

GEOG 4010: Cultural Geography | Discard Culture

Professor: Dr. Josh Lepawsky, SN 2008. Phone: 737-3098.

Class time & location: Mon/Wed: 9am-10:15am, SN 2000 (Summer's Room)

Office hours: Wed: Noon -1pm.

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Course description

Contemporary cultural geography is a highly diverse field where the very meaning of the phenomenon it purports to study – culture – is highly contested. This course takes seriously a claim made 20 years ago that cultural geographers should abandon the search for culture's existential roots. In short: there is no such thing as culture. Instead, what there is are actions or practices of people and things that can be followed. The point in following the action is to determine where, when, by what or whom, and under what conditions sites and situations are deemed cultural (as opposed to say, economic, political, or otherwise) and why that matters. In this mode of analysis, culture is something we arrive at rather than something we depart from. To pursue this approach to culture this course focuses on one particularly rich area of habitual practice: discarding. In so doing, we let go of culture-as-thing and begin to see the relevance of thinking analytically about practices. When we follow practices we are in for continual surprises about where we find ourselves.

Course materials

Weekly readings

Available electronically

Course websites

<http://discardculture.xyz/>

<https://online.mun.ca>

Course evaluation

8 Weekly CREW write-ups

Due

Mondays

Worth

50%

Controversy map movements

- Movements 1 & 2 Wed Feb 10 10%
- Movements 3 & 4 Wed Mar 2 10%
- Movement 5 Wed Mar 23 5%

Controversy map (final)

Mon Apr 4

25%

Course policies

All deadlines are firm. No assignments will be accepted after a deadline, unless documented extenuating circumstances exist.

No cell phones, instant messaging, Facebooking or the like. Turn off all cell phones before entering class.

Equity: This course draws on students from a variety of disciplines, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. This diversity is an asset. In order for this course to be a valuable

experience for all participants there is an expectation that dialogue will be collegial and respectful across disciplinary, cultural, and personal boundaries.

Academic integrity: Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will have serious consequences for you. It is in your interest to familiarize yourself with Academic Regulation 4.11 <http://www.mun.ca/regoff/calendar/sectionNo=REGS-0748> .

Course Grading

A (80–100%) An *excellent* assignment in most respects: evidence of extensive knowledge and understanding; evidence of substantial reading and study beyond the course content; well organized, sharply focused and well balanced; contains good insights and some originality; comprehensive grasp of course material, breadth and depth of outside reading; consideration of almost all the salient points; very good ability to analyse, synthesize and evaluate the relevant material.

B (65-79%) A *good* assignment: well argued; evidence of reading beyond assigned class material, solid knowledge and understanding of relevant course material; covers most of the relevant points in satisfactory depth; demonstrates attention to the questions at hand; well-structured arguments; lacks the originality and insights of a first-class assignment.

C (55-64%) An *adequate* assignment: shows some knowledge and understanding of course content; little or no evidence of outside reading beyond assigned and required sources; contains errors or omissions; focus wanders from the questions at hand; weak use of examples and weak organization.

D (50-54%) A *weak* assignment: shows limited knowledge and understanding of the topic; may contain errors and omissions; attempts to answer the question but misses important points; poor use of examples and poor organization; may lack focus, be poorly written, short or incomplete; shows very little evidence of background reading; may seriously misinterpret or avoid the topics at hand.

F (<50 %) A *very poor* assignment: inadequate, possibly a very short assignment with little material of relevance to the topics covered and possibly also serious errors and omissions.

Course content and readings

Week 1 Jan 6. Topic: *Course introduction*

Assignments due:

- None :)

Learning Goals

- Understand key terms and concepts:
 - controversy
 - second-degree objectivity
- Get familiar with Scalar, the platform for completing the course project.

Reading & Materials

Assignment: mapping controversies: <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/cultural-geography/assignment-mapping-controversies?t=1451473110429>

Resources for Mapping Controversies: <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/cultural-geography/resources-for-mapping-controversies?path=course>

Workshop Wednesday: Controversy mapping example, *What the Frack?* Introduction to Scalar.

Week 2, Jan 11 & 13. Topic: *Diving into Magma*

Assignments due:

- Weekly CREW

Learning Goals

- Understand key terms and concepts:
 - analysis
 - a ‘good’ controversy
- Learn to use Zotero to collect and organize documents and data for your controversy map.

Reading & Materials

Venturini, Tommaso. 2010. “Diving in Magma: How to Explore Controversies with Actor-Network Theory.” *Public Understanding of Science* 19 (3): 258–73. doi:10.1177/0963662509102694.

Venturini, Tommaso. 2010. “Building on Faults: How to Represent Controversies with Digital Methods.” *Public Understanding of Science*, December, 0963662510387558. doi:10.1177/0963662510387558.

Workshop Wednesday: Overview of Google Search Operators with emphasis on “site:”, “link:” and “info:”; using Zotero to build a repository of source documents.

Week 3, Jan 18 & 20. Topic: *Superorganic culture*

Assignments due:

- Weekly CREW.
- Topic for controversy map due, Wed Jan 20.

Learning Goals

- Understand key concepts and terms:
 - explicans and explicandum
 - superorganic theory of culture
- Getting familiar with Web of Science and Scopus.

Reading & Materials

‘cultural geography’ in Dictionary of Human Geography. Blackwell. London. (Online through MUN library catalogue).

Duncan, J. S. (1980). "The Superorganic in American Cultural Geography." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 70(2): 181-198.

Workshop Wednesday: using Web of Science and Scopus to characterize scientific and technical literature.

Week 4, Jan 25 & 27. Topic: *The (non)existence of culture*

Assignments due:

- Weekly CREW.

Learning Goals

- Understand key concepts and terms:
 - infinite regress of culture
- Familiarization with ScienceScape and Google Trends.

Reading & Materials

Mitchell, D. (1995). "There's no such thing as culture: towards a reconceptualization of the idea of culture in geography." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 20: 102-116.

Workshop Wednesday: Overview of [ScienceScape](#) tools; Google Trends; possible tools for visualizing debates (concept mapping software: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_concept_and_mind_mapping_software), Node-Link Tree: <https://github.com/mbostock/d3/wiki/Gallery>)

Week 5, Feb 1 & 3. Topic *Wastescapes*

Assignments due:

- Weekly CREW

Learning Goals

- Understanding key terms
 - wastescapes, location, temporal & spatial

Readings & Materials

“99% Invisible | Episode 86: Reversal of Fortune.” 2014. *99% Invisible*. Accessed December 2. <http://99percentinvisible.org/>.

Liboiron, Max. 2015. “Backchannels | How the Ocean Cleanup Array Fundamentally Misunderstands Marine Plastics and Causes Harm | Society for Social Studies of Science.” Accessed December 30.

http://www.4sonline.org/blog/post/how_the_ocean_cleanup_array_fundamentally_misunderstands_marine_plastics_an .

Lepawsky, Josh. *The Offworld Rubbish Project*: <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/the-offworld-waste-project/index>

“99% Invisible | Episode 114: Ten Thousand Years.” 2014. *99% Invisible*. Accessed December 2. <http://99percentinvisible.org/>.

Trauth, Kathleen M., Stephen C. Hora, and Robert V. Guzowski. 1993. “Expert Judgment on Markers to Deter Inadvertent Human Intrusion into the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.” United States Department of Energy | Sandia National Laboratories.

<http://www.wipp.energy.gov/picsprog/test1/SAND90-3036%20Expert%20judgement,%20human%20intrusion.pdf>. pp. 1-1—1-12, skim Appendix F and Appendix G.

Workshop Wednesday: Overview of network visualization software examples: Lynks, Kumu, VIS, Gephi.

Week 6, Feb 8 & 10. Topic *Rethinking Waste*

Assignments due:

- Weekly CREW.
- Controversy map movements 1 & 2 due Wed Feb 10.

Learning Goals

- Understand key concepts and terms:
 - waste
 - modernity
- Familiarization with cartographic resources for controversy mapping.

Reading & Materials

Drackner, M. 2005. "What Is Waste? To Whom? - An Anthropological Perspective on Garbage." *Waste Management & Research* 23 (3): 175–81.

Shanks, Michael, David Platt, and William L. Rathje. 2004. "The Perfume of Garbage: Modernity and the Archaeological." *Modernism/modernity* 11 (1): 61–83.

Workshop Wednesday: Overview of cartographic/mapping options for controversy maps: Scalar's Google Map template, Google Maps, Story Maps.

Week 7, Feb 15 & 17. Topic <i>Waste/Value/Law</i>

Assignments due:

- Weekly CREW.

Learning Goals

- Understand key concepts and terms
 - modern waste and value
 - property
 - public-private boundary

Readings & Materials

Liboiron, Max. 2013. "Modern Waste as Strategy." *Lo Squaderno: Explorations in Space and Society*, no. 29: 9–12.

<http://discardstudies.com/2014/07/09/modern-waste-is-an-economic-strategy/>

Poop Train. 2014. Accessed December 19. http://www.radiolab.org/story/poop-train/?utm_source=sharedUrl&utm_medium=metatag&utm_campaign=sharedUrl.

Gidwani, Vinay. 2012. "Waste/Value." In *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Economic Geography*, edited by Trevor Barnes, Jamie Peck, and Eric Sheppard. Chichester: Wiley. (D2L)

Abrahamsson, Sebastian, and Katja De Vries. 2012. "Dumpsters, Muffins, Waste and Law." *Discard Studies*. March 27.

<http://discardstudies.com/2012/03/27/dumpsters-muffins-waste-and-law/> .

Workshop Wednesday: Controversy map consultations: individual project questions and troubleshooting.

Week 8, Feb 22 & 24 **** No class: Winter Break****

Week 9, Feb 29 & Mar 2. Topic *Recycling Reconsidered*

Assignments due:

- Weekly CREW.
- Controversy map movement 3 & 4 due Wed March 2.

Learning Goals

- Understand key concepts and terms:
 - busyness
 - Jevons' Paradox
 - recycling trap
- Familiarization with timelines in Scalar.

Readings & Materials

MacBride, Samantha. 2011. *Recycling Reconsidered: The Present Failure and Future Promise of Environmental Action in the United States*. MIT Press. p. 1-22.
Available electronically via MUN Libraries.

Liboiron, Max. 2014. "Solutions to Waste and the Problem of Scalar Mismatches."
Discard Studies. February 10. <http://discardstudies.com/2014/02/10/solutions-to-waste-and-the-problem-of-scalar-mismatches/>.

Alcott, Blake. 2015. Jevons' Paradox (Rebound Effect) in *Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era*. D'Alisa, G. Demaria, F. and Kallis, G. (eds). New York: Routledge, pp-121-124. (D2L)

Workshop Wednesday: Working with timelines in Scalar. Example: TimelineJS.

Week 10, Mar 7 & 9

Assignment due: None :)

Learning Goals:

- Growing confidence with controversy mapping approach via individual consultations.

Workshop Monday & Wednesday: individual consultations.

Week 11, Mar 14 & 16. Topic *Cleaners and Gleaners: working with what others discard*

Assignments due:

- Weekly CREW.

Learning Goals

- Understanding key concepts and terms
 - working with waste
- Overcoming challenges for making your controversy map.

Readings & Materials

Nagle, Robin. 2013. *Picking Up: On the Streets and Behind the Trucks with the Sanitation Workers of New York City*. Macmillan. pp. 11-27 (D2L)

“Garbage.” 2003. *This American Life*. WBEZ. <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/249/garbage>.

[SEE OVER]

PIMP MY CARROÇA São Paulo + Rio de Janeiro (english Subtitles). 2012. <http://vimeo.com/46827769>.

Workshop Wednesday: Controversy map consultation: individual project questions and troubleshooting.

Week 12, Mar 21 & 23. Topic *Waste as a thinking technology*

Assignments due:

- Weekly CREW.
- Controversy map movement 5 due Wed March 23.

Learning Goals

- Understanding key concepts and terms
 - Anthropocene
 - intergenerational responsibility
 - waste futures
- Overcoming challenges for making your controversy map.

Readings & Materials

Clark, Nigel, and Myra J. Hird. 2013. “Deep Shit.” *O-Zone: A Journal of Object-Oriented Studies*, no. 1: 44–52. (D2L)

Zalasiewicz, J., M. Williams, C. N. Waters, A. D. Barnosky, and P. Haff. 2014. “The Technofossil Record of Humans.” *The Anthropocene Review* 1 (1): 34–43. doi:10.1177/2053019613514953.

Workshop Wednesday: Controversy map consultation: individual project questions and troubleshooting.

Week 13, Mar 28 & 30. Topic *Visualizing industrial productivism and its effects*

Learning Goals:

- Understand key concepts and terms:
 - productivism
- Overcoming challenges for making your controversy map.

Readings & Materials:

In-class film: *Manufactured Landscapes*

Workshop Wednesday: Controversy map consultation: individual project questions and troubleshooting.

Week 14 April 4 Topic: *Course De-briefing*

Learning goals:

- How students think the course could be improved for future versions of it.

Assignment due:

- Final controversy map due Monday April 4.