Society, Culture, and Place
Geography 343
Professor Ron Wixman
GTF: Maylian Pak

**Course Description:** This course focuses on geography as related to social, cultural, and political issues. We examine differing value systems (social, religious, ethnic, gender, neighborhood, professional, and others) on world, regional, national, and local levels. The primary goal of this course is to inform students of the important cultural differences and approaches to the places in which people live. Different groups living in the same place can have varying views as to what that place means to them. Frequently, these are major sources of conflict. Many of the world’s most difficult issues stem from differing claims to territory. On local levels, these play out on social, economic, religious, and other issues. Many situations regarding both the nature of cultural space and competition over these are discussed in this class. For example, in Eugene two of the most commonly debated issues deal with development and the opposition to it by competing social and economic groups in the city, and uses of public space and funds for sport-oriented activities versus educational ones.

**Required Text:** Doreen Massey and Pat Jess (Eds). *A Place in the World?*

**Course Requirements and Grading:**
Students will be evaluated on 4 exercises, class participation, and attendance.

The first 4 weeks of this course deal with concepts presented both in class and in the required text. In the first 2 weeks students should have read, and be prepared to discuss, the first 3 chapters of the text (including the introduction). These deal with: Migration, Globalization and Place; The conceptualization of place; and Place and identity. In the second 2 weeks, students must read chapters 4, 5, and 6: The contestation of place, New cultures for old, and Places and cultures in an uneven world. In addition to these readings, students are required to attend class and participate in discussions.

**Exercise 1** is a multiple choice test based on both the required readings and class lecture material. (25 points)

The next 2 weeks focus on relationship of the text and class discussions dealing with world and global cultural values. Here macro-level issues regarding concepts of space and place are treated.

**Exercise 2** is a 4-5 page paper dealing with describing and analyzing a subject of your choice related to the discussions in class. These can deal with urban, rural, regional, or other macro-level phenomena. (25 points)

The 7th and 8th weeks are devoted to understanding these type issues on a regional and/or local level.

**Exercise 3** is a 6-8 page paper presented as group projects, addressing these issues in Eugene itself. Students will go out and do field inquiry and research on various neighborhoods and activity centers in this city. For example: the downtown mall,
the area of government buildings, the University area, specific neighborhoods (East and West University neighborhoods, South Eugene, Whiteaker, etc...), Valley River Center and its surroundings, and others. One composite paper will be submitted by the group as a whole (no individual papers). (25 points)

The last 2 weeks are devoted to in-depth discussion in-class on students’ own experiences and issues regarding their own backgrounds. All students are expected to participate in these discussions and attendance is mandatory.

**Exercise 4** is a 4-5 page paper where students are expected to discuss their own and their families’ backgrounds. Here, constructs presented by Massey and Jess must be used and referenced in the paper to show that the student has a clear understanding, at this point, of the ideas of this course as related to their individual lives. (25 points)

**Notes:** No late papers are accepted. What is expected of this class is to be able to work both individually and in small groups. For exercise 3, for example, groups of related issues and areas will present findings to the class followed by a class discussion. Those dealing with retail activities, such as the Downtown Mall, the Oakway Mall, and Valley River Center will each present their own group findings and then the class will analyze and discuss similarities and differences between them. Similarly, those dealing with residential areas will present in the same way.

Class participation and attendance will be used to either increase or decrease the students’ final grades for the class.