportation	Excursion: Bois Franc Meet at Côte-Vertu Metro at 1500. It's a 35 minute Metro ride from McGill Metro, so plan accordingly. We will take the 1505 bus (#70) to Bois-Franc.	Grant and Bohdanow, New urbanism developments in Canada
Oct 12	BH 426	Qualitative methods – interviews, participant observation Photography Field journal due (will be returned next week) Fieldwork plan due Fri Oct 14 at 5pm	Excursion: McCord exhibition on McGill College Ave	Flowerdew & Martin Ch. 7 (interviews) Flowerdew & Martin Ch. 15 (visual analysis) Deverteuil, Changing Landscapes of SW Montreal
Oct 19	BH 426	Consultation sessions and feedback on proposal (Sign up for a time in class on Oct 12)		

Class	Meet at	Topic	Activity	Required Readings (all posted on WebCT)
Oct 26	TBD – varies by group	Archival methods (Group I) Housing and immigration (Group II)	Excursion: Centre D'Histoire and City Archives (Group I) Excursion: Parc Extension (Group II)	Group I: Fischler, What Sort of Problem is the Replanning of the Turcot Interchange? Group II: RAMPE, Community Urban Development Plan for Parc Extension
Nov 2	TBD – varies by group	Archival methods (Group II) Housing and immigration (Group I)	Excursion: Centre D'Histoire and City Archives (Group II) Excursion: Parc Extension (Group I)	Group I: RAMPE, Community Urban Development Plan for Parc Extension Group II: Fischler, What Sort of Problem is the Replanning of the Turcot Interchange?
Nov 9	BH 426	Writing up a literature review Data analysis		Flowerdew & Martin Chs 17-19
Nov 16	BH 426	Writing up a field report	Excursion: Underground City	Brown, The Indoor City
Nov 23	BH 426	Final presentations Field journal due		
Nov 30	BH 426	Final presentations Report due Self- and peer evaluation due		

Team Formation

The field research project is a team effort. You will be assigned a team in late September. Teams will consist of 3-4 people, and will be organized with attention to your preferences regarding topic and team members. More details will be given in class.

Safety

Safety is the most important priority. Do not take any risks to collect data, whether during class time or for your own projects. In particular:

- ALWAYS work with a partner or in a small group when in the field. This includes the in-class assignments.
- If asked to leave by a business owner, do so immediately and without protest.
- Carry a mobile phone when in the field. If you do not have one, talk to the professor or TA.
- Make sure you have the emergency contact number (see top of course outline)

Equipment

The Department of Geography has equipment that may be useful for your group project, including clipboards, clicker-counters, GPS receivers and florescent vests. Contact Paula Kestelman (paulak@geog.mcgill.ca or in Burnside 613). You can borrow digital cameras and recorders from Audiovisual (<https://home.mcgill.ca/collaboration/aa/>).

Think also about how your group will collaborate and share drafts, data, etc. Dropbox (www.dropbox.com) is a useful, free service that synchronizes files between different users.

Late Submission of Assignments

Students can make a formal request to the professor for special consideration for an extension to an assignment due date with one of the following documents in hand:

- A Medical Doctor's note which specifically states that you were unable to hand in an assignment by the due date because of a medical emergency, or
- A bereavement notice from a newspaper or other legitimate documentation in the case of a family or close friend's death.

In the case of a group assignment, the request should be made by the affected student.

Ten percent will be deducted for every 24-hour period a piece of assessment is late. The first 24-hour period starts at the time the piece was due (e.g. if you submit something at 5.30pm when it was due at 5pm, that equates to a 10% deduction). *Due at the start of class means 2.35pm. Poor organisation is not a valid reason for an extension of the due date.*

Students With Disabilities

If you have a disability please contact the professor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the *Office for Students with Disabilities* at 514-398-6009 before you do this. If you have any mobility difficulties, please contact the professor on the first day of class, so that we can ensure that field locations are accessible.

Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

Mutual Respect

Mutual respect is expected at all times amongst instructors, teaching assistants, support staff and students at McGill University. Students are referred to the Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities (the 'Green Book') for McGill's policies on Code of Conduct and to www.mcgill.ca/dp-cio/epolicies for McGill's E-policies.

Language

In accordance with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.