

Course Syllabus
Geography 161
INTRODUCTION TO GEOGRAPHY
3 credit hours
Spring Semester - 2008

Class Meeting Room: LDB 321

Class Time: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 11:00- 11:50

Instructor Information: Name: Dr. Gang Gong

Office Number: Lee Drain Building - 333

Office Hours: TR 11:00-2:00

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* I always try to have an "open-door" policy as regards office hours, so please feel free to call or come by any time that you have a question.

Course Description/Rationale: The goal of the course is to provide students with a general knowledge of the physical, ecological, cultural and political factors that influence human activities, beliefs, and values. This information is essential to an understanding of world events, both past and present, and to an understanding of the environmental, economic, and political problems that humanity is presently faced with. The material is relevant to students in *all* disciplines, but especially to those majoring in Geography, Economics, Political Science, Social Science, and Environmental Science.

Objectives: Upon completion of this course, the student should be familiar with the factual knowledge of geography and learn the fundamental principles of the discipline. Specifically, students should achieve

- a) an understanding of the geographic grid and time, map scale, and map projections
- b) an understanding of the basic principles of the physical environment;
- c) an understanding of climates and their significance to humanity;
- d) an understanding of the significance of population growth and related issues
- e) an understanding of the elements of culture and the significance of such things as language and religion in defining and maintaining cultural identity and engendering cultural conflicts;
- g) knowledge of the basic principles of spatial organization of economic activities.
- h) knowledge of the history of the nation-state concept and an understanding of the factors that promote the formation and disintegration of nation-states.

Methods of Instruction: The course is geared toward a traditional lecture format. I will use Power Point mostly in my lectures. All the slides will be available online – on the Blackboard course website after each lecture. Students will also be required to complete a variety of homework exercises and participate in class debates.

Textbook Information: Introduction to Geography; by Bergman, E.F. and Renwick, W.H.; Prentice Hall.

Your Reading Responsibilities

Because of time limitation, it will not be possible for the instructor to lecture over every concept covered in the readings from the textbook, nor is it possible to cover all the material in the text. 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 that is not discussed in lecture is in the assigned readings, please make sure you know it.

Obviously, the greatest emphasis on a test will be placed on lecture material; and, I assure you that I will not ask about obscure information in the text just to test your ability to memorize trivia! However, I do expect you to learn the key concepts and vocabulary in the assigned readings.

Attendance and Tardy Policy

Attendance is required and will be recorded. During the semester, each student has three “free” absences. I will deduct 20 points for each subsequent, *unexcused* absence - up to a maximum of 100 points. In order for an absence to be excused, please inform the instructor ahead of time (this is extremely important when you are scheduled to participate in debate), and **some form of documentation MUST be provided** either before or afterwards. 100 points amounts to 10% of the course grade. For those students who are borderline to the next highest grade, the extra 10% for attendance can make a lot difference.

In addition to the required attendance policy, it is necessary that you please come to class on time and stay until the class is over. If you leave early without having cleared it with the instructor, you will be counted absent.

Course Assignments and Grade determination:

Grading will be based on five (5) exams and three (3) homework exercises, as well as attendance. Each exam is worth **150** points. So exams total **750** points. Each homework exercise is worth **50** points. Attendance counts another **100** points. Therefore, there are a total of **1000** points possible for the course.

The distribution below shows the points needed at the end of the semester to receive the grade indicated.

- A = 900-1000
- B = 800-899
- C = 700-799
- D = 600-699
- F = less than 600

For students that are within 1% point of the next higher grade at the end of the semester, I will *consider* raising their grade if:

- a) they did not have more than two absences
- b) they came to class on time and paid attention in class
- c) they made at least one test grade equal to the desired final grade

ALSO NOTE THAT YOU CANNOT PASS THE COURSE UNLESS YOU HAVE PASSED AT LEAST ONE EXAM--NO MATTER HOW MANY POINTS THAT YOU HAVE EARNED.

Late Work

If an assignment is not submitted on time, it must be turned in by the beginning of the next class period; however, 50% of the value of the exercise will be deducted. After one class period beyond the due date, you cannot turn in the assignment and will, therefore, receive a zero for it. Since I will leave enough time for you to work on each homework assignment, no excuse will be allowed for late submission.

Missed Exams:

Generally there is no make-up exam. However if you have a **documented excuse** for missing the exam and get permission from the instructor **ahead of time**, you could take up to one make-up exam during the last week of the semester; i.e., during the week before finals begin.

Cell Phones:

Please turn off your cell phones when you come into the classroom. If you **MUST** have them on, please use the vibrate option, then quietly leave the room if necessary. Ringing cell phones are disruptive to the entire class. Please be courteous to your fellow students.

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. 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.

Students are encouraged to study in groups to prepare for tests. However, “group effort” is definitely not permitted when taking exams! This will result in an automatic zero on a test. Two such occurrences will result in an F in the course.

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.