

## Sig Langegger, PhD

---

### Teaching Statement

The concept of territoriality plays a large role in my teaching, as it does in my research. Territoriality, the control of people through the control of space, allows students to consider complex economic, social, and cultural problems from new perspectives. Whether formally or informally regulated, territory can simultaneously facilitate and frustrate cultural practice. In my pre-academic years as a restaurant owner, I often noted the influence of internal and external architecture on efficient team operation and customer satisfaction. I now endeavor to use real spaces to help students understand complex spatial problems. For example in my Urban Geography course in Beijing, I led field trips through Xiǎo yuè hé, an urban slum adjacent to the campus. My students, many of whom harbored negative perceptions of this space, learned how territorial regimes like land use regulation, urban design, and economic planning not only combine to produce social misery but can also contribute to stereotypical perceptions of both marginal spaces and the people compelled to occupy these spaces.

I use several techniques to ensure that students engage thoroughly with reading assignments. In my introductory courses, I work the students' short first-take reading responses into each week's lesson plan. For upper division classes, I structure courses around a combined lecture/seminar format in which student groups make brief presentations of their individual initial reading responses. The group then collaborates to summarize and respond to the readings by incorporating material, theories, and perspectives presented in lectures. In creating an open environment for debate, I see that each presentation leads to an interactive discussion. This format allows students to develop critical reading and academic writing skills together, as well as sharpen presentation and verbal argumentation skills in close communication with each other.

My research contexts, specifically public space, marginality, and territory, directly inform my teaching style. Lecture halls and seminar rooms are useful examples of public spaces in that they have great potential to encourage personal expression and to provide a living manifestation of cultural diversity. To this end, I work to create a safe environment in which students explore and learn about the causes and ramifications of cultural dissonance. In a recent Geography of East Asia course, for example, one student group's final project focused on the impact of ethnic Koreans on popular culture in Osaka, Japan. Midway through the semester the students discovered uncomfortable truths about the often virulent anti-Korean sentiment in Osaka. Concerned that their work might offend either ethnic Korean or nationalistic Japanese students, they asked to change their project's focus. I reminded them that my classroom is an open space in which difference can and should be recognized, respected, and discussed. After consideration, the students stuck with their original topic and went on to produce a balanced, engaging presentation that chipped away at the façade of a monoethnic Japan.

My goal as a teacher is to offer students different ways in which to reflect and demonstrate how they relate personally to the content I present them. By transferring my research contexts to the classroom, I not only provide experiential learning environments off-campus, I also create interactive spaces in which students have the opportunity to learn as much from each other as they do from me.