GEOG 3301: Geography of Texas
Spring 2019
Online Course

Instructor: Dr. Jen McCormack
Instructor Email: jennifer.mccormack@sulross.edu; mackormack@gmail.com (only if srsu email has issues)
Instructor Office Phone: (432) 837-8161
Instructor Office Hours and Location: LH 302 by appointment

Geography of Texas is a combination of a critical theory, content, and qualitative field methods course on the physical and human geography of Texas. Using the beautiful geography of Texas, we also focus on cinematic geographies as a base for discussing spatial narratives, identity, culture, politics, economy and policy.

Course Objectives and Skills
- Acquisition of a geographical perspective on Texas’s diverse environments, peoples, cultures, law and economic systems.
  Assessment: analytical writing, spatial technology, field sites and original research, exams
- Development of a geographical imagination and critical analysis of data, theory and texts.
  Assessment: analytical writing, spatial technology, field sites and original research, exams
- Acquisition of research skills:
  o Primary research sources
  o Application of social theory
  o Presentation of original research
  Assessment: analytical writing, spatial technology, field sites and original research, exams
- Acquisition of spatial technology and cartographic literacy
- Analyze meta queries: What are the human forces that create regions? How is identity derived from geography? What are the relationships between power and place?
  Assessment: analytical writing, spatial technology, field sites and original research, exams

The Americans with Disabilities Act
Sul Ross State University is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate a request for accessibility services. Students seeking accessibility services must contact Mary Schwartz in Counseling and Accessibility Services, Ferguson Hall, Room 112. The mailing address is P.O. Box C-171, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas 79832, Telephone Number 432-837-8203.

Plagiarism and Cheating
Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated at any level. I will be able to spot copy and pasted writing and this is not only against class policy, but against university policy. Your work is important! Writing, reading, thinking is your way of preparing for your professional life. Respect your scholarship and investment in YOUR future!

Class Policy
Geography is a dynamic discipline! We will look at human movement and systems across space and use critical social theory to dig deep. We won’t always agree and that is what makes a stimulating course. However, we owe each other respect and openness to diverse viewpoints. Respect is key in all communication.
**Required Texts**

All readings are in PDF form on the course website in each weekly module folders. All readings are mandatory and your understanding will be assessed through weekly assignments, exams and special projects.

**Assignments**

I. **Lecture PPTs and Readings**: Every week has a folder on the course Blackboard site. You are responsible for using the lecture PPT as a guide and doing all the readings every week. Email the professor with any questions! This information will be new and sometimes confusing to read alone. I am here to help, just contact me 😊

II. **Weekly Analysis (100 points each, 1200 points total)**: Every week you will have an analysis project of writing and interaction with the readings, multimedia, maps, and the lecture PPTs. This Weekly Analysis (WA) will have a prompt on the Word Doc in that week’s folder. **Open this document at the beginning of the week** so you can organize your time. Some weeks this will be questions and/or a short essay on the readings and ideas; other weeks it will be viewing a documentary, looking at the night stars from your site, going on a hike, and/or interacting with different map sites. This means the time to complete the weekly analysis can vary and you do not want to wait until the last minute. **This is the major component of your grade and the way I assess your grade.** WA are due by Friday at midnight, CST of that week to instructor email, no exceptions. Communicate with professor if you have questions/concerns BEFORE deadline.

III. **Original Research Project: Cinema Texas (200 points)**: Using the analytical ideas of Lukinbeal on ‘Cinematic Geography,’ Shohat and Stam on ‘Representation and Identity,’ and Tuan on ‘Making Place’—you will create a short visual presentation on a film made in/or about Texas. This visual can a storyboard using Powerpoint, Prezi, clips of the film, a short video of your own, a photo story, a map story of filming locations with Google Earth, etc. Be creative!

In your project, you can talk about the presentation of Texas culture and people, stereotyping within Texas or about Texans, etc. Simply invoke the geography and tell a coherent story, based on the texts listed above. In your storyboard explain how you used Lukinbeal, Shohat and Stam, and/or Tuan. **GO DEEP IN YOUR ANALYSIS!** You can tell any story you are inspired to tell—but use these three readings as the theoretical concepts to center your story of how Texas environments, culture, and people are portrayed in film.

**Research**: In the past students have done diverse and excellent projects including: 1) looking at civil rights and race in sports in El Paso with the film *Glory Road;* 2) culture and gentrification in Austin with the film *Slacker;* 3) the site of the football field as symbolizing small town politics with *Friday Night Lights;* and 4) mythologies and the idea of who is a “hero” in Texas history with *Alamo.*

In your research, use the IMDB website for the film you choose to compare the filming locations. Go under “Details” and it will list all the filming locations. For example, is a location really West Texas or is it New Mexico filmed to look like TX? If so, what does that say about our expectations of place and cultural geography versus reality? How do our mythologies about space, people and stories create a space, even if it is an illusion? How do you think these expectations perpetuate the myths—especially, if we keep reasserting them? Do they help us form identities? Tell stories? Do we hear the same stories over and over? For example, who is usually cast as a cowboy? How does that compare to the history and contributions of vaqueros? Who is usually cast as the settlers of the West? How does that compare to contributions of Buffalo Soldiers?
Possible films and filmmakers:

Texas filmmakers making films in TX:
- Richard Linklater: Boyhood, Dazed and Confused, Slacker, Bernie
- Robert Rodriguez: Machete, Spy Kids, Grindhouse
- Mike Judge: Office Space (filmed in Dallas—this is a great one using TX to represent an everywhere U.S. space; this inverts spatial expectations by using generic offices, apartment complexes and chain restaurants—absence of specific identity to tell the story. This is the opposite approach most filmmakers use in or about TX).
- Tobe Hooper: Texas Chainsaw Massacre (the 1974 original! The locations are amazing: Bastrop, Round Rock, Kingsland, San Marcos, etc.—this film is known for utilizing the geography to tell the story)

Filmed in and about TX:
- Wim Wenders: Paris, TX (Big Bend NP, Marathon, Brewster County and Houston)
- Joel and Ethan Cohen: No Country For Old Men (Big Bend NP, Marfa); True Grit (Austin, Granger, Blanco)
- Gregor Nava: Selena (Corpus Christi, San Antonio, Houston, Lake Jackson)
- Peter Bogdanovich: The Last Picture Show (novel by Larry McMurtry, filmed in Archer City, Olney, Holliday, Wichita Falls)
- Peter Berg: Friday Night Lights (film, not T.V.; set in Odessa, filming in Odessa, Abilene, Elgin, Taylor, Houston)

2016 was also the inaugural year of the Women Texas Film Festival. Links to new films by young TX women filmmakers: http://www.dallasobserver.com/arts/texas-first-all-female-film-festival-announces-its-lineup-for-texas-theatre-8531903

IV. Exams (100 points each, 200 total): There are two exams in this course, the mid-term and final. They will be posted on Blackboard. Using your WAs, the lecture PPTs, notes on the materials, etc. are an excellent way to prepare for the exam.

Grading
The professor will post your grades on the Blackboard course “Grade Center”, after review. Courtesy reminder: professors are teaching several courses at once and we are not grading robots.

As review, assignments are:
- 12 WA (100 points, 1200 total)
- 1 Cinema Texas Project (200 points)
- 2 Exams (100 points each, 200 total)

Total possible points: 1600

Grade scale
1600-1525=A
1524-1450=B
1449-1375=C
1374-1200=D
under 1199=F

Course Schedule *subject to change at instructor's discretion

Jan 22/Week 1: Introduction to Course and Human Geography of Texas
Readings:
1. Syllabus
2. Chapter 1 “Human Geography: A Cultural Approach” (Domosh, Neumann and Price)
WA #1 Due Friday
Jan 28/Week 2: Cultural Geography of Texas/Exploring Home Geographies with Google Earth

Readings:
1. “Journey’s End: Wim Wenders in TX” (Ramirez)
2. “Language and Making of Place” (Tuan)
3. “Texas-It’s Like a Whole ‘Nuther Country” (Cukor-Avila, et al.)
4. Google Earth Map Story “This is Home: The Americas”:
   https://earth.google.com/web/@46.07711605,3.96965625,335.26422697a,1070199.27107779d,35y,0h,0.0000181t,0h,0.0000181t,0d,0.0000181t,0r/data=CjISMB1gN2IyMzE5NzNlOGRmMTFlNmI5OWM2ZjgxOGQ2OWE2ZTeiDHNwbGFzaHJjcmVlbg

WA #2 Due Friday

Feb 4/Week 3: Eco-Regions of Texas

Reading:
1. The Eco-Regions of Texas (EPA) “Introduction”, “Methods” and select 4 regions you would like to focus on. You will be writing a report profiling 4 regions and comparing them with data in this EPA report and the maps for the WA this week.
2. Interactive map of Texas Eco-Regions on Texas Alliance for Fish and Wildlife:
3. Level IV TX Eco-Region interactive map: https://www.plantmaps.com/interactive-texas-ecoregions-l4-map.php

WA #3 Due Friday

Feb 11/Week 4: Texas Water Geography and Law

Readings:
1. “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Water” (Hardberger)
2. “Edward’s Aquifer” (Longley)
3. “Ft. Stockton v. Claytie” (Aguilar)

WA #4 Due Friday

Feb 18/Week 5: Stars of Texas

1. “Watchers of Pleiades” (Ceci)
2. “Sky Almanac, 2019” (Star Date)
3. Listen to “Star Date” (on WA)
4. Visit McDonald Observatory Website: https://mcdonaldobservatory.org
5. *Download Star Apps on WA to your smart phone; you will need to plan ahead this week for one night of star gazing data collection! 😊

WA #5 Due Friday

Feb 25/Week 6: Indigenous Texas and Sacred Geographies

1. “‘Speaking with Names’: Language and Landscape among the Western Apache” (Basso)
2. “Relativity, Relatedness and Relativity” (Deloria. Jr.)
3. “The Biggest Tribe You Never Learned About in Your Texas History Books” (Mancias)

WA #6 Due Friday
Mar 4/Week 7: Imperial Texas
Readings:
1. “‘Mexico in his head’: Slavery and the Texas-Mexico border” (Kelley)
2. “Introduction: Demythologizing Texas” from The Conquest of Texas (Anderson)

WA #7 Due Friday

Mar 11/Week 8: Mid Term
Mid Term will be posted on Blackboard.

Mar 18-22/Week 9: Spring Break
Enjoy the beauty of Texas geography!

Mar 25/Week 10: U.S.-Mexico War
Readings: Primary Sources on The War on Mexico (Zinn) *This looks like a lot but most of these are just one page and are all in the single document file on Blackboard
1. Diary of Col. Hitchcock (1845-146)
2. Miguel Barragan (18350
3. Juan Soto (1847)
4. Frederick Douglass (1849)
5. North Star Editorial (1848)
6. Henry David Thoreau (1849)

WA #8 Due Friday

Apr 1/Week 11: Civil Rights
Readings:
1. Selections from Fighting Their Own Battles (Behnken)
2. Documentary: Austin Revealed: Civil Rights Stories

WA #9 Due Friday

Apr 8/Week 12: Environmental Justice and Gentrification
Readings:
1. “Race and Environmental Justice in the United States” (Bullard)
2. “From Freedman’s Town to Uptown”: Community Transformation and Gentrification in Dallas, TX” (Prior and Kemper)
3. “Environmental Justice: One Texas Man’s Refinery Fight” (Turrentine)

WA #10 Due Friday

Apr 15/Week 13: Immigration
Readings:
1. “Galveston Ellis Island of Texas” (Hardwick)
2. “Bracero Agreement, 1942” (Governments of U.S. and Mexico)
3. “A Day Without Immigrants” (Pulido)

WA #11 Due Friday

Apr 22/Week 14: Borderlands, La Frontera
Readings:
1. Sections from “Borderlands, La Frontera” (Anzaldúa)
2. “Film at the Border: Memories of Cinemagoing, Laredo, TX” (Lozano)

WA #12 Due Friday

Apr 29/Week 15: Cinema and Texas Geography
Readings:
1. “Stereotype, Realism, and the Struggle Over Representation” (Shohat and Stam)
2. “Cinematic Landscapes” (Lukinbeal)
3. Documentary: “Children of Giant”

Original Research Project: Cinema Texas BEGIN *Check in with prof on your plan via email.

May 6/Week 16: Modern Human Geography in Texas: New Urbanism

Readings
1. “The Texas Urban Model” (Kotkin and Cox)
2. “A Tale of Six Cities” (Salamon)
4. “Mapping the Changing Face of the Lone Star State” (Goldsberry)

Original Research Project: Cinema Texas DUE

May 13/Finals Week: Final TBA