

Roads and Road Publics
ANG 6930 sec 4107 / ANT 4930 sec 3206



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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-4pm
or by appointment

Thursdays 7-9
(1:55-4:55 pm)
WEIM 1092

Course Description:

What kinds of communities emerge through the material and metaphorical construction of roads as 'public' works? What kinds of events and encounters do such works entail and make possible? This course examines roads and road-building for the ways in which they throw into palpable relief the inevitable tensions between 'state' and 'people' while time and again underscoring the impossible task of representing public interest or imagined futures *in general*.

In this class we will weigh the distinctive features and shared traits of different kinds of roads with attention to how through them place, time and space appear to coalesce. However, we

will privilege major, or mega-project, highways for their inextricable connection to territorial administration, regimes of property and political belonging. In particular we will be mindful of the multiple uses and effects of new roads: how they have reconfigured urban and rural landscapes, impacted indigenous populations, shaped settler ideologies and bolstered state claims to radical title over frontiers. Asking what binds *infrastructure* to assertions of eminent domain will allow us to underscore the political character of roads and their potential for becoming extremely charged spaces of encounter: as nodal points of governmentality (checkpoints with their interpellations of state subjects and possibilities for various forms of profiling); as sites of popular contention (demonstrations, strikes, blockages); or as zones of “everyday insecurity” (highway robbery and traffic accidents).

Along the way we will consider the expressive culture of land transportation and travel, while assessing the affective dimensions of roads through their experience and narration as rendered in works of ethnography, literature and film. Here the challenge will be to keep the inquiry never far from the substantial: dirt and dust, stones and asphalt, but also the various modes of sense that accrue to and through the condition of the surface itself. Emphasis on materiality is crucial since much thinking about roads all too quickly flies off into abstraction and allegory. Ultimately, we want to ask how roads articulate distinct kinds of social space and time and examine the variable modes of sociality (intimacy, distance, anonymity, etc.) they produce.

Overview of Requirements: This class is a seminar. Active participation in all discussions is expected. Once during the semester, each student will be asked to prepare and present a seminar report on one or more of the assigned readings. There will be a take-home mid-term exam and also a final paper.

Required Texts:

Arguedas, J.M. *Yawar Fiesta* (Waveland Press, 2002)

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. *A Thousand Plateaus* (University of Minnesota Press, 1987)

Schivelbusch, W. *The Railway Journey*. (University of California Press, 1987)

Virilio, P. *Speed and Politics* (Semiotext(e), 2007)

Optional Texts:

Habermas, J. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (MIT Press, 1989)

Urry, J. *Mobilities* (Polity, 2007)

All remaining class readings can be downloaded from the Sakai course page.

Attendance: Arriving punctually and remaining until the end of each class is required. An attendance sign-up sheet will be circulated at the beginning of each session. If for any reason you must miss class, please inform the Instructor ahead of time (or as soon as possible) and present appropriate documentation. In such cases it is the student's responsibility to contact a classmate to obtain notes on the materials covered while away.

Absences for reasons of religious holiday, illness, and official university business are excused; however, proper notification must still be provided. **Please note:** *More than one unexcused* absence will severely undermine performance in the course. After the *second* unexcused absence the final grade will be reduced a full letter. Students with *four or more* unexcused absences will fail. On the other hand, bonus credit will be granted for perfect (or near perfect) attendance.

Evaluations – Final course grades will be calculated according to a combination of four criteria:

Participation (20%): A grade for participation will be assessed at the end of the semester based on the degree to which you play an active, informed role in class discussions and in so doing contribute to the overall success of the course. This requires that you arrive at each session on time with the assigned materials *in hand*, having carefully read them all, and prepared to share your impressions, questions and interpretations. You are also highly encouraged to meet with the Instructor in office hours two or three times during the semester to talk about your progress in the course and your plans for the final project.

Seminar Report and Presentation (25%): Every student will be responsible for the preparation and presentation of one seminar report on the assigned readings of a particular week. The seminar report should not be a mere summary of the texts but rather a well-crafted, spirited interpretation that situates the readings within the ideas and concepts of the course. It should also outline specific concerns and hone questions. Student(s) in charge of the coming week's presentation should circulate a list of discussion points and questions *at least 24 hours* prior to class (that is, no later than noon on Wednesday) via Sakai.

Mid-term exam (25%): The mid-term will be a take-home exam distributed two weeks before the due date.

Term project paper (30%): For undergraduate students – The final paper is a “road ethnography” broadly defined of approximately 3300 words. Based on a research project of your own design the paper should critically examine one of the class themes. The specific topic must be elaborated in close consultation with the Instructor.

For graduate students – The final paper should be an original, persuasive and creative engagement with one or more of the class concepts. Of approximately 5500-7000 words in length, it should contribute directly towards the development of a conference paper, journal article or dissertation chapter.

From all students a concise 250-word abstract that clearly outlines the objectives of the project is due in early March. The term paper itself must be handed in no later than the last day of class.

All papers, exams and reports should be typed and double-spaced with one-inch margins and pages numbered. In addition to submitting a hard copy of the assignment, *you are also required to send an electronic version to the Instructor via Sakai.*

Written assignments will be judged on content (the extent to which they succeed in explicating course material and themes) but also in terms of style (coherence, persuasiveness and creativity).

Assignment Deadlines:

- 1) mid-term exam: Feb. 24
- 2) term paper abstract: Mar. 3
- 3) final paper: Apr. 14

Late policy: Assignments are due at the beginning of class. Mid-term exams and seminar reports handed in late but still within one week of the original due date will be docked the equivalent of a full letter grade. After that they will no longer be accepted. No extensions will be granted for the term paper.

Academic Honesty:

All work submitted by a student for a grade must be completed by that student and free from unauthorized assistance or deliberate misrepresentations. The penalty for plagiarism or cheating is a grade of zero points on the assignment in question; in such cases an incident form will also be sent to the Office of the Dean of Students. If you have questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, please consult the UF Honor Code as well as the UF Policies on Academic Honesty, Student Rights and Responsibilities. These are available online at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentrights.php> - [academichonestyguidelines](#).

ADA Statement: “Students with disabilities, who need reasonable modifications to complete assignments successfully and otherwise satisfy course criteria, are encouraged to meet with the instructor as early in the course as possible to identify and plan specific accommodations. Students will be asked to supply a letter from the Disability Resource Center to assist in planning accommodations.”

Grading Scale: The following scale will be used for grades on all assignments and exams: 94-100=A; 90-93=A-; 87-89=B+; 83-86=B; 79-82=B-; 76-78=C+; 72-75=C; 69-71=C-; 66-68=D+; 62-65=D; 59-61=D-; 58 and below=E (failing).

Regarding university grading policies, be advised that a grade of C- is not valid for major, minor, Gen Ed, Gordon Rule, or for college basic distribution credit. For questions about minus grades, please see <http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>.

You may consult current UF policy on how grade point averages are calculated at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>.

Health and Counseling: The University offers the following health and counseling services for students in the event personal problems hinder academic performance:

University Counseling Center (301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575),
Student Mental Health (Student Health Care Center, 392-1171), and
Sexual Assault Recovery Services (Student Health Care Center, 392-1161).

Please note: The Instructor may make minor adjustments to class readings or assignment requirements during the course of the semester. Any and all modifications will be announced ahead of time.

Course Schedule

week 1 **introductions: what's the public of a *public* work?**

1/6 **film:** Juan Carlos Rulfo's "En el hoyo" (In the Pit) (2006)

week 2 **the distance in-between**

1/13 Kafka, "The Great Wall of China"

Simmel, "Bridge and Door"

Bergson, "The Perception of Change"

Urry, *Mobilities*, Ch. 4-7

Burtynsky's "Manufactured Landscapes" (selected scenes)

week 3**road as chronotope**

1/20

Bahktin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (excerpts)

Roseman, "How we built the road"

Arguedas, *Yawar Fiesta*Redfield, *A Village that Chose Progress*, Ch.1Redfield and Rojas, *Chan Kom a Maya Village*, Ch.1-2

Keller, "A Road by Any Other Name: Trails, Paths, and Roads in Maya Language and Thought"

recommended: Dalakoglou, "The Road - An ethnography of the Albanian–Greek cross-border motorway"**week 4****theorizing things public**

1/27

Arendt, *The Human Condition*: "The Public and Private Realm"Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Ch. 1-2

Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere"

Kharkhordin, "Things as *res publicae*"

Caillois, "The Great Bridgemaker"

Yanev, "Who is Minding the Bridge?"

week 5**first roads and road events**

2/3

Weber, E. *Peasants into Frenchmen*, Ch.12Schmink and Wood, *Contested Frontiers in Amazonia*, Ch. 5-7, 10-11.

Perz et. al., "Unofficial Road Building in the Amazon"

Kernaghan, "Asphalt Trenches"

week 6 **state space I: problems of legibility**

2/10 Schmitt, "Law as a Unity of Order and Orientation"

Schmitt, "Appropriation / Distribution / Production"

Lefebvre, "Space and the State"

Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, Part I

Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, Lecture 13

Harvey, P. "The Materiality of State Effects"

Fairhead, "Paths of Authority"

Virilio, *Speed and Politics* (excerpts)

mid-term questions distributed

week 7 **transformations of perception**

2/17 Benjamin, "The Railway Disaster at the Firth of Tay"

Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey* (selected chapters)

Schnapp, "Crash"

Williamson, "The Fluid State: Malaysia's National Expressway"

Thomas, "The River, the Road, and the Rural-urban Divide: a postcolonial moral geography from southeast Madagascar"

recommended: Augé, "From Places to Non-Places"

week 8

senses of the surface

2/24

Zardini, "Surface of the City"

mid-term due

Mrazek, "Asphalt as Language"

Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*: Series 22-27

Kernaghan, "Furrows and Walls"

week 9

a science of materials or a poetry of things?

3/3

Lay, *Way of the World*: "Pavements"

project abstract due

Taussig, *My Cocaine Museum*: "Cement, Speed", "Stones"

Caillois, *The Writing of Stones* (excerpts)

Lingis, *The First Person Singular* (excerpts)

Lingis, *The Imperative* (excerpts)

**** 3/10**

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS **

week 10

state space II: the smooth, the striated

3/17

Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (selected chapters)

Earle, "Routes through the landscape"

Kosok, "Transport in Peru"

Normark, J., "Triadic causeways of Ichmul"

week 11

roadside (ruins, shrines)

3/24

Simmel, "The Ruin"

Stewart, "Mimetic Excess in an Occupied Place"

Juhlin and D. Normark, "Public Road Signs as Intermediate Interaction"

Everett, "The Cross-cultural Roadside Cross"

Robert, "The Moral Economy of Urban Roads and Demolition in Contemporary Vietnam"

Film: Honigmann, "Metal and Melancholy"

week 12 **arresting movements**

3/31 Jeganathan, "Checkpoint"

Roitman, "The Ethics of Illegality in the Chad Basin"

Pottier, "Roadblock ethnography"

week 13 **slowing things down**

4/7 Virilio, *Speed and Politics* (excerpts)

Connolly, "Speed, Concentric Cultures, and Cosmopolitanism"

(Additional readings TBA)

week 14 **strange propositions**

4/14 Melville, "Bartleby, The Schrivener"

final paper due

Deleuze, "Bartleby; or the Formula"

Harvey and Knox, "Impossible Publics? Enthusiasms, Refusals and Confrontations around a Peruvian Road Building Project"

Harvey and Knox, "Otherwise Engaged: Culture, deviance and the quest for connectivity through road construction"

Khan, "Flaws in the Flow: Roads and their modernity in Pakistan"