

GEOGR 1500 – GEOGRAPHY OF CYBERSPACE – Fall 2003

Instructor:	Dr. Harvey J. Miller
Course meeting time and room:	Mondays, Wednesday 11:50 am – 1:10 pm, 233 Orson Spencer Hall
Office hours and location:	Monday, Wednesday 9:00 - 10:30 AM or by appointment
Phone:	585-3972
Internet:	harvey.miller@geog.utah.edu

TEXTS

- The World Wide Web (WWW). Available at a computer near you!

DESCRIPTION

'Cyberspace' or the information world created by the Internet, World Wide Web (WWW), Virtual Reality (VR) and other information and immersive technologies is having a profound impact on culture, society and economics. It is also having a profound impact on the way we view and use geography. Cyberspace can collapse space and time, making geography meaningless for activities such as shopping, correspondence and social interaction. But at the same time, cyberspace can also enhance geography by increasing our knowledge of places and improving the competitive advantage of 'wired' cities and regions. At the extreme, cyberspace can actually replace real geography by creating virtual worlds through increasingly powerful VR environments. This course examines the complex interactions between cybergeography and real geography and the potential impacts on society and the global economy. Students will have opportunities to explore these issues through traditional lectures, reading and discussions as well as WWW-based projects and web-enhanced instruction.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. An understanding of the impacts of technology on society and the environment.
2. An understanding that technologies are not neutral, rather they have profound social, economic, cultural and environmental implications and result from explicit or implicit social choices.
3. An understanding of the role of transportation and telecommunication technologies and their impacts on the geographic organization of social, political, economic institutions as well as daily life.

EVALUATION

Course examinations (three midterms): 60% of the final grade. Each examination will cover approximately one-quarter of the course material.

Class participation and project: 40% of the final grade. Projects will consist of small web-based assignments and a final project involving the construction of an online presentation/webdocument describing some domain of cyberspace activity (e.g., shopping, recreation, social interaction, privacy issues).

There will be no final examination. The latter part of the course will focus on discussion and class projects (see below).

POLICIES

- 1) Individual extra credit will not be assigned
- 2) An "incomplete" will be given only in extreme cases when conditions beyond the

student's control require an extended period of absence.

3) The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and the Center for Disabled Student Services, 581-5020 (voice or TDD).

IMPORTANT DATES

Last day to drop (delete) classes	Aug 29
Last day to add classes	Sept 2
Last day to elect CR/NC option or to audit a class	Sept 2
Last day to withdraw from term length classes	Oct 17
Classes end	Dec 4
Final exams	Dec 8-12
<u>University holidays</u>	
Labor Day	Sept 1
Fall Break	Oct 2-3
Thanksgiving Break	Nov 27-28

WEB TOOLS

This course has an online component using WebCT (web course tools) software. These tools provide access to online materials, course schedule and announcements as well as chat rooms, email and other novel ways for interacting with the instructor and other students. Students can self-register for the GEOGR 1500 WebCT during the first two weeks of the course. **You are responsible for announcements, reading assignments and other material posted at the GEOGR 1500 WebCT site, so be sure to check it frequently.**

If you are registered for this course you are automatically registered for the WebCT site. See: <http://webct.utah.edu/>. You must logon to WebCT using your university Network ID (uNID). See <http://www.netcom.utah.edu/helpdesk/faq/nid.html> for information about UNID

CLASS PROJECT

Students will be required to research and create a website that explores one or more topics of interest that are relevant to this course. This will be essentially an expanded version of the more traditional “term paper,” but students will not be limited by the constraints of linear text and static images. More details and a timeline will be discussed in class and at the WebCT site.

You should draw your class project topic from the list of topics in the “Discussion” part of the course. You are also free to focus on some other topic dealing with the interface between the analog and digital worlds. In either case, you must consult with me about your topic.

COURSE FORMAT

The first part of the course will involve traditional lectures and examinations.

The second part of the course will focus on discussion and class projects. I will come to class with some ideas and perhaps a short lecture to “seed” the discussion, but the format will be more open and interactive among all members of class. The topics to be discussed are open: the list below only provides suggestions. Specific topics to be discussed will depend on remaining time and students’ interests. Announcements of the topics to be discussed on each day as well as background webreadings will be provided via the “Calendar” tool at the WebCT site.

COURSE OUTLINE

Note: I will assign online readings for each class via the WebCT site.

A. Lectures

1. Introduction: The death of distance?

- 1.1. Cyberspace and the telematics era
- 1.2. Where and when are you? Time geography
- 1.3. The shrinking world: space-time convergence
- 1.4. Presence and telepresence
- 1.5. The world is shrinking, but shriveling and fragmenting

2. The new virtuality: How and why computers are changing everything

- 2.1 The three simple ideas behind the revolution
 - Idea #1: Knowledge can be coded using only zeros and ones
 - Idea #2: Sand can (semi-) conduct electricity
 - Idea #3: Networked computers are better than isolated computers
- 2.2. The times they are a-changin’: A CPU tsunami
 - Moore Law of Integrated Circuits
 - Moore was short-sighted: Kurzweil’s Law of Computing
 - No limits? The strange and promising world of quantum computing

3. Do you really think it’s all new? Communications revolutions in history

- 3.1. The nature of communication networks
 - Connectivity: One-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many networks
 - What are we pushing in the pipes? Waves versus bits
- 3.2. A brief history of telecommunications
 - Postal systems
 - The telegraph
 - The telephone
 - Radio and television
- 3.3. The Internet and World Wide Web
 - Recap: The growth of network computing
 - Building a bomb-proof network: Packet switching
 - Interoperating the Internet: TCP/IP
 - The growth of the Internet and birth of the World Wide Web
- 3.4. Current trends
 - Napster and peer-to-peer networking
 - Wireless networks and location-based services

B. Discussion

Being digital in an analog world - Suggested topics (feel free to suggest others!)

- Measuring and mapping cyberspace
 - Problems in measuring cyberspace
 - Cybercartography
- E-commerce and the commercial life of cities
 - Where* is the information economy?
 - Cyberspace and urban economies
- Social life in cyberspace
 - Telecommunications and urban culture
 - Virtual communities versus geographic communities
 - Privacy and surveillance
- Telecommunications and urban form
 - History: Transportation, telegraphs, telephones and the city
 - The death of cities or urban renaissance?
- Is the web green? Telecommunications and the environment
 - Commuting and telecommuting
 - Intelligent transportation systems