THE WAR ON DRUGS IN GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE
GEOG 383.22/GEOG 705.08/MONDAY 5:35 – 8:15
Hunter North 1004 and Online

Instructor: Annie Spencer
Office location: Hunter North, Room 1032
Email: aspencer@gc.cuny.edu (Include “GEOG383” in the subject line)
Office hours: In lieu of regular office hours, I will be available by appointment, via email or telephone. I will respond to student emails (please include the course number in your subject) within 24 hours.

Brief description/purpose of course: Popularized by Richard Nixon, the phrase "War on Drugs" points to a set of domestic and foreign policy measures enacted by the U.S. government starting in the early 1970s, and persisting through the present-day, meant to combat the production, distribution and consumption of illegal drugs. The War on Drugs has been called "the single greatest policy failure in 50 years." Recent films such as "The House I Live In" (2012) and "How to Make Money Selling Drugs" (2012) as well as the hit series The Wire (2002 - 2008) highlight some of the worst impacts of the drug war, such as the inherently racial and racist implementation of policing and sentencing, mass-incarceration, and the diversion of state dollars from education and social services. In our inquiry into to creation of this war, its outcomes, and the way forward, this course will consider the work of geographers, sociologists, physicians, journalists, as well as policy documents, films and radio segments.

The course will be taught as an online/in-person hybrid. The online portion will include a weekly, asynchronous Blackboard discussion board component (about 1.5 hours per week) as well as prepared presentations and discussion board posts. In-person sessions will occur 4 times per semester, in one, 3-hour session, and will follow a discussion-based seminar format. The final project will be a term paper.

Attendance is mandatory for the four (4) in-person sessions. The rest of the course will take place online, with both asynchronous and synchronous elements.

The class will meet in the Hunter North Building Room 1004 on the following dates:

Monday, January 27
Monday, March 3
Monday, April 7
Monday, May 12

Required Texts: Please plan to purchase, borrow, or otherwise secure access to the following books. Any edition from any publisher is acceptable. These books have been ordered at Shakespeare and Co. and the Hunter College Bookstore. Other reading assignments will be made available through Blackboard.


Course objectives: Upon completion of this course students will:

- have an understanding of the U.S. War on Drugs in its socio-spatial, economic and political contexts;
- have gained exposure to an interdisciplinary social science approach to social inquiry rooted in the foundations of contemporary human geography;
- understand the principles and theories of economic geography and be better informed about the spatial characteristics of economic processes;
- have an understanding of the close links between local events and global phenomena;
- have an understanding of contemporary trends in the global economy and their impacts on individual livelihoods in diverse places; and
- be able to apply newly-acquired knowledge to think sensibly and critically about important real-world problems and be able to make better sense of academic, government and journalistic accounts of the global economy.

Course evaluation: Students will be evaluated on the following criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Item</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation 1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation 2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation and reading Journal</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar paper</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
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Hybrid Format: The course will meet in-person four times throughout the semester. All other course engagement will happen remotely. Students are expected to complete the readings and all Blackboard activity (discussion board posts, supplemental materials) on a given week’s material by midnight Friday of that week. Students are expected to stay current on the Blackboard discussion throughout the week and must demonstrate this by making no fewer than two substantive posts each week.

Presentations: In lieu of written response papers, students will prepare two presentations on a given week’s readings and supplemental material. Guidelines will be discussed and weeks will be assigned during the first class session.

Class Preparation and Participation: Students are required to attend in-person class sessions and should be prepared to discuss the readings and any discussion assignments given in the previous class. Readings should be completed before the class period in which they will be discussed. Students’ written (online) and spoken (in-person) comments should regularly demonstrate effective class preparation and substantive, thoughtful engagement with the course materials and topics. Students are expected to keep up with online course assignments and to be active participants in online group activities.

Reading Journal: Students are required to keep a reading journal that they will submit to me electronically in the week prior to each of the four in-person classes. Details will be discussed in the first class.

Final Paper: Students will write a seminar paper (15 pages) on a pre-approved topic.

Standards for written work: Your written work should conform to the following standards:

- Papers should be typed, double spaced with one-inch margins, using a Times Roman or other similar serif font.
- Papers should cite sources and use the author-date style of referencing commonly used in the discipline of geography. See a copy of the Annals of the Association of American Geographers for examples.
Papers should make use of sources from the World Wide Web only when the source is a government agency or other reliable institution, and online version of a print resource (i.e. article databases), or when it is the online source itself that is the subject of the research. See me concerning the appropriateness of using sources from the Web. You should not use Wikipedia or other online encyclopedic references in a college level paper.

Writing help: Students who need help with writing are encouraged to take advantage of the Hunter College Writing center. The Reading/Writing Center is located in Room 416, Thomas Hunter Building. Drop-in hours and more information can be found here: http://rwc.hunter.cuny.edu/index.html

Classroom policies: Participation is 25 percent of the class grade. For in-class sessions, students should not expect to receive full credit for participation if they are habitually absent, late, sleeping, using electronic devices or are otherwise visibly not engaged in or disruptive of the class discussion. For online sessions, students should complete all required assignments in the week that they are assigned. Whether online or in-person, students will be expected to demonstrate that they have read and engaged critically with the week’s readings. For online weeks this will require regular and substantive engagement on the Blackboard discussion board each week.

Hunter College Policy on Academic Integrity: Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

Hunter College ADA Compliance: In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY, located in Room E1214B, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call: (212) 772-4857 or (212) 650-3230.

Note on late assignments/missed exams: If you will not be able to complete an assignment on time, please inform me of this at least one day prior to the due date. Late assignments will ONLY be accepted if a prior arrangement has been made with me and appropriate circumstances warrant additional time. Late assignments without appropriate circumstance/documentation will be penalized (5 points off per day late).

Policy on Incomplete (IN) and Credit/No Credit (CR/NC) grades: A final grade of IN (incomplete) will not be given except under the most extraordinary, and documented, circumstances. Only undergraduate students who have completed ALL course requirements including all writing assignments, midterm and final exams will be eligible for a final grade of CR/NC. You must submit your CR/NC form to me before the end of the May 12th in-person class meeting. Unfortunately, graduate students are not eligible for CR/NC.

Credit/No Credit (C/NC) as a final course grade is available to undergraduate students only. To receive C/NC you must have completed all of the course requirements (exams, quizzes, papers, etc.) and have submitted the C/NC form to me no later than 15 minutes prior to beginning the final exam.

Disclaimer: Assignment due dates and readings may change from what is listed in this syllabus depending on the needs of the class and in unforeseen events such as school closures. I will give ample warning of any changes. Students will be responsible for staying abreast of any such revisions.
SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1 – January 27: Introductions / No Readings
[in-person class]

Week 2 – February 3: Setting the Stage & A Geographical Approach

“Timeline – America’s War on Drugs” – National Public Radio, April 2, 2007


Gilmore, R. W. “Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography.”


Week 3 – February 10: Neoliberalism & “The Punitive Turn”


Audio: Against the Grain interview w/ Loic Waquant, "The Punitive Turn"
http://www.againstthegrain.org/program/540/id/121142/wed-3-21-12-punitive-turn

Week 4 -- February 20:*Global Flows


Time Magazine “Top Ten Unhealthy Side Effects of the War on Drugs”
http://healthland.time.com/2011/06/17/top-10-unhealthy-side-effects-of-the-war-on-drugs/

*no classes Monday, February 17. Classes follow a Monday schedule on Thursday, February 20.
Week 5 – February 24: Addiction—Neuroscience, Policy, Criminalization


Film: *The House I Live In* (dvd is at Hunter Library Media Reserve Desk)

Week 6 – March 3
[in-person class]

Case Study: Rockefeller Drug Laws

NPR: “The Drug Laws That Changed How We Punish” February 2013
http://www.npr.org/2013/02/14/171822608/the-drug-laws-that-changed-how-we-punish

PRDI Fact Sheet on the Rockefeller Drug Laws
http://www.prdi.org/rocklawfact.html

“Mandatory Minimum Sentencing and Potential Pardons by President Obama,” The Huffington Post, August 2013

Week 7 – March 10: Declining Wages; Structural Change


Richard Walker “Class Struggle in the U.S.A.” (Lecture 18) and “Will Work for Fast Food” (Lecture 19) from his Economic Geography course available for free on iTunes U

Film: PBS Frontline: *Two American Families*
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/two-american-families/

Week 8 – March 17: The Prison Boom; The Prison-Industrial Complex


Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “Beyond the Prison Industrial Complex” Lecture
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTPjC-7EDkc

Week 9 – March 24: The PIC, the Penal State


**Week 10 – March 31: Locating the War on Drugs**


Film: *How to Make Money Selling Drugs* (2012)

**Week 11 – April 7**

[in-person class]

Case Studies: The Million Dollar Block Project & The Campaign to End Stop and Frisk

The Million Dollar Block Project  
http://www.spatialinformationdesignlab.org/projects.php?id=16

NPR: “Million Dollar Blocks” Map Incarceration’s Costs  
http://www.npr.org/2012/10/02/162149431/million-dollar-blocks-map-incarcerations-costs

http://www.thenation.com/article/176967/stop-and-frisk-now-bill-de-blasio's-hands  & various other TBD re. the campaign to end Stop and Frisk

[Spring Break April 14 – 22]

**Week 12 – April 28: Transnational Dimensions**


Week 13 – May 5: Resistance, Reworking, and The Horizon for Change


Critical Resistance and INCITE! Statements, additional TBD

Week 14 – May 12
[in-person class]

Final Paper Presentations / Closing Remarks

**Final Papers Due May 22**