

Principles and Theory in Geography

ENVS249

The central role of education should not only be to impart 'facts' about the world, but to develop our capacity for thought. The way we think, theorize and engage with the world is always guided by our intellectual frameworks; what we consider important, and thus what we choose to do and say about the world, is largely determined by them. Although we are often not aware, we are always thinking and acting through these frameworks, and thus the ability to discern between them is crucial to understanding the diversity of research within the geographic discipline.

The module begins with an overview of the history of the subject, highlighting theoretical tendencies and identifying key contributors to the discipline. We will consider what is meant by 'science', and consider the extent to which parts of geography can be considered 'scientific'. Students will then be introduced to some of the principle theories utilized by geographers, including complexity theory, feminism, marxism, post-colonialism, post-modernism and post-structuralism. We will use these concepts to interrogate some core concepts in geography, such as nature, space, scale and time, illustrating the necessity for all geographers to engage with these intellectual frameworks.

The ability to understand and engage these diverse ways of seeing are central to all critical thinking, and future modules will draw on the numerous principles and theories discussed in this module. The module is run as a series of lectures and discussion, and assessment involves writing an essay and an examination.

