San José State University
College of Social Sciences, Geography Department
Course # 47266, GEOG 135 – Qualitative Methods in Geographical Research, Fall, 2015

Course and Contact Information

Instructor: Kerry Rohrmeier, Ph.D.
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Office Hours: Monday 1:30-2:30 pm, Tuesday 4:00-6:00 pm, and by appointment
Class Days/Time: Monday 3:00-4:15 pm
Classroom: Clark Building, Room 224
Prerequisites: English 1B

Course Format

This is a hybrid course, which means half of the time will be spent in lecture/studio-style weekly class meeting and half of the time will be spent working in the field on a consulting project for the City of Palo Alto Public Works Department. A considerable portion of student work is to be done independently or in small groups with the instructor present so it is imperative that students are familiar with course expectations and assigned responsibilities. All course resources can be found on the GEOG 135 Canvas webpage using your 9-digit SJSU ID and password. You are responsible for regularly checking this website for the latest information and communication. Please log in and follow the ‘Getting Started’ steps.

Faculty Messaging

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website. You are responsible for regularly checking with the Canvas website to learn of any updates. The email address listed above is best for the fastest reply.

Course Description

From the Course Catalog: Development of skills required for geographical research and writing. Library research, oral presentations, variety of writing assignments dealing with diverse geographic problems (3 units).
Qualitative research methods will be taught in a studio format so that students have an opportunity to engage the material collaboratively. The City of Palo Public Works Department Zero Waste Program is seeking mapping and analysis of its waste facilities located along alleyways in the University and California Avenue corridors. These spaces are becoming popular pedestrian linkages, but still need to serve commercial users for refuse, storage, collection, and deliveries. The project goal will be to ‘clean up’ these key alleys while still providing commercial customers appropriate services.

Learning Outcomes and Course Goals

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

• CLO 1 Define and use basic geographic tools and techniques.
  Students will demonstrate understanding through weekly written assignments and the term studio project. These exercises involve writing, public policy research, GPS data point collection, GIS, and cartographic skills.

• CLO 2 Demonstrate understanding of, and ability to, analyze and critique human and environment interactions.
  The course studio project will incorporate various social science qualitative methods to analyze the human environmental connections pertaining to land use and waste disposal (garbage, recyclables and compost material).

• CLO 3 Demonstrate professional communication skills.
  Students will interview and survey stakeholders affected by the proposed activated alleyways, plus the class as a whole will submit an official summary report to the City of Palo Alto, California.

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook

A traditional textbook is not required for this class. All readings are hyperlinked in the course schedule or placed on Canvas.

Course Requirements and Assignments

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on.

• Active participation in this course is mandatory, and is especially important for a flipped hybrid course format. Given our limited time together in person you will likely have little to contribute to the class if you have not completed required studio responsibilities and class assignments ahead of time (CLO1).

• There are 10 assignments to be completed outside of class meetings. These range from compiling sources, reviewing public policies, writing survey questions, interviewing stakeholders, and demonstrating the knowledge gap between geographic theory and practice as it pertains to waste management (CLO1 and CLO2).

• The class will prepare a comprehensive report on activated alleyways along both California Avenue and University Avenue for the City of Palo Alto Public Works Department (CLO3). Students will be divided up into teams and must meet group tasks as outlined in the Scope of Work chart attached at the end of this
syllabus. The project aims to address fear-inducing spaces, generate a vibrant sense of place, and critique the cultural norms of rapid consumption and disposal. The ultimate goal will be for the City to one day use this baseline as a tool for implementing activated alleyways – a new trend on urban design. Various qualitative research methods will be covered and applied throughout the term such as observation, landscape photography, surveys, interviews, GPS mapping, and GIS spatial analysis will be required of this project (CLO1).

### Grading Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Assignments</td>
<td>400 (40 each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio Project</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1,000</td>
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*Note: Department policy dictates that graduate students are expected to contribute more than undergraduate students taking undergraduate courses. Therefore, additional project management responsibilities are required for 100-points; making the graduate student total points possible 1,100 points*

**SCALE:**

- **A+** = ≥98%
- **A** = 94-97%
- **A-** = 90-93%
- **B+** = 87-89%
- **B** = 84-86%
- **B-** = 80-83%
- **C+** = 77-79%
- **C** = 74-76%
- **C-** = 70-73%
- **D+** = 67-69%
- **D** = 60-66%
- **D-** = 51-59%
- **F** = ≤50%

All students have the right, within a reasonable time, to know their academic scores, to review their grade-dependent work, and to be provided with explanations for the determination of their course grades. In keeping with this policy, and to making grading responsive. All assignments are due as stated on the Course Schedule and Canvas. **Late work is not accepted.** Please save all your work until after you have checked your final course grade. Then if you have questions about your final grade, you can bring in past work, and if necessary, corrections can be made.

### Classroom, Field & Online Protocol

- All assigned readings must be completed prior to class for successful participation in the discussions.
- This course requires working with others, so civility and courteousness is always expected. While we may not agree with other perspectives and opinions stated, respect is mandatory.
- For group work it is expected that all members contribute equitably to any assignment.

### University Policies

#### General Expectations, Rights and Responsibilities of the Student

As members of the academic community, students accept both the rights and responsibilities incumbent upon all members of the institution. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with SJSU’s policies and practices pertaining to the procedures to follow if and when questions or concerns about a class arises. See University Policy S90-5 at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S90-5.pdf. More detailed information on a variety of related topics is available in the SJSU catalog, at http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/catalog/rec-12234.12506.html. In general, it is recommended that students begin by seeking clarification or discussing concerns with their instructor. If such conversation is not possible, or if it does not serve to address the issue, it is recommended that the student contact the Department Chair as a next step.
Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester’s Catalog Policies section at http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic year calendars document on the Academic Calendars webpage at http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/. The Late Drop Policy is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the Advising Hub at http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/.

Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material

University Policy S12-7, http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf, requires students to obtain instructor’s permission to record the course and the following items to be included in the syllabus:

- “Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor’s permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material.”
  - It is suggested that the greensheet include the instructor’s process for granting permission, whether in writing or orally and whether for the whole semester or on a class by class basis.
  - In classes where active participation of students or guests may be on the recording, permission of those students or guests should be obtained as well.
- “Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent.”

Academic integrity

Your commitment, as a student, to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2 at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The Student Conduct and Ethical Development website is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 at http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the Accessible Education Center (AEC) at http://www.sjsu.edu/acc to establish a record of their disability.

Accommodation to Students' Religious Holidays

San José State University shall provide accommodation on any graded class work or activities for students wishing to observe religious holidays when such observances require students to be absent from class. It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor, in writing, about such holidays before the add deadline at the start of each semester. If such holidays occur before the add deadline, the student must notify the instructor, in writing, at least three days before the date that he/she will be absent. It is the responsibility of the instructor to
make every reasonable effort to honor the student request without penalty, and of the student to make up the work missed. See University Policy S14-7 at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14-7.pdf.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center at http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/ located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and in the Associated Students Lab on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library. A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include DV and HD digital camcorders; digital still cameras; video, slide and overhead projectors; DVD, CD, and audiotape players; sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

SJSU Peer Connections

Peer Connections, a campus-wide resource for mentoring and tutoring, strives to inspire students to develop their potential as independent learners while they learn to successfully navigate through their university experience. You are encouraged to take advantage of their services which include course-content based tutoring, enhanced study and time management skills, more effective critical thinking strategies, decision making and problem-solving abilities, and campus resource referrals.

In addition to offering small group, individual, and drop-in tutoring for a number of undergraduate courses, consultation with mentors is available on a drop-in or by appointment basis. Workshops are offered on a wide variety of topics including preparing for the Writing Skills Test (WST), improving your learning and memory, alleviating procrastination, surviving your first semester at SJSU, and other related topics. A computer lab and study space are also available for student use in Room 600 of Student Services Center (SSC).

Peer Connections is located in three locations: SSC, Room 600 (10th Street Garage on the corner of 10th and San Fernando Street), at the 1st floor entrance of Clark Hall, and in the Living Learning Center (LLC) in Campus Village Housing Building B. Visit Peer Connections website at http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu for more information.

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the Writing Center website at http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter. For additional resources and updated information, follow the Writing Center on Twitter and become a fan of the SJSU Writing Center on Facebook. (Note: You need to have a QR Reader to scan this code.)

SJSU Counseling Services

The SJSU Counseling Services is located on the corner of 7th Street and San Fernando Street, in Room 201, Administration Building. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues on an
individual, couple, or group basis. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit Counseling Services website at http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling.
## Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change with fair notice. For the most up to date information please check Canvas.

### Week 1  8/24
A resurgence in geographic qualitative research, group signups


Read: *Seattle Times* “Seattle’s Alleys Getting a Facelift”

**Assign 1:** Review the Scope of Work assigned to your role. Briefly explain your understanding of what each task entails and how and when you plan to complete this work. **Due 8/30**

### Week 2  8/31
STUDIO Project Kick-off Meeting

Client Guest Matthew Krupp, AICP – Manager, Environmental Programs (Zero Waste), City of Palo Alto Public Works Department


**Assign 2:** Prepare kick-off meeting follow up questions for the project manager **Due 9/6**

### Week 3  9/7  LABOR DAY HOLIDAY – NO CLASS
Online Study: Ethical considerations when working with human subjects

Read: [AAG Statement on ethics](#)

**Assign 3:** Review SJSU IRB Certification, [Complete CITI Training](#) **Due 9/13**

### Week 4  9/14  QUALITATIVE RESEARCH THEORY
Social science research issues of power, access, identity, and storytelling


**Assign 4:** Reflexivity, evaluating issues of positionality and the bias’ you might encounter in or bring to your role **Due 9/20**

**All Background Documents Due, Socioeconomic Data Due, Waste Generation Information Due, Shortform and Visual Preference Survey Instruments Due, Stakeholder Identification Due**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5    | 9/21   | PLANNING YOUR RESEARCH
Advancing research from topics to questions


Assign 5: Review proposed Shortform Survey and Open-ended Interview questions. Provide feedback - are they sufficient? Why or Why not? Due 9/27

Content Analysis (aka Policy Review) Due, Other Case Study Examples Due, Report Layout and Cover Due |

| 6    | 9/28   | RESEARCH METHODS
Using visual evidence to document cultural landscapes


Assign 6: Upload your best field photos, their associated metadata, and captions for the Cartography & Graphics Team Due 10/4

Good timing for mapping data points |

| 7    | 10/5   | Ethnography: the participant observer as an insider

Read ‘Participant Observation: University of Oregon Methods Wiki

Assign 7: Journaling is an excellent way to document field research. Ethnographic participant observation embeds the research in his/her subject and thus having ‘lived it’ must keep extensive daily records. Reflect on your day in the field and submit your observations – detail matters! Due 10/11 |

| 8    | 10/12  | Interviews and discourse analysis

Read ‘Semi-structured interviews’: University of Oregon Methods Wiki

Assign 8: One of the best ways to prepare for open-ended interviews is to anticipate participant questions ahead of time. Put yourself in the stakeholders position and create three questions you would ask of the interviewer? Due 10/18

Corrected Photos Due, Randomized Identification of Open-Ended Interviewees with a Contact List Due |

| 9    | 10/19  | Examining Surveys and Focus Groups

The University Ave People Team will Host a Mock Focus Group in class

Read ‘Focus Groups’: University of Oregon Methods Wiki |
<table>
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<tr>
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</table>
**Assign 9:** Reflect on your involvement in the focus group exercise and provide follow up commentary which you may have forgotten at the time or wish to further explain **Due 10/25**  
Good timing for a second observatory at sites |
| 10 | 10/26 | Unusual interviewees – friendship as a method; managing the corporate interview  
**Assign 10:** You must clearly defend in a 750-word written essay the challenges that exist between theoretical and field study of place, and why both are important to geographic training **Due 11/1**  
**All GPS Data Points Due to the Cartography/Graphics Team** |
| 11 | 11/2 | CHALLENGES  
Research in conflict areas, addressing topics of opposition, and/or the challenges of fieldwork abroad  
**Shortform Survey, Visual Preference Survey, and Open-Ended Interview Results Due**  
If there were any issues with data then this week go back to the field |
| 12 | 11/9 | DATA ANALYSIS  
Reliability, coding then deciphering the narrative: discourse analysis  
**If Revised Mapping Was Needed Then New GPS Data Due** |
<p>| 13 | 11/16 | The importance of mixed methods |</p>
<table>
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<th>Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>GIS Spatial Analysis Due</strong></td>
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| 14   | 11/23 | WRITING  
Putting the field experience into words and voicing authenticity |
|      |       | **All Maps and Graphics Due, Lit Review Due, Report Written Sections Due** |
| 15   | 11/30 | Studio Day  
Submit Draft Deliverable (1 Color Hardcopy) Due 12/1 |
| 16   | 12/7  | Studio Day, Go Over Instructor Revisions |
| Final| Fri 12/11@12:15 pm | Submit Final Deliverable to Client in Person (3 Color Hardcopies, 1 Electronic PDF Format) |
# City of Palo Alto Public Works Department Activated Alleyways Project - California Avenue & University Avenue

## California Avenue Field Group (7 Students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Group Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mapping Team (4 Students)</td>
<td>People Team (3 Students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take Photos of Existing Conditions in Sept</td>
<td>Draft Shortform Survey to be used at both sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect GPS Points on all can/enclosures on regular day</td>
<td>Conduct Shortform/VPS Interviews Sun Morn (During Farmers Market)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect GPS Points on all can/enclosures on trash day</td>
<td>Conduct Midweek Day Shortform/VPS Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe pick up - locate access issues/challenges points</td>
<td>Conduct Weekday Evening Shortform/VPS Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check to see if constriction issues are still present in late Oct</td>
<td>Conduct Sat Afternoon/Evening Shortform/VPS Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get all GPS points into an ArcMap layer</td>
<td>Random Select and Conduct Open-ended Merchant Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crunch both sites Shortform &amp; VPS Data</td>
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</table>

## University Avenue Field Group (7 Students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Group Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mapping Team (4 Students)</td>
<td>People Team (3 Students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take Photos of Existing Conditions in Sept</td>
<td>Draft Visual Preference Survey to be used at both sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect GPS Points on all can/enclosures on regular day</td>
<td>Draft Open-ended Interview Instrument to be used at both sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect GPS Points on all can/enclosures on trash day</td>
<td>Host Mock Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe pick up - locate access issues/challenges points</td>
<td>Conduct Midweek Day Shortform/VPS Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check to see if constriction issues are still present in late Oct</td>
<td>Conduct Weekday Evening Shortform/VPS Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get all GPS points into an ArcMap layer</td>
<td>Conduct Sat Afternoon/Evening Shortform/VPS Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Random Select and Conduct Open-ended Merchant Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crunch both sites Open-ended Interview Data</td>
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## Policy & Design Group (4 Students)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Group Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cartography &amp; Graphics Team (2 Students)</td>
<td>Policy Analysts (2 Students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather GIS Base Layers</td>
<td>Visit City Office to Collect Pertinent Planning &amp; Public Works Docs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prep Site Photos (Crop, Correct, Adjust, etc.)</td>
<td>Gather Socioeconomic Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compile Images, Graphics from Bay Area Ex Sites (SF/Oak)</td>
<td>Gather Waste Stream Data for the two sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upload and project Mapping Team data points</td>
<td>Identify Stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Report Cover and Report Layout</td>
<td>Research Bay Area Activated Alleyways Cases (SF &amp; Oak)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare and Plot Large Maps for use in class exercises</td>
<td>Synthesize All Pertinent Existing Policies - look for conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce production quality maps for the draft and final reports</td>
<td>Write Up Vision Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design and produce the Visual Preference Survey instrument</td>
<td>Write Up Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create a Graphic of this Workflow</td>
<td>Write Up Project Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visualize crunched survey data</td>
<td>Write Up Methods, Results, and Policy Recommendations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Functional Responsibilities</td>
<td>Research Responsibilities</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client Communications</td>
<td>Lit Review line of research 1: identity of place/fear inducing places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take Notes at 8/31 Kick-off Mtg, Follow up with Action Items</td>
<td>Lit Review line of research 2: mass consumption/disposable material culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oversea Schedule and Tasks</td>
<td>Lit Review line of research 3: other activate alleyway cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review and edit report draft</td>
<td>Synthesize Focus Group Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly 15-min update during Class</td>
<td>GIS Spatial Analysis of Point Data</td>
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