GPHY 870: Historical and Cultural Issues in Fieldwork: Winter 2020
DRAFT ONLY

Instructor: Dr. Laura Cameron, Mac-Corry Hall Rm. E303
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Classroom: M-C E229

Class Times: Tuesdays 11:30 to 2:30

Objectives: This course actively explores the histories, practises and cultural meanings of fieldwork. Geographical fieldwork is considered along with conceptions of the ‘field’ in allied disciplines such as ecology and anthropology. Constructions of the ‘field’ are addressed in terms of empire, nationalism, ‘nature’, pedagogy, translocalism, the lab-field border, performativity and in relation to its role as a gendered, ethical, imaginative, sensory and affective space of knowledge and activity.

Fieldwork has long had a key role in the making of knowledge in both social and natural sciences. Recent work in geography, sociology and the history of science has begun to explore diverse cultures of the field, raising a range of questions about the nature of field knowledge. Where is the field and for whom? The course focuses on case studies and currents pertinent to the study of field cultures within North America and elsewhere. The primary objective is to provide opportunities for in-depth discussion and activities to help understand and reassess the motives, practises and status of fieldwork. Both ‘human’ and ‘physical’ geography students are most welcome.

Weekly seminars will involve excursions, discussion of the course readings, films, field exercises as well as presentations integrating course themes and reflections upon the students’ past and future fieldwork activities. The readings, including relevant journal articles and book chapters, will be made available.

Evaluation: Students will be responsible for leading the discussion of particular readings, engaging in weekly activities and discussions, offering a seminar presentation, keeping a ‘field’ journal and completing four ‘field exercises’. The tentative mark breakdown is as follows:

- Participation & Presentations.........25%
- ‘Field Journal’ Assignment............35%
- ‘Field Exercises’ (4)....................40%

A key theme for this course is “walking.” For the ‘Journal Assignment’, I would ask each of you to make weekly entries in a journal based upon the assigned readings, our discussions, your presentations and any “outside” material including films, radio programs, newspaper articles, found objects, etc. that seem relevant to the week’s topic. As frequently as possible, I would ask that you make a habit of doing the week’s reading and then going for a walk before writing your entry. A record of the walks themselves...
may be incorporated into your entries in various ways. The average individual average length of each entry should be 400 words minimum. Illustrations, mappings and diagrams are also encouraged. The journals may act as forums to focus and synthesize concepts concerning fieldwork considered in class but please feel free to reflect on how the readings are connected to other things you are interested in. A hand-written exercise book may be the most convenient format but bound, typed pages also are fine. Towards the end of term, you will submit the whole journal and select your three “best” entries for evaluation. In terms of evaluation I am looking for (1) diligence = keeping at it each week) (2) reflection (extension of self to readings and discussions through engagement, thought, self-reflexiveness and creativity) and (3) synthesis. By synthesis I am referring to the demonstrated ability to critically analyze course concepts and bring them into meaningful relation with each other (as well as with your own fieldwork interests/experience if possible). Please come see me with an entry if you would like early feedback on this assignment.

There are four short ‘field exercises’ in total, each worth 10% of the overall grade. Details and deadlines will be provided in class. In general terms, these exercises provide opportunities to stretch your imagination, try new skills and explore and reassess fieldwork (yours or the work of others) with the aid of the critical readings/discussions provided in the course (as well as relevant materials you encounter on your own steam).

- 1. Soundwalking
- 2. Archives & geographies of correspondence/relational knowledge
- 3. Playful spaces; geographical practices on foot
- 4. Your field imagination: whispered fieldnotes sound installation

Participants will help to introduce the reading materials each week and responsibilities will be shared as equally as possible.

Late Policy: If special circumstances make a deadline extension necessary, it must be arranged in advance. Without prearranged permission, late assignments will lose 5% per day.

Course Schedule: Tentative ONLY

Week 1 Introduction: Where is the Field?

Week 2  *Senses in Fieldwork: Focus on Sonic Geography and Sound Walking*

This class will involve an expedition to the outdoor gallery Fieldwork near Perth. We will meet first in the usual place, The Rutherford Room.

- Cathy Lane, ‘Sounds, history, memory’ pp. 28-30
- Hildegard Westerkamp, ‘Soundwalking’ pp. 49-54


[plus Raffles, H. ‘W is for the sound for global warming’ and Smith, S. ‘Performing the (sound)world’]

*Exercise 1 distributed.*

Week 3  *Identity Formation and Fieldwork Practices I*

This class meets initially in the Faculty Club.


See O’Rourke, D “On the Making of ‘Cannibal Tours’”

Week 4  *Geology and Fieldwork* plus *Debate: Whom to trust?*

TBA


Week 5 The Field and the City

TBA
Woolf, V. “Street Haunting: A London Adventure” in Street Haunting and Other Essays (p 225-240)

Archive Visit with Heather Home & Exercise 2 distributed.

Week 6 Ethics and Fieldwork

TBA

Week 7 Story-telling and the Field

TBA
Methods session on Oral History

Exercise 3 distributed.

**Week 8 Writing the Field**
TBA, Special Guest

**Week 9 Identity Formation and Fieldwork II**

For this class, we head to Belle Island.

TBA

**Week 10 Sharing our Walks (Exercise 3)**
Exercise 4 distributed.

**Week 11 Gender and the Field plus Fieldwork Diaries**

TBA
London: Routledge.

**Week 12 Participant Observation**

TBA