

Tourism and Human Geography: A Critical Perspective

PhD Research Course in Human Geography, Fall 2026, 7.5 ECTS

Date/Location of Physical Meeting

Östersund, 19th-23rd October, 2026

Syllabus

Course Organizers

Richard Ek, Department of Geography, Media and Communication, Karlstad University

Dimitri Ioannides, Department of Economics, Geography, Law and Tourism, Mid Sweden University

Linda Lundmark, Department of Geography, Umeå University

Sponsoring Departments

- Department of Geography, Media and Communications, Karlstad University
- Department of Economics, Geography, Law and Tourism, Mid Sweden University
- Department of Geography, Umeå University

Aim

Geographers have increasingly paid detailed attention to the ways in which tourism plays out in various places and spaces. Over the last three decades or so this has led to the generation of new knowledge. Primarily this knowledge accumulation has been driven by the pursuit of several so-called academic “turns” (critical junctures shaping the body of the discipline) that have influenced the study of the various branches of human geography for more than three decades. This course aims to provide a human geographic lens to the study of tourism. Understanding the spatial aspects relating to tourism is important, especially in relation to comprehending the dynamics of destinations and origin-destination flows as well comprehending the uneven distribution of the sector’s impacts.

As such, this approach is important in the overall tourism studies discipline. A focal point of the course involves the several critical themes attesting to tourism’s significance as a vehicle of capital accumulation in contemporary society. Further, the course adopts a critical perspective that prioritizes the embrace of a political

economy approach to understanding tourism spaces. Among others, emphasis is placed on assessing tourism's effects on social equity in a variety of geographic realms. The relationship of tourism to the mobility, gendered, and post-colonial perspective is also addressed.

Learning Outcomes:

- A firm understanding of tourism geographies as a subfield of the human geography discipline.
- Understand how key geographical theories have been applied to the study of tourism.
- Be able to critically and holistically analyse tourism's effects in different geographical settings, especially as they relate to social equity issues within host societies.

Location and Timetable

The course will consist of three separate parts.

- Students must submit a short report 2 weeks before arriving for the physical meeting in Östersund.
- One-week physical meeting consisting of lectures/seminars/field visits in Östersund and surroundings (October 5-9, 2026)
- Students will work on an individual course paper. The final online examination shall take place approximately 6-8 weeks after the completion of the physical meeting.

Swedish national program in Human Geography PhD Education:

Criteria for passing the course (7.5 ECTS):

- Brief report on a selected theme in tourism geographies 1.5 ECTS
- Participate actively in seminars, field work and assignments 1.5 ECTS
- Major course paper in selected topics 4 ECTS
- Peer review of a fellow student's major paper 0.5 ECTS

Main Topics Covered:

Dimitri Ioannides: *Tourism and Economic Geography: A Political Economy Perspective*

Linda Lundmark: *Nordic Tourism Geographies and Tourism in Peripheries*

Richard Ek: *Tourism, Geopolitics and Political Geography*

Invited Guest Lectures:

Doris Carson, Umeå University – Evolutionary Economic Geography & Tourism (lecture shall be online)

Julie Wilson, Associate Professor, Open University of Catalonia (UoC):
Tourism Geographies – The State of the Art

Sandra Wall Reinius, Associate Professor, Mid Sweden University (MIUN):
Governing Contested Landscapes: Tourism and Everyday Life in Jämtland, Sweden

Selected Readings for Part 1 (these readings must be completed before the course begins)

Gibson, C. (2009). Geographies of tourism: Critical research on capitalism and local livelihoods. *Progress in Human Geography*, 33(4), 527-534.

Gill, A. (2012). Travelling down the road to postdisciplinarity? Reflections of a tourism geographer. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe Canadien*, 56(1), 3-17.

Hall, C.M. & Page, S.J. (2009). “Progress in Tourism Management: From the geography of tourism to geographies of tourism – a review.” *Tourism Management*, 30: 3-16.

Huijbens, E.H. & Müller, D.K. (2022). The socio-spatial articulations of tourism studies in Nordic geography. In P. Jakobsen, E. Jönsson, & H. Gutzon Larsen. (Eds.), *Socio-spatial Theory in Nordic Geography* (pp. 169-190). Cham: Springer. Doi:10.1007/978-3-031-04234-8_10

Wilson, J. & Müller, D.K (Eds.) (2025). *The Routledge Handbook of Tourism Geographies*. 2nd edition. Routledge.

Selected Readings for Part 2 (a finalised reading list will be provided later)

Bianchi Raoul (2009). A critical turn in tourism studies: A radical critique. *Tourism Geographies*, 11(4): 484-504.

Britton, S. (1991). Tourism, capital and place: Towards a critical geography of tourism. *Environment and Planning D: Society & Space* 9: 451-478.

Cole, S. K., Mullor, E. C., Ma, Y., & Sandang, Y. (2020). Tourism, water, and gender—An international review of an unexplored nexus. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Water*, 7(4), e1442.

Ferreira, S. (2018). Tourism through the lens of a human geographer: A view from the South. *Tourism Geographies*, 20(1), 178–181.

James, L., Halkier, H., Sanz-Ibáñez, C., & Wilson, J. (2023). Advancing evolutionary economic geographies of tourism: Trigger events, transformative moments and destination path shaping. *Tourism Geographies*, 25(8), 1819–1832.

Mosedale, J. (2014). “Political economy of tourism regulation theory, institutions and governance networks.” In A.A. Lew, C.M. Hall and A.M Williams (eds.) *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Tourism*. pp. 55-65. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Mostafanezhad, M. (2018). The geopolitical turn in tourism geographies. *Tourism Geographies*, 20(2), 343–346.

Bækkelund, N. G. (2021). Change agency and reproductive agency in the course of industrial path evolution. *Regional Studies*, 55(4), 757-768.

Gill, A. M., & Williams, P. W. (2014). Mindful deviation in creating a governance path towards sustainability in resort destinations. *Tourism Geographies*, 16(4), 546-562.

Brouder, P. (2017). Evolutionary economic geography: reflections from a sustainable tourism perspective. *Tourism Geographies*, 19(3), 438-447

Scheyvens, R., & Momsen, J. H. (2020). Tourism and poverty reduction: Issues for small island states. In *Tourism and Sustainable Development Goals* (pp. 111-129). Routledge.

Scheyvens, R., & Momsen, J. (2008). Tourism in small island states: From vulnerability to strengths. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, 16(5), 491-510.

For Part 3, students must select their own literature.

Diversity Statement

This course is organised and coordinated by one female and two white male instructors. We have invited female colleagues to participate as guest lecturers during the one-week physical meeting. Further, we have ensured that the course literature includes several works by women scholars and persons from the global south and addresses issues in a diverse range of geographical settings throughout the world.

Sustainability Statement

To reduce the carbon footprint of the participants (faculty and students), physical meetings relating to the course will occur in one location over the course of one week. We encourage travel to and from the physical location by railway. All travel while in Östersund shall be either on foot or by collective means of transportation (i.e., bus). In cases where persons with disabilities attend the course, special transport arrangements shall be made for these individuals.

Results

Students who submit all the required work and earn a passing grade will be issued with a signed course certificate, which attests that they have successfully met the course requirements.

Evaluations

Following completion of the course, students will be asked to submit evaluations of the content and the instructors. The organisers shall submit a report where they will briefly discuss, among others, the evaluations. The evaluations will be conducted online.

Fees

The costs of the participating doctoral students from Swedish geography departments will be paid by their respective departments. It is possible, if not all places are filled by students based in Swedish geography departments that, at the discretion of the course organisers, PhD students from other environments (i.e., departments/disciplines) may be admitted to the course. However, these individuals will have to cover their own costs for any field activities.

Application Procedure

Students who wish to take this course must contact either Richard Ek and/or Dimitri Ioannides by the 1st of May 2026 at the latest. When applying they must submit a short (no longer than 2 pages) statement explaining their respective reasons for wishing to attend this course. They must also clearly explain how the course will benefit their own doctoral work.