

**SOCIOLOGY 1871W**  
**GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIETY**  
**COURSE SYLLABUS**

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**Instructor:** Rachel Franklin  
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**Office Hours:** Mondays 10:00am–Noon, and by appointment

**Lecture Time and Location:** Mondays, 3:00–5:20 pm, Sayles Hall 005

**Course Description:** This course is intended as an introduction to a geographical approach to understanding the spatial organization of individuals, societies, and economies. The two main emphases of the course are on theories/concepts and applied analytical tools. Students are introduced to key theories in geography, sociology, and economics that have attempted to organize and classify the spatial structures and interactions across space of social and economic actors. Through exposure to core concepts, students learn how space or geography has been conceptualized over time, common elements of social science theory in general, and, finally, through critique, how to assess theories that may be elegantly conceived but imperfect ways of viewing the world around us.

If we wish to empirically test the theories that organize the world around us, we need measurement tools. Therefore, the course emphasizes “geographical analysis,” or spatially explicit methodological tools that have been developed to help quantify and explain the extent and types of spatial relationships that exist. These tools may consist of complex statistical models, but they may also be (relatively) simple measures, indices, or techniques that provide a quantitative assessment of spatial relationships. To help students gain familiarity with actual analysis, assignments will provide students with hands-on opportunities to work with spatial data and to gain practice interpreting quantitative results.

**Objectives:** By the end of the semester, you will:

- understand some of the common ways in which we sub-divide the world into regions or areas and how the choice of these sub-units affects our analysis and results
- be able to discuss intelligently regional and urban theories of spatial structures and hierarchies, the assumptions underlying these theories, and the criticisms that have been leveled at them
- have improved your ability to write coherently and clearly about analytical results, previous research using these techniques, and potential weaknesses of the approach or technique
- be familiar with common types of spatially-explicit economic and socio-demographic data in the U.S. and the geographies for which these data are collected
- have had experience working with the above data and will feel a degree of comfort in applying common analytical techniques to these data.
- know several definitions of the term “accessible” and various ways in which it can be measured
- understand what migration, transportation, and trade data have in common and some of the intricacies involved in working with origin/destination, or flow, data

**Assignments:** There will be regular assignments and group activities that emphasize computation and interpretation. These will be worth 10 points each and may be started or even completed during class time.

**Course Project:** Each student will complete a semester-long project that will focus on some element of economic development, demographic change, or some similar topic related to course material (e.g. characteristics and location of urban growth in Rhode Island over the past 20 years). The project should make use of theories and techniques covered in class and should be framed within either an editorial or a policy prescription context. Final project deliverables will be written (~ five-page policy brief or news article/letter to the editor format) and oral (presentations on May 5). Students may work in groups of 2-3 with permission of the instructor.

**Final & Midterm Exams:** There will be two exams in the course. The first will cover readings and course material. The second will be the product of the class's research on Brown graduating student migration behavior.

**Discussion Contribution:** It should go without saying that you are expected to attend lecture and contribute to discussion. Lectures will be used to explain concepts and techniques, and to discuss assigned readings. In general, you should come to class prepared to discuss readings and to link them to material covered in class. At least three times during the semester, you will be expected to contribute a current events story that ties into course material – these articles may come from *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, or similar and should be distributed to the class at least a week in advance of discussion along with a brief argument for why the story is relevant and a set of discussion questions.

**Required Course Textbook:** For much of the course material, we will be using Plane and Rogerson's *Geographical Analysis of Population*, which is available online for about \$40-\$50. Supplemental assigned readings will be available via Canvas.

**Course Assessment:** Evaluation in the course will be based on assignments, the final project, contribution to classroom discussion, and a final exam. All course materials will be available via Canvas. Each component will be weighted as follows:

Assignments & Discussion Contribution	30%
Midterm Exam	15%
Project	35%
Final Exam	20%

## Course Schedule

(If necessary, schedule may be adjusted during the course of the semester)

Week	Topic	Deliverable
<b>Population</b>		
(1) Jan. 27	Introductions	
(2) Feb. 3	Population Distribution and Composition	
(3) Feb. 10	Demographic change	
(4) Feb. 17	<b>Long Weekend</b>	
(5) Feb. 24	Migration	
(6) March 3	Migration II	
(7) March 10	Segregation and Diversity	
<b>Economies</b>		
(8) March 17	Describing Economic Activity	<b>Project Plans</b>
(9) March 24	<b>Spring Break</b>	
(10) March 31	Economic Growth and Change	
(11) April 7	Location and Distribution of Cities	<b>Project Updates</b>
(12) April 14	Producer Location	<b>Tent. Midterm Date</b>
<b>Demographics and Planning</b>		
(13) April 21	Theories of Urban and Rural Structures and Land Use	
(14) April 28	Demographics and Planning	<b>Draft Projects</b>
(15) May 5	Project Presentations	<b>Projects Due</b>
<b>May 9</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM: BROWN STUDENT MIGRATION</b>	