Grading Guide for HGO 4011 Philosophy and Methodology of Geography

Overview of the assignment

The point of the essay is to demonstrate what they have learned in the course. This includes three aspects: i.) their ability to identify and use theoretical concepts that were introduced in the course; ii.) relationships between different conceptual ideas in the course. iii.) the empirical content of the topics taught. Excellent essays will demonstrate an ability to include all of these aspects, while those on the lower end of the spectrum will only engage with a single aspect. They are expected to engage both the assigned readings and others they find themselves.

The exam questions all ask students to think across a minimum of 2 topics in the course. Strong answers that nevertheless only address one topic can be awarded a maximum grade of B, but a C or lower would be more likely. The questions are challenging and good answers will show a working knowledge of how to use theory. Those that are able to show a strong command of philosophy, but struggle to apply it at different levels of abstraction will be graded lower than essays which may not engage philosophical terminology as much (critical realism, etc), but which show strong abilities to understand how theory shapes research. It is not expected that they will take a deep dive into differences between types of realism, for example, but they should be able to recognise how the overall epistemological stance shapes the kind of research questions asked.

A mock exam answer has been provided to the students.

A

- Essays whose design shows awareness and understanding of the research literature, and which attempts to address (and succeeds in addressing) a particular gap in that literature.
- Essays which build both on set readings and on a wider range of materials (either supplied as 'further reading' or discovered during independent library work).
- Essays whose design and/or execution shows a capacity for original thought, together with an ability to write clearly and sustain an argument.
- Essays whose execution reflects an ability to adopt an appropriate methodology, and to use that methodology effectively and imaginatively to address a clearly defined research question(s).
- Essays which combine competence with originality in data collection (where appropriate), analysis and interpretation.

A +

- Meets the criteria outlined above and additionally demonstrates particular excellence in more than one of the following:
- Originality in, and careful thorough application of, research design
- Methodological innovation
- Range of coverage or depth and imagination of discussion
- Creative synthesis of wide-ranging literature
- Development/ introduction of new ideas that are thought-provoking or which challenge received views
- Wide range and high quality of original materials

B

- Essays whose design is inspired by the relevant research literature and which tackle a clearly defined research question.
- Essays which draw effectively on key readings supplied during the course of study, and refer at times to other literature and examples.

- Essays whose design and execution show clear thinking, together with an ability to write well and sustain an argument.
- Essays which are methodologically sound and include original materials.
- Essays which are well-presented (they are complete, comprehensive and are appropriately referenced and illustrated)

B -
- Meets the above criteria.
- May have less new data/original material than would merit a B. Analysis may be limited by less-than-ideal choice of methods.
- There may be some unevenness in written communications skills, so that the best use of otherwise good original materials is not made.

B +
- Meets the above criteria, and additionally includes one or more of the following qualities:
- Careful research questions
- Methodologically commendable
- Effectively combines own materials with a range of existing literature and ideas
- Development of new ideas
- Poorly developed conclusion

C
- Essays which, though competent are lacking in content, focus, organisation, breadth of reference, or depth of discussion
- Essays in this class do work with a specified research problem, but this may not be grounded in an adequate literature review.
- Essays which have B qualities may also fall into this category if they are too short, rushed, unfinished or badly organised.

C -
- Essays which are poorly designed and/or contain little original material and/or fail to give a reasonable account of how the materials were chosen and organised.
- Original materials are partially described rather than fully explained
- Lacks a conclusion.

C +
- Essays contain some original material, are reasonably well-argued and show a satisfactory understanding of the issues involved but fail to engage with more than 1 or 2 aspects of the course.

D
- Relevant material is presented, but essays lack order/organisation/argument. Structurally problematic.
- Essays at this level shows some knowledge of key literature and contain some original material. However, these may be used ineffectively or inaccurately.
- Essays will have a poor grasp of conceptual issues, omit some key points, or fail to identify and address a research problem/questions.
- Findings include unsubstantiated assertions and/or literature reviews contain too many omissions or inaccuracies.

D -

- An attempt is made to organise the material and present an argument. However, arguments may be weakly developed, or contain evidence of poor judgement.
- Text may stray from the point and/or show limited comprehension of key themes.
- Contain a large number of inaccuracies or misinterpretation of the literature.

Fail
Essays in this grade show inadequate knowledge of relevant material. They contain little or no relevance to the course. Treatment of the topic is superficial. Knowledge of the key literature is minimal.

Includes some literature review, and makes references to research findings, but is deficient in knowledge/understanding of literature and fails to incorporation relevant findings.