

GEOGENV 3416F – Urban Culture of Public Spaces

Course Outline: Section 001 Fall 2026

This course is taught in-person

1. Course Information

*Details about design and delivery of the course are listed below in Section 6



Classes Start	Fall Reading Week	Classes End	Study day(s)	Exam Period
September 9	October 10-18	December 9	December 10	December 11-22

Thursday September 17, 2026: Last day to add a second-term half course

Wednesday September 30, 2026: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (no classes).

Monday October 12, 2026: Thanksgiving Holiday

Monday November 30, 2026: Last day to drop a first term half course without penalty



Course Instructor	Contact Information	Office Hours
Manuel Spiller	mspille6@uwo.ca	Monday from 1-2.30pm

Teaching Assistant(s)	Contact Information	Office Hours
	Email address	



☒ Office hours will be held in SSC 2310. These are drop-in hours with no sign-up required.

2. Calendar Description

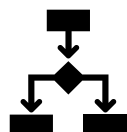
A geographic investigation of urban culture focusing on the design, use and identities of urban public spaces as evidenced through systematic observations of social life in urban public settings. Relevant concepts, theories, and field methods are applied to guide and critique the investigation.

2 lecture hours, 0.5 course

Antirequisite(s): none

Prerequisite(s): Two full courses in Geography and Environment and third- or fourth-year status at the University

Prerequisite checking is the student's responsibility



Senate Regulations state, "unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

3. Textbook

☒ All resources will be posted in OWL

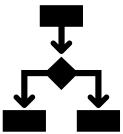


☒ For assignments, students will be required to find relevant resources and information in support of their submissions.

4. Course Objectives and Format

This course has the following objectives:

- Introduce the concept of public space as a physical, legal, and social construct, and examine how "publicness" is produced, contested, and maintained;
- Develop an understanding of how design, planning, and policy decisions shape who public spaces serve and whose needs are prioritized or excluded;
- Build your knowledge of the legal and political dimensions of space, including property, ownership, and the claiming of public and common spaces across different jurisdictions and cultures;
- Learn to observe, document, and critically analyze real public spaces through site-based fieldwork, and further develop your analytical and writing skills through personal, comparative, and site-analysis assignments.



☒ Missed work should be completed within 2 days of the assigned due date. Please see statement on assignment flexibility in Section 8 and 9 below, and on the course Brightspace site.

☒ Attendance is required is required for this course. An attendance record will be taken at the beginning of each class. The participation mark for this course will have a relationship to attendance and engagement in class.

All course material will be posted to the new OWL Brightspace learning environment: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/home>. Any changes will be indicated on the OWL site and discussed with the class.

Current versions of all popular browsers (e.g., Safari, Chrome, Edge, Firefox) are supported with OWL Brightspace; what is most important is that you update your browser frequently to ensure it is current. All JavaScript and cookies should be enabled.

If students need assistance, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help page](#). Alternatively, they can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#). They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

5. Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze real-world public spaces and the policies, designs, and social practices that shape them, using geographical concepts, skills and understanding.
- Better understand the fundamentals of public space as a legal, physical, and social concept.
- Identify, analyze, and interpret spatial patterns and processes of urbanization, place-making, and design as they shape access to, and experience of public space.
- Comprehend how power, culture, and identity shape public spaces.
- Learn about contemporary challenges of public spaces, including tourism and COVID-19.
- Develop spatial thinking and spatial analysis skills applied to cultural, social, political, and economic dimensions of public life.
- Practice critical and reflective reading, listening, and thinking, and apply these through observational fieldwork, personal reflection, and written analysis.



6. Course Content and Schedule

Week	Dates	Topic	Readings
1	Sept 14	Course introduction & defining urban	No readings
2	Sept 21	Understanding urban & public spaces	Carol Rose (OWL) Marshall Berman (OWL) <i>London Park claim</i>
3	Sept 28	Publics and power	Jane Jacobs (OWL) David Madden (OWL) <i>Toronto Park & Parking</i>
4	October 5	Designing public spaces DUE: A1 - Place you know	Susan Herrington (OWL) <i>Piazza, not Plaza</i>
	October 12	Fall Reading Week	N/A
5	October 19	Assessing public spaces	Susan Herrington (OWL)
6	October 26	Designing for people (independent – no lecture)	Video: <i>The Human Scale</i> (76 min) Western Library Search: 991045417158105163
7	November 2	Field study (independent – no lecture)	
8	November 9	In-class midterm	
9	November 16	Legal ambiguity of public spaces	<i>Hamilton Encampment</i> <i>Kitchener Encampment</i> <i>Vancouver access sale</i>
10	November 23	The end of public spaces DUE: A2 - Site Analysis	David Madden (2010) (OWL)
11	November 30	External impacts on public spaces	<i>COVID Barcelona</i> <i>Occupem Les Nostres Platges</i>
12	December 7	Course conclusion and exam review	



7. Communication



- ☒ Students should check the OWL site every 24 – 48 hours.
- ☒ A weekly update will be provided on the OWL announcements.
- ☒ Students should email their instructor(s) and teaching assistant(s) using the emails listed on page 1 of the syllabus and use 'GEOG 3416' in the subject line.
- ☒ For any other communication, the centrally administered **e-mail account** provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at his/her official university address is attended to in a timely manner. You can read about the privacy and security of the UWO email accounts [here](#).
- ☒ Emails will be monitored from Monday to Friday; standard response time is 24 – 48 hours.

8. Evaluation

Below is the evaluation breakdown for the course. Any deviations will be communicated.

Assessment	Format	Weighting	Due Date
Assignment 1	Short essay (submit on OWL)	10%	October 5
Midterm test	Short answer & multiple choice (in-person)	25%	October 19
Assignment 2	Site analysis report (submit on OWL)	25%	November 16
Final exam	Essay questions (in-person)	30%	December TBD
Attendance		10%	



The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

Students are responsible for material covered in the lectures as well as the assigned chapters/sections in the text.

- ☒ All assignments are due at 11:55 pm EST unless otherwise specified
- ☒ Assignment 1 and Assignment 2 use a flexible assessment approach. Details are outlined in Section 9 below and in the assignment sheets posted on Brightspace
- ☒ Written assignments will be submitted to Turnitin (statement in policies below)
- ☒ Students will have unlimited submissions to Turnitin
- ☒ Rubrics will be used to evaluate assessments and will be posted with the instructions
- ☒ After an assessment is returned, students should wait 24 hours to digest feedback before contacting their evaluator; to ensure a timely response, reach out within 7 days

Click [here](#) for a detailed and comprehensive set of policies and regulations concerning examinations and grading. The table below outlines the University-wide grade descriptors.

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

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.

9. Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

General Information about missed work:

University policy on academic considerations are described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found [here](#).

Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

Formal Documentation Designation statement:

Assignment designated as requiring formal documentation: GEOG 3416F Midterm, to be held in-class on Monday, October 19th.

Please note that this assessment is considered to be central to the learning objectives for this course. Accordingly, students seeking academic consideration for this assessment will be required to provide formal supporting documentation. Students who are granted academic consideration for this assessment will be provided with the following opportunity to make up this work: make-up midterm.

Flexibility statements

Assessment has flexible submission deadline: Assignment 1 and Assignment 2

Please note that because the submission deadline for Assignment 1 and Assignment 2 already include flexibility in the form of a 48-hour submission window, the instructor reserves the right

to deny academic consideration for assignments which are submitted following the end of the period of flexibility.

Absence from Course Commitments

Students must familiarize themselves with the Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically schedule during the last week of the term. Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described elsewhere in this document. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor of this course, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the Student Medical Certificate or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Course Assessments that Require Supporting Documentation

For this course the following assessment has been designated as requiring supporting documentation: GEOG 3416F Midterm, to be held in-class on Monday, October 19th.

Academic Consideration for Course Components with Flexible Deadlines

This course employs flexible deadlines for Assignments 1 and 2. The assignment deadlines can be found above in the course outline. For each assignment, students are expected to submit the assignment by the deadline listed. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their assignment up to 48 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 48 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 25% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. As flexible deadlines are used in this course, requests for academic consideration will not be granted. If you have a long-term academic consideration or an accommodation for disability that allows greater flexibility than provided here, please reach out to your instructor at least one week prior to the posted deadline.

Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays. Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

10. Make-up Examinations

Procedure on makeup assessments for Social Science students and for courses offered by the Faculty of Social Science

Effective September 1, 2026

Students who miss a regularly scheduled test/quiz, mid-term, or final exam may request academic consideration through the Student Absence Portal.

If academic consideration is granted, students should consult the course outline for information regarding how the missed assessment will be addressed and follow any instructions provided by the instructor. At the instructor's discretion, the weight of a missed test/quiz or mid-term may be transferred to another assessment in the course, including the final exam, rather than requiring a makeup assessment. Reweighting is not available for missed final exams.

Students are entitled to **one makeup assessment opportunity** for a missed test/quiz, mid-term, or final exam supported by approved academic consideration. **No additional makeup opportunities will be provided.** Makeup assessments represent the final opportunity to complete a missed course assessment.

What happens if I miss a makeup assessment as a Social Science student or in a course offered by the Faculty of Social Science?

Students who miss a makeup assessment are not eligible for an additional makeup opportunity. Depending on their circumstances, they may:

1. Remain enrolled in the course and accept a grade of zero on the missed makeup assessment. Students should consult the course outline and calculate whether they can still achieve a passing grade in the course.
2. Withdraw from the course through Student Center before the published drop deadline. A course dropped before the deadline will result in a withdrawal (WDN) without academic penalty. Part-time students should consult the Registrar's Office refund schedule to determine whether a tuition refund is available. Students enrolled full-time in 4.0-5.0 courses are generally not eligible for tuition refunds when a course is dropped.
3. If the published drop deadline has passed and the missed makeup assessment is supported by appropriate documentation, students may submit their documentation through the Student Absence Portal to request a WDN (withdrawal without academic penalty). Approval is not automatic and remains subject to Faculty review. Requests for a second makeup assessment will not be considered.

Students are encouraged to carefully consider their ability to complete a makeup assessment as scheduled, as no further opportunities to complete the missed work will be available.

11. Use of Electronic Devices

No electronic devices will be allowed during tests and examinations.

12. How to Be Successful in this Class:

Students enrolled in this class should understand the level of autonomy and self-discipline required to be successful.



1. Invest in a planner or application to keep track of your courses. Populate all your deadlines at the start of the term and schedule time at the start of each week to get organized and manage your time.
2. Make it a daily habit to log onto OWL to ensure you have seen everything posted to help you succeed in this class.
3. Follow weekly checklists created on OWL or create your own to help you stay on track.
4. Take notes as you go through the lesson material. Keeping handwritten notes or even notes on a regular Word document will help you learn more effectively.
5. Connect with others. Try forming a study group and try meeting on a weekly basis for study and peer support.
6. Do not be afraid to ask questions. If you are struggling with a topic, check the online discussion boards or contact your instructor(s) and or teaching assistant(s).
7. Reward yourself for successes. It seems easier to motivate ourselves knowing that there is something waiting for us at the end of the task.

13. Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools/software/apps is permitted with limitations. AI is unacceptable when used to generate content that is submitted in an unaltered state.

Assignments are designed to use the student's positionality and perspective. AI may be used to find information to work with. Instructions will be given when Assignments are introduced, if a student is unsure whether their intended use of generative AI is permitted, they have to consult with the instructor prior to completing the assignment.

Students using Generative AI have to add a statement to their submission outlining which generative AI has been used and how.

14. Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

15. Western's Commitment to Accessibility

The Department of Geography and Environment 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. [Information regarding accommodation of exams](#) is available on the Registrar's website.

More information about "[Accessibility at Western](#)" is available.

16. Mental Health

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Mental Health@Western](mailto:MentalHealth@Western) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

17. Support Services

[Office of the Registrar](#)

[Western's Support Services](#)

[Student Experience](#)

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts [here](#).

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

18. Important Dates

September 9: Classes resume

September 17: Last day to add a first term half course

September 30: [National Day for Truth and Reconciliation](#) (non-instructional day).

October 12: Thanksgiving Holiday – Department Office Closed

October 12-16: Fall Reading Week (No classes; Department Office open)

November 30: Last day to drop a first term half course or a full course without penalty

December 9: Classes end

December 10: Study day

December 11-22: Examination Period