



Letters

(Source: The Guardian, Tuesday November 27, 2001)

Don't lose geography

I share the misgivings of the author of your article (The erosion of geography, November 20). When I was teaching languages in the late 70s and early 80s I was often told by reasonably bright O- and A-level students that they did not need to know about geography as they had opted out of the subject when they were 13.

The teaching of geography is very relevant and important and - judging from the work my son did for his GCSE - it is taught in a far more interesting and exciting way than when I went to school.

We quite readily mock Americans and their president for their ignorance of the world outside, but if students can opt out of geography at the age of 11, then we could easily fall into the same category.

Elke Davies
Claverham, Somerset

Universities are hit, too

Congratulations to Paul Brown for pointing out the importance of geography in our present troubled times. It is hard, however, to agree with his line that "universities are largely unaffected". The Guardian has reported that geography provision has ended at, for example, Luton - once highly respected.

Several new universities have now either closed or scaled down their geography provision. Many experienced lecturers are leaving, most of them on basic redundancy terms. It seems remarkable that the government has deliberately acted to demote geography but has made no financial provision to fund the departure of the academics whose careers have thereby been brought to a premature end.

Name and address supplied

Just the job

It is sad that Paul Brown spoils an otherwise well argued defence of geography with a patronising attack on media and film studies degree programmes for being "oversubscribed with people seeking a glamorous life". Our students are as hardworking as any other undergraduates. Nor do they necessarily want to become an environmental or other kind of newspaper journalist.

It is ironic that he cites Orwell in discussing the need for students to understand how governments use television for propaganda purposes during wars in far off places, such as Afghanistan. The fact that our programme explicitly addresses this is one of the main reasons it is popular with applicants.

Dr Dominic Wring
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