**SPRING 2021 COURSE SYLLABUS – GEOG804.001**

**GEOGRAPHIES OF INFRASTRUCTURE**

Technology, Agency, Materiality, Storytelling

Wednesdays 5:30-8:30

Remote course via:

https://unc.zoom.us/j/97588427058?pwd=QUFGcVRsaVBkL3FFQTN0TVlydzILZz09

Meeting ID: 975 8842 7058  Passcode: 359001

**Professor Scott Kirsch**

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course homepage: via https://sakai.unc.edu

office hours (via https://unc.zoom.us/my/kirsch.geography): Tues and Fri 1-230pm; and by appt.

**Overview**

Located at the intersection of surface and structure, infrastructure has been on the agenda in recent years in the critical social sciences, history, and cultural studies. Roads, ports, power plants, and pipelines; infrastructures of extraction, transportation, information, and communication; and built environments of commerce, military and policing power, science, technology, and health, have all been identified as transformative social (or socio-natural) sites, and key settings around which processes of urbanization, neoliberalism, nationalist identity formation, war, security, and geopolitics have pivoted. As Cowen (2019) suggests, “Infrastructure, almost by definition, reproduces relations, though sometimes in queer ways,” reflecting or making visible the persistence of hegemony, resistance, and social struggle.

The seminar takes “geographies of infrastructure” as a starting point for exploring the ongoing remaking of the earth’s surface, and reworking of social relations, spaces, and flows, across multiple sites and scales. Its approach is interdisciplinary, drawing on cultural and historical geography, science and technology studies, historical geographical materialism, labor history, political ecology, planetary urbanization, and “inhuman geography.” A number of workshops, mixed media activities, and project assignments will be integrated into the seminar format to emphasize elements of storytelling, research method, and writing practice.

**Requirements**

- Close reading and discussion of texts. Participants will take turns leading discussions. Plan to read ~75-125 pages per week for regular seminar meetings. (50%)
- Project participation: creative contribution to a class atlas of infrastructures project (the name is a place-saver!) Will involve some additional research and writing, collaboration, and imaginative uses of mapping and new media. (15%)

- Term paper. In which students are encouraged to examine aspects of their own graduate research projects in relation to course themes. Papers will be developed in workshop settings throughout the semester. Alternately, students may choose to write a review paper, or to expand their work on the collaborative project. (35%)

∞ Please inform the instructor if you have special needs which require accommodations in order for you to fully participate in this course.

Required Texts
Available: https://unc.bncollege.com/shop/BNCBTBLListView?catalogId=10001&langId=-1&storeId=88196

Martín Arboleda, Planetary Mine: Territories of Extraction under Late Capitalism (Verso, 2020)


Kathryn Yusoff, A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None (University of Minnesota Press, 2018)

Additional texts are listed in the schedule below to be read in advance of class meetings – pdfs or links will be provided via sakai.

Schedule

I: INTRODUCTION: STRUCTURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Jan. 20 Introductions

Jan. 27 Keywords
- Arboleda, ch. 1 “Openings: The mine as transnational infrastructure” (1-34)
- Yusoff, Preface (xi-xiv); “Geology, race, and matter” (1-22)

Feb. 3 Planetary stories
- Arboleda, ch. 2 “Empire: Resource imperialism after the West” (35-74)
- Gandy, “Introduction” (1-18)

Feb. 10 Ruins, waste, and strata
• Yusoff, “Golden spikes and dubious origins” (23-64).

**II. A SPACE OF FLOWS?**

**Feb. 17** Road stories
• “Good roads movement” in North Carolina, archival exercise *tba*

**Feb. 24** Planetary urbanization
• Gandy, ch. 1 “Water, space, and power”
• Arboleda, ch. 3 “Labor: Bodies of extraction and the making of urban environments” (75-108)
• Kathryn Furlong “Geographies of infrastructure II: Concrete, cloud and layered (in)visibilities” *Progress in Human Geography*. May 2020.

**Mar. 3** Ethnographies of infrastructure
• Malini Ranganathan, “Paying for pipes, claiming citizenship: Political agency and water reforms at the urban periphery” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38 (2014): 590-608/

**Mar. 10** Productions of space
• Gandy, ch. 2 “Symbolic order and the urban pastoral”

Mar. 17 **WORKSHOP #1

III. INFRASTRUCTURAL SCIENCES

Mar. 24 Technology
• Yours Truly, “Technology as a keyword” in M. Domosh, M. Heffernan, C.W.J. Withers (eds.), The SAGE Handbook of Historical Geography (Sage, 2021), pp. 680-697
• Lisa Björkman and Andrew Harris, “Engineering cities: Mediating materialities, infrastructural imaginaries and shifting regimes of urban expertise” International Journal of Urban and Regional Research (2018): 244-262.
• Arboleda, ch. 5 “Expertise: Technocracy and expropriation” (140-174)
• Gandy, ch. 3 “Technological modernism and the urban parkway”

Mar. 31 Geology
• Yusoff, “The inhumanities” (65-85); “Insurgent geology” (87-101)

Apr. 7 Ecology
• Arboleda, ch. 4 “Circulation: State power and the logistics turn in the extractive industries” (109-139)
• Gandy ch. 5 “Rustbelt ecology”

Apr. 14 WORKSHOP #2

IV: POLITICS, AGENCY, CHANGE

Apr. 21 Circulations
• Arboleda, ch. 6 “Money: Debts of extraction” (175-205)
• Colin Flint and Cuiping Zhu, “The geopolitics of connectivity, cooperation, and


**Apr. 28**

**Liquid cities and sensing infrastructures**

- Matthew Gandy (dir.) *Liquid City* (documentary) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhAk-E3Jico](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhAk-E3Jico) and Gandy, “Liquid city: Reflections on making a film” *Cultural Geographies* 16 (2009): 403-408
- Gandy, Epilogue
  - Yusoff, “Writing a geology for the storm next time” (103-108)
  - Arboleda, “Epilogue—toward an emancipatory science in the city of extraction” (243-259)

**May 5**

**Workshop #3: Project presentations**

**May 10**

“FINAL” (7pm): Term papers due.