

**GEOGRAPHY 330-01 (4792); CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY**  
**Fall Semester 2007 (3 credit hours)**

*Professor:* Dr. John B. Strait                      *Class Room:* 321 Lee Drain Building (LDB)  
*Office:* 335 Lee Drain Building              *Class Time:* Mon/Wed/Fri. 11:00 am-11:50 am  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course will introduce and explore the study of culture from a geographical perspective. In other words, we will examine the inter-relationships of learned human behavior and cultural landscapes from a spatial point of view. While we will emphasize the study of cultural geography, the course will also introduce basic concepts involved with using a geographical perspective to understand the world around us. Specific subject matter will be quite broad and could include the geographical study of religion, language, race/ethnicity, migration, folk vs. popular culture, housing, music, sport, agriculture and a host of other cultural phenomena.

**Objectives:** Upon completion of this course, the student should achieve the following:

- a) recognize and understand the basic concepts and factual knowledge associated with using a geographical perspective and be able to define cultural geography
- b) understand the basic components and principals of cultural systems and the ways in which these components interact over time and space
- c) critically analyze a variety of spatial patterns and processes that affect culture and cultural developments and understand various theories used to explain such developments
- d) investigate broad geographical differences via the use of demographic and economic data associated with various geographical regions within the U.S. and the World
- e) understand the geographic dynamics of “globalization” and the ways in which this phenomena relates to cultural change across the globe
- f) develop an interest in learning about culture and cultures and increase awareness of cultural diversity
- h) learn and apply some of the ideas brought to class towards an understanding of other political, economic, cultural and/or social phenomena and every-day events you encounter in your life

By increasing knowledge of geographical and cultural differences and similarities, this course will allow students to further understanding of the political, economic and cultural systems within which we live.

**TEXTBOOK AND OTHER MATERIALS:**

The primary book we will be reading will be;

1. De Blij, H.J., A. B. Murphy and E. Fouberg. 2006. *Human Geography: People, Places and Culture*. 8<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: John Wiley & Sons
2. Other readings may be used and will be announced as the semester progresses. Such additional material and/or reading may be placed on blackboard, on reserve in the library or distributed in class.

## Your Reading Responsibilities

Because of time limitations, it will not be possible to discuss all assigned reading material in class. This means that:

- 1) in some cases, only part of a chapter is assigned; and
- 2) you are responsible for reading the assigned material on your own and learning it. So, if a concept mentioned in the readings is not discussed in lecture please make sure you know it. The greatest emphasis on tests will be placed on lecture material; and, I assure you that on an exam I will not ask about obscure information in the text. As a general rule, *most*, if not all material you will be tested on will be covered in class to some degree. However, you should learn key concepts and vocabulary in the assigned readings.

Reading and study of the assigned material is an important preparation for this course. Certain assigned material will also be useful to you as a reference for key terms and ideas. **HOWEVER**, it is important to understand that **THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR ATTENDING CLASS**. Due to the nature of the course, some material that will be discussed in class will not be found in the books or readings assigned in class. Class lectures will draw from a variety of sources, and goes beyond information covered in any assigned readings.

**Lecture Outlines:** The course will be somewhat geared toward a traditional lecture format. Whenever possible, classroom lectures in Power Point format will be posted on the course website available on Blackboard (usually the night before). However, keep in mind that some lectures and course discussions cannot be posted on Blackboard. While these outlines can be very useful as study tools, I would discourage you from totally relying on them – they are simply outlines and will not include all important material. **MOREOVER, BLACKBOARD WILL MOST LIKELY BE UNAVAILABLE AT CERTAIN TIMES DURING THE SEMESTER.** An inability to access lecture outlines from Blackboard (either due to a system problem OR simply because they are not available) does **NOT** constitute a valid excuse for missing an exam – thus, it would be wise to avoid waiting until the night before an exam to print them out and/or study them!

### **ATTENDANCE AND CLASSROOM OBLIGATION:**

Students are expected to attend class on time on a regular basis. In accordance with university policy, attendance will be taken regularly and used to aid in your semester-end evaluation. Thus, regular attendance will allow you to earn free points, while failure to attend class may result in lowering of grades. *Any student missing 40 % of the course will NOT pass and you will NOT be counted present if you arrive to class late and attendance has already been taken.* It is the student's responsibility to acquire information of material covered while absent (including handouts and readings distributed and/or assigned in class). Students are also responsible for any changes in assigned material or due dates. **MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE GIVEN WITHOUT A DOCUMENTED EXCUSE.**

### **Exams:**

The exams will be comprised of subjective (multiple choice, matching, true/false) questions and short-answer essays. In addition, exams may incorporate a take-home portion. Exam questions will be drawn from lecture, textbook readings, visual presentations, films, guest speakers and classroom discussion.

### **Make-up Exams:**

In the event that a student is absent from an exam, it is the student's responsibility to contact me within 24 hours after the test date for a make-up to be considered. Make-ups exams will be provided **IF THE STUDENT HAS A WELL-DOCUMENTED EXCUSE.**

**EVALUATION:** (due dates for some assignments will be announced over the course of the semester)

1. Exam 1 (Friday, September 21) .....	110 points (22 %)
2. Exam 2 (Friday, October 22) .....	130 points (26 %)
3. Final Exam (Wednesday, December 12; 11 am – 1 pm....	130 points (26 %)
4. Research Paper (5-7 pages; due date Thursday, Dec. 6...	60 points (12 %)
5. Research Prospectus (1-2 pages, due Wednesday, Oct. 31...	5 points (1 %)
6. Group Discussion/Debates (dates to be announced).....	35 points (7 %)
7. Other Assignments (dates to be announced) .....	15 points (3 %)
8. Attendance and participation .....	15 points (3 %)
 Total .....	 500 points (100%)

*The grading scale will be based on a 10-point system; 90 -100% = A, 80 - 89 % = B, etc.*

*\* NO EXTRA CREDIT IS GIVEN TO INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS \**

### **Important Dates;**

Monday, September 3 – ; Labor Day Holiday NO CLASS

Wednesday, September 5 – 12<sup>th</sup> Class Day; last day to drop without a Q and receive 100% refund

Wednesday, October 10 – last day to drop courses without a grade of F; last day to resign without receiving a WP or WF

Wednesday – Friday, November 21 – 23, Thanksgiving Break; NO CLASS

Thursday, December 6 – Last Day of Class

Wednesday, December 12 - Final Exam (11 am – 1 pm)

### **Research Paper: Country Issue Topic**

By the conclusion of the semester, each student will need to complete a 5-7 page research paper focusing on some aspect of cultural geography that pertains to a specific country. The purpose of this assignment is to give students the opportunity to more intently learn how course topics relate to specific places. *You should not plan on providing a thorough description or profile of a particular country.* Rather, you are to discuss and address some specific issue or topic related to a country. For example, if you are interested in Brazil – do not provide me with a complete description of Brazil. You could focus your research on folk religion in Brazil, the cultural role of football (i.e. soccer) to national identity, or the culturally specific role that gender plays in the country. Try to avoid focusing on a topic that we cover intently in lecture, the purpose of this assignment if for you to go beyond what we have done in class. We will discuss this assignment more intently as the semester progresses. By March 1 each student will need to turn in a research prospectus (1 page or so) that briefly outlines your topic. This prospectus should also include potential sources that you plan to utilize for your research.

The paper should be typed, well-organized (it might be helpful to use sub-headings) and should include a bibliography of not less than two books and one scholarly article. Scholarly journals employ footnotes or parenthetical citations to reference their sources. Within your paper, you may utilize any standard form of referencing or citation as long as you are consistent. Pay careful attention in your paper to grammar and editing. **THE PAPER IS DUE THE LAST DAY OF THE SEMESTER: THURSDAY, MARCH 1!**

Examples of scholarly articles:

Collins, C. and Scott, S. "Air Pollution in the Valley of Mexico." *Geographical Review* 83 (1993): 119-133.

Denevan, William M. "The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492." *Annals of*

*the Association of American Geographers* 82 (1992): 369-385.  
Gilbert, Alan. "Debt, Poverty and the Latin American City." *Geography* 80 (1995): 323-333.

### **Discussion;**

Many of the issues and topics presented in this course will be worthy of discussion and debate. Whether our own ideas ultimately change or remain the same, much of the material presented should spark considerable debate and discussion. You will note that class participation is part of your grade. This course will be somewhat oriented towards a discussion format, so constructive questions, comments, and insights are strongly encouraged (In fact, I hope to learn a great deal from you!).

In addition, we will have a number (probably 4) of scheduled in-class group discussions. You will be assigned into groups and then charged with researching and presenting some dimensions of certain topics. Two different groups will be focusing on the same issue, with the intent being for the entire class to be exposed to different perspectives of the issue and/or topic. The purpose of this assignment is to generate class discussion, thus allowing us to gain insight to important issues that relate to course material.

### **Academic Honesty:**

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action; *NO QUESTIONS ASKED!* The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. I suggest you read the Student Handbook regarding the official University policy regarding academic honesty.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act**

*SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. Note: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center. Therefore, any student seeking accommodations should go to the Counseling Center and Services for Students with Disabilities in a timely manner and complete a form that will grant permission to receive special accommodations.*

### **Religious Holy Days**

*If a student desires to be excused from class, assignment, or a test to participate in activities associated with a religious holy day, then the student must notify the instructor of each scheduled class that he/she will miss for religious reasons. In such cases, the student will be required to take the test or submit the assignment early—unless there are good reasons for not being able to do so and the instructor has agreed to those reasons.*

### **Special Circumstances**

If unusual circumstances arise during the semester, such as a medical problem, death in the family, etc., that adversely affects your attendance **PLEASE discuss this with me immediately and provide documentation.** Under these conditions, I will gladly

do my best to accommodate your situation by excusing absences, allowing late work to be turned in within a reasonable time period, and so on. However, if you wait until after-the-fact, at the end of the semester, to let me know that you were experiencing these adverse circumstances, there is *nothing* I can do about it at that time. **I will not retroactively make accommodations and I will not give extra credit assignments to make up for grade deficiencies of any type.**

### **Visitors in the Classroom**

*Unannounced visitors to the classroom must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted in the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom. This policy is not intended to discourage occasional visiting of classes by responsible persons.*

### **IMPORTANT: Final Remarks:**

Hopefully we will all enjoy ourselves exploring cultural geography this semester. As mentioned above, I hope that everyone feels free and willing to ask questions, make comments, etc. However, the size of the class and the acoustics of the classroom will make it imperative that people refrain from engaging in casual conversations with one another. If you are talking to a neighbor it becomes very difficult for people around you to hear anything. Thus, I'm asking you ahead of time to **NOT** strike up conversations amongst yourselves (*AND DO NOT TALK ON THE PHONE – IN FACT TURN ALL CELL PHONES OFF WHEN ENTERING THE CLASSROOM!*). This behavior not only disrupts the learning experience, it is also disrespectful. If you have something to say about the course material, please share it with the rest of us. Otherwise, you should remain quiet. I reserve the right to remove anybody from the classroom that is being disruptive, which includes carrying on conversations.