

GEOG 4000B – The Nature and Philosophy of Geography Course Outline: Section 001 - Winter 2025

This course is taught in person unless circumstances necessitate going on-line.

1. Course Information

Important Dates

Classes Start	Spring Reading Week	Classes End	Study day	Exam Period
January 6	February 15-23	April 4	April 5 & 6	April 7-30

January 14th, 2025: Last day to add a second-term half course

February 17th, 2025: Family Day

March 31st, 20245 Last day to drop a second term half course without penalty

1.1. Contact Information:

Instructor: Dr. Jeff Hopkins

Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:00 – 4:00 via email, phone or Zoom (TBA)

Email: jhopkins@uwo.ca

2. Calendar Description

2.1. Course Description

The discussion of geographical paradigms within an historical and social context. A central concern is the relationship between the academic and professional practice of geography.

2 lecture hours, 0.5 course

Antirequisite(s): none

Prerequisite(s): Fourth year status, and enrollment in a major or Honors Specialization in the Department of Geography.

Prerequisite checking is the student's responsibility

2.2. Senate Regulations

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 & Other Course Materials

Weekly reading materials will be posted/linked on the course website in the Content folder of OWL. There are no textbook or trip costs in this course.

4. Course Objectives

The major purpose of this course is to pause and reflect on the geographical education you have experienced and practiced over the past three and half years. In this, your final term of a four-year journey, let us consider what it is you think you have learned in *'geography'*, and what it means to you to be a *'geographer.'* How might the many tools, insights, skills, and *'knowledge'* you have acquired be applicable to both your professional and personal lives post-graduation? This course examines the nature and *'philosophy'* of geography: what it is and what lens or perspectives does geography bring to your world? How has it influenced the way you think about, and see, the world and others? Of what practical utility is *'geography'* in your life? What do you carry forward as a *'geographer'*?

In keeping with the *Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations* of our programs, this course promotes several objectives to varying extents:

1. Develop knowledge and understanding of the fundamental characteristics, processes and temporal changes of human systems and their interactions
2. Demonstrate awareness of geographical diversity through knowledge of different places and understanding of the processes that shape them spatially and over time
3. Combine breadth of knowledge of Geography with understanding of selected sub-fields.
4. Describe and explain the scope and nature of Geography as a discipline.
5. Synthesize and evaluate geographical information from diverse sources
6. Collect, analyze, and interpret geographical data in relation to social systems
7. Describe and explain, analyze, and interpret geographical phenomena outside the classroom by engagement with people, places and/or environments
8. Analyze real-world problems and policy applications using geographical concepts, skills and understanding.
9. Communicate geographic ideas and understanding effectively to a variety of audiences in writing, orally, and graphically.

All course material will be posted to OWL: <http://owl.uwo.ca>. Any changes will be indicated on the OWL site and discussed with the class.

Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox are the preferred browsers to optimally use OWL; update your browsers frequently. Students interested in evaluating their internet speed, please click [here](#). [Using the right browser is important, especially when using different features integrated with OWL]

If students need assistance, they can seek support on the OWL 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

Fulfilling these objectives will provide numerous *'learning outcomes'* that will enable you to:

1. Develop knowledge and understanding of the fundamental characteristics, processes and temporal changes of human systems and their interactions
2. Demonstrate awareness of geographical diversity through knowledge of different places and understanding of the processes that shape them spatially and over time
3. Combine breadth of knowledge of Geography with understanding of selected sub-fields.
4. Describe and explain the scope and nature of Geography as a discipline.
5. Synthesize and evaluate geographical information from diverse sources
6. Collect, analyze, and interpret geographical data in relation to social systems
7. Describe and explain, analyze, and interpret geographical phenomena outside the classroom by engagement with people, places and/or environments
8. Analyze real-world problems and policy applications using geographical concepts, skills and understanding.
9. Communicate geographic ideas and understanding effectively to a variety of audiences in writing, orally, and graphically.

6. Format and Course Content

6.1 Seminar Format

The format of this course is unconventional in that it is largely student driven. There is a time and place for professors to lecture at the podium—to profess and share their knowledge—and for students to take notes, to memorize, to learn: this is not such a time or place. You are now well-seasoned, knowledgeable, and highly skilled: it is time for you to be more actively engaged in how you learn, what you learn, to recognize your personal insights, and to share them with your peers. There will be materials to have read and exercises to have completed before we meet on Fridays; there may well be some readings during the seminar; there will most definitely be individual and group work exercises, challenges, and activities during the seminars. It will be largely student-driven, student-lead and student-centred. The instructor’s role is more that of co-ordinator, moderator, mentor, and coach. What you get out of this course is dependent upon what you put into it.

Given this is a mandatory course as deemed by the Department, it is expected that you will attend all seminars, come prepared to do so, and be constructively engaged with your peers.

6.2 Seminar Topics

#	Seminar Topics	Dates
1	Introduction & Organization: Meet & Greet	Friday, Jan. 10
2	Philosophies: Ways of Thinking, Ways of Knowing	Friday Jan. 17
3	Geographies: Key Concepts & Traditions	Friday, Jan. 24
4	Geographies: Shifting Sands & Contemporary Challenges	Friday, Jan. 31
5	Knowledge, Power, Ideology	Friday, Feb. 7
6	Morals, Values and Your Geographical Compass	Friday, Feb. 14
	NO SEMINAR – READING WEEK	Feb. 15 - 23

#	Seminar Topics	Dates
7	Geographical Skills, Professionalism & Careers	Friday, Feb. 28
8	Individual vs Group Work / Presentation Workshop	Friday, Mar. 7
9	Presentation Workshop	Friday, Mar. 14
10	Group Presentations (3 groups)	Friday, Mar. 21
11	Group Presentations (2 groups) (Last Seminar)	Friday, Mar. 28

6.3 Notes and Note-Taking

Note taking, like reading, form the foundation of communication, critical thinking, and decision making. If you write information down by hand, retention is heightened relative to passive observation. Keeping track of what you do in each seminar—noting down your thoughts, ideas, concepts, insights, and any questions you generated or acquired for others—is worthwhile and encouraged. Such a record may prove useful in the writing of your essay, your group presentation, and during the final, open-book, final examination. At the very least, after each seminar, take ten to fifteen minutes and summarize your thoughts. The seminar PowerPoint slides will be posted on OWL after the day’s seminar.

The PowerPoint slides for each seminar will be posted in the Resources folder of our class OWL site for your review after each seminar.

7. Communication

Please read this course outline and all assignments thoroughly and completely before asking questions, the answers to which may well be found in the outline or assignment itself. If you have long and complex questions—and I hope you do—I will be delighted to address them during the seminar or office hours. Please take advantage of the office hours posted on the front page of this outline. I am available to help you succeed.

Please read all announcements posted via OWL.

Please use e-mail judiciously. Short answer questions are welcome; longer and more complex questions may require a phone call or a Zoom meeting, both of which can be arranged by email.

Please do not expect an instantaneous response to your email, particularly if it is not sent during office hours: it may take 24-36 hours. I am unlikely to respond to emails after 5:00 pm weekdays or during the weekend. Please use proper English in your correspondence. Communication, like politeness, is a two-way street, and I shall extend to you the same courtesies. Thank you for respecting these boundaries.

8. Evaluation

Evaluation Components	Percentage of Course Grade	Due Date
Group #1 Self Evaluation	5%	Fri., Jan. 24 th
Essay Term Paper	30%	Fri., Feb. 14 th
Group #2 Self Evaluation	5%	Fri., Feb. 14 th
Group #3 Presentation Peer/Prof. Evaluation	35%	Fri., Mar. 21 st or Mar. 28 th
Final Examination (<i>take home</i>)	25%	Apr. 7 th – 30 th T.B.A.

8.1. Organization and Nature of Evaluations

Students will be assigned to work in three different groups during the term. The first two are during the seminars, and the third is for a formal group presentation the end of the first two group cycles students will evaluate their own participation and contributions to the group, as well as their peers, using an evaluation rubric provided. The Group #3 Presentation will also be subject to peer evaluation as well as the professor's assessment. Both the Term Paper and Final Examination will be evaluated by the professor. Detailed explanations of all of these will be provided in class well in advance of the due dates.

Students are responsible for material covered in the lectures as well as the assigned readings.

Given this is a mandatory course, **your attendance is required**. Unless you provide a legitimate and documented account of your absence (see below) you will be deducted marks on your final course grade based on the following absentee rates:

One Absence:	0% (<i>We all deserve a break</i>)
Second Absence:	5%
Third Absence:	10% -- cumulative so it is 15%
Fourth Absence:	15% -- cumulative so it is 30%
Fifth Absence:	'F' -- failed the course

The final examination will be posted on OWL seven days prior to the time and date of the scheduled exam slot. It will be a take-home exam and open book. Response to the final exam will be uploaded into the student's drop box no later than the termination time of the official examination time slot (TBA).

8.2. Assessment

How do I grade? A mark below 50% reflects an unacceptable level of content and/or presentation. A mark between 50%-59% shows minimally acceptable content and/or presentation. Marks between 60%-69% indicate competent work meeting requirements. I regard the mark of a low 'B' (70% - 73%) indicative of average work, both competent and

acceptable. You have completed all the assignments and readings and demonstrated a general understanding of the course material as evidenced in the essays, labs, and final exam. A grade of mid to high 'B' (74%-79%) reflects evidence of an above average performance. Not only have you fulfilled the assignments in a more meticulous fashion, but you have also demonstrated a more thorough understanding of the material and gone a few extra steps beyond the average student as evidenced on the test and in your written work. An 'A' (80%-89%) is reserved for outstanding effort and achievement. Exceptional diligence, a thorough knowledge of the course material, and the ability to apply and convey concepts in an effective, logical, and literate fashion are clear. Hard labour and exceptional effort are necessary but not, by themselves, sufficient to warrant an 'A.' An 'A+' (90%+) is rare but is certainly possible. An exceptionally outstanding performance on the essay, presentation and final examination demonstrating a superb command of English and a critical mind capable of synthesizing complex facts and ideas to arrive at particularly astute conclusions, will earn this prestigious grade.

Your evaluation is based primarily on your ability to fulfill the primary objectives of the course as evidenced in your group work, essay, and final exam.

Students are responsible for material covered in the seminars as well as the assigned reading material. To pass this course you must earn a final minimum mark of 50%.

All assignments are due in the student's OWL drop box on the date noted by 11:55 pm EST unless otherwise specified.

Written assignments might be submitted to Turnitin at the instructor's discretion.

Students are asked to wait 24 hours to digest feedback before contacting their evaluator. If you have questions or concerns about your evaluation, please seek assistance within seven days of having received the graded assignment.

Grades will not be adjusted simply for need. It is important to monitor your performance in the course. Remember: *You* are responsible for your grades in this course.

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

8.3 Use of AI

Within this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. However, it is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their *own* ideas, arguments and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploring a topic, with students expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources of information and avoiding *plagiarism*. Essays, written assignments and/or lab reports should reflect the student's own thoughts and independent written work. Students should also generate their own figures (e.g., graphs, diagrams) rather than using AI generated ones. ***By adhering to these guidelines,***

students contribute to a responsible and effective learning environment that promotes critical thinking, independent inquiry and all of them to produce original written contributions. The same principles also apply to the use of translation software to support the writing the essays and other written assessments.

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:

The group presentation 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. For students who are granted academic consideration for this assessment their term paper mark will be assigned to the group presentation mark

Flexibility statements

Both the term paper and the self-evaluations are due on the dates noted above by 11:59 PM in your OWL drop box. *These are all granted an automatic two-day extension, meaning these are due no later than 48 hours after the initial deadline.* There is no penalty for submitting assignments during this two-day window. When this extension ends, assignments will not be accepted and will be assigned a mark of zero.

Please note that because the submission deadline for these assessments already include flexibility, 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 scheduled 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:

Term Paper: due Friday, February 14th, 2025

10. Religious Accommodation

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.

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

11. Late Submissions and Extensions

Requests to have an assignment formally re-evaluated must be done within one week of receiving the graded assignment. In this concise, written request you will specify the aspects of your work that you would like re-visited and the justification for doing so. ***Please be aware that disliking or disagreeing with your grade is no grounds for re-assessment.***

Should you feel that your final grade in the course is biased, inaccurate or unfair, you do have the right to appeal your final mark. Please refer to the *Western Calendar* prior to doing so (see web site below). To avoid such time-consuming and stressful procedures for all, be assured that each piece of work is graded carefully and thoroughly. ***Be aware that marks may be raised--as well as lowered--through an appeal process.***

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. Plagiarism & 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.

Plagiarism is stealing: it is unacceptable, and those who tempt fate will be persecuted to the fullest extent allowed under the university's regulations. Penalties may include the following:

- i. Zero on the plagiarized assignment
- ii. An 'F' in the course
- iii. Expulsion from the university

Be aware that 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>).

14. Alternative Examination Dates, Dropping the Course

The date of the final examination is set by the Office of the Registrar and will not be changed. If you consider that you have grounds to write a final examination on an alternate date, you must follow the procedure established by the Dean's Office and complete the appropriate forms. The same holds for dropping the course

15. Absences and Tardiness

Students who have documented accommodations will be accommodated accordingly. In all other instances of absences, omissions and tardiness on your part, your maturity is respected: you are adults. If you choose to miss seminars, lectures, assignments, and the examination you are at liberty to do so. The consequences are made evident in this course outline. ***If you are late***

to class—or must leave early—please do so quietly with minimal disturbance to your peers.
Thanks.

16. 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.

17. Mental Health

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit Western's [Health and Wellness website](#) for more information on mental health resources.

18. Support Services

[Western's Support Services](#)
[Student Development Centre](#)

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 at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html.

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

19. Use of Electronic Devices

Never record digitally or otherwise any part of the class seminars. Do not take photos in class.

20. Mutual Respect

Students can expect me to come prepared for, and attend, all seminars regularly and punctually. I ask the same of you. I will strive to promote a collegial atmosphere of mutual respect conducive to the exchange of ideas and the process of learning. Our seminars are open intellectual forums to explore philosophical issues from a geographical perspective; everyone's voice and interpretations are welcome. Your own grounded interpretations and opinions in no way whatsoever need parallel my own or those of your peers to succeed in this course. ***Freedom of thought and expression is strongly encouraged: please do so in a courteous, responsible, and respectful manner.*** By abiding to this code of mutual civility and respect, we set the stage for a safe, healthy, and stimulating intellectual forum for each other.

Not to belabour the point but included below is the *Code of Conduct for Students, Staff, and Faculty for the Department of Geography*. The *University of Western Ontario Code of Student Conduct* is available at <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>: please familiarize yourself with both of these documents should you have concerns about your own or somebody else's classroom behaviours.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Finally, if you have problems with the course, please seek assistance from your peers and/or the professor during office hours: I am approachable and I welcome your questions. I hope that you enjoy the class and learn from the course.

21. Geography Code of Conduct

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STUDENTS, STAFF, AND FACULTY FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

Affiliation with the Department of Geography presumes mutual respect among students, staff, teaching assistants, and faculty. A positive atmosphere of professionalism and collegiality is essential for everyone to perform to the best of his or her abilities. This requires respect for the opinions and questions of others and behaviour that is, at all times, courteous, and conducive to creating a pleasant and productive environment for learning and working.

As members of a Department of Geography, we are expected to show special respect for our environment, being individually responsible for promoting a clean and safe work environment within the facilities of the Department and the Social Science Centre, including classrooms, laboratories, the Map Library, offices, hallways, washrooms, exterior grounds, and the facilities and vehicles used in field courses and field trips.

It is inevitable that misunderstandings will occur from time to time. However, it is in everyone's interest to try and resolve problems in a non-confrontational manner. Threatening, violent, or abusive behaviour, harassment (including sexual and racial harassment), rudeness (in person, in writing, or on the telephone), and abuse of authority, for whatever reasons, corrode good working and learning conditions.

Incidents that cannot be resolved amicably may be reported to the Chair of the Department (661-3653). The Chair will consider appropriate actions for resolving the problem, usually after consultation with the parties involved. If required, contact with university services (e.g., Police, Equity) or civil authorities will be invoked.

Student Use of University Facilities and Classroom Decorum:

Students are expected to comply with the authority of University staff and faculty on all matters relating to access to facilities (offices, classrooms, laboratories, and Map Library) and to use of equipment and resources.

Students are expected to attend all lectures and laboratory sessions regularly and punctually.

Instructors are responsible for maintaining an appropriate academic atmosphere in all class activities; students are expected to cooperate in this effort.

Actions that impede instruction deter the ability of students to learn, or show disrespect for instructors and fellow students, will not be condoned in Geography classrooms and labs. Such actions include reading during lectures, disturbing consumption of food or drink, use of Walkman's and radios, and disruptive conversation. Serious disrespect for classroom decorum should be reported to the instructor and, if required, to the Chair of the Geography Department (SSC 2429, Telephone 661-3653).

Students are expected to adhere to University standards of academic honesty, as outlined under "Scholastic Offences" in the Western Calendar. Unacceptable practices include cheating, impersonation, plagiarism, misrepresentation of research, falsification of documents, obstructing the academic activities of another, aiding, or abetting academic misconduct, and abuse of confidentiality. In addition to incurring penalties, as outlined in the Calendar, some academic offences may fall under the Criminal Code of Canada.

Approved on behalf of Faculty, Staff, and Students by the Council of the Department of Geography on 4 March 1994.

22. Important Dates for Winter 2025

Monday January 6: Classes resume

Tuesday January 14: Last day to add a second term half course

Monday February 17: Family Day – Department Office Closed

February 17-23: Spring Reading Week (No classes; Department Office open)

Friday March 7: Last day to drop a second term half course

Friday April 4: Classes end

April 5 and 6: Study days

April 7-30: Examination Period

PLEASE NOTE *Course format, content & order of seminars may deviate from this general outline due to unforeseen circumstances.*