

Course Syllabus
Geography 161-04 (1512)
INTRODUCTION TO GEOGRAPHY
3 credit hours
Spring Semester - 2008

Class Meeting Room: LDB 207

Class Time: Tuesday and Thursday 12:30-1:50

Instructor Information: Name: Dr. Marcus Gillespie

Office Number: Lee Drain Building - 336

Office Hours: MWF 9:00-10:00 and 2:00-3:30; TTh 2:00-3:00

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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 achieve the following:

- 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 biomes and their significance to humanity;
- d) an understanding of the significance of exponential population growth and related resource use
- e) an understanding of population growth patterns and migration, and their relevance to the economic and social issues countries must deal with;
- f) 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 economics as they relate to the economic advantages and disadvantages of countries and with "globalization".
- 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: This course is based on a traditional lecture format. **All lectures are on Power Point and are available on the Black Board site for the course under "Course Documents". Students must print these presentations and bring them to class. Please note that key words and phrases are deleted from the student version of the presentations; so, students must come to class in order to add the missing information.** Students also will be required to complete a variety of homework exercises.

Textbook Information: Introduction to Geography: People, Places and Environment - 4th Ed.; by Bergman and Renwick. John Wiley & Sons publishers.

Required Materials: Students must have access to a computer in order to access the Internet and Black Board site, and to prepare certain assignments.

Your Reading Responsibilities

Because of time limitations, 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.

Supplementary Readings: One Chapter titled “The Islanders” from Man on Earth by John Reader. Xeroxed copies of these readings will be available at the library, as will a version that is accessible online. The code word for accessing the on-line version is “_____”.

Attendance, Tardy, and Make-Up Exam Policy: Like all professors, I value education very highly and believe that it is literally a privilege to have the opportunity to go to college. This means that I believe that students should take this opportunity very seriously (especially given the high cost of a college education!) and should come to each and every class. Skipping class can only be seen as a sign that one does not value the opportunity to learn. While it is true that a few students manage to do well on exams even if they do skip classes frequently, this is definitely *not the norm* and it is not same as saying that they got as much from the course as they could have gotten had they gone to class. Much of the learning that occurs in any classroom is not measurable on a test – but it is just as valuable. Also, I have routinely seen that students do poorly on exams simply because they did not come to class. **I want to do what I can to prevent failure; in short, I want students to succeed and get the most out of their education.** For these reasons, the following are the attendance and tardy policies for this class:

To encourage attendance, **I give each student 30 free points at the beginning of the semester.** However, I will deduct 10 points for each and every *unexcused* absence. No points will be deducted if the absence is excused. In order for an absence to be excused, **some form of documentation MUST be provided.** Although 10 points per absence may seem negligible, the deductions can add up quickly and result in a significant loss of points. For example, if a student misses 4 times, the amount of points that would be deducted amounts to about 5.7% percent of the total grade for the course. If that student had 84% (B) based on coursework, but missed 4 times, his or her grade would drop to 78% (C). Note that although the *Student Handbook* states that students may not be penalized for missing 3 or fewer classes, in this class students are *given* points for attendance, and so points can be deducted for absences. Also note that a student would have to miss more than three classes (30 points deducted) before academic points (that are unrelated to attendance) would be deducted. **Attendance matters; so, please take advantage of the opportunity to learn by coming to all classes.**

1. In addition to the required attendance policy, it is necessary that you **please come to class on time.** Tardiness is very rude because it disrupts the class and adversely affects the presentation of information, as well as other activities. For the same reasons, **please do not leave the class early** unless you are sick or have cleared this with me.
2. **Late Work:** **If an assignment is not submitted on time, it must be turned in by the beginning of the next class period; however, 10% of the value of the exercise will be deducted for each day it is late.** So, if it is due on Thursday, and is not turned in until the following Tuesday, then 20% will be deducted. Please understand that students can turn in *late* assignments on non-class days, such as Wednesdays and Fridays, in order to reduce the amount of points that will be deducted. It must emphasized that, after one class period beyond the due date, you cannot turn in the

assignment and will, therefore, receive a zero for it. So, please get those assignments in on time!
Note that some assignments must be submitted on time and will not be accepted late.

3. Missed Exams or Late for Exams: If you miss an exam, you must get permission from the instructor to make it up. If you have a documented excuse for missing the exam, you should make it up as soon as possible. **If you *do not* have a documented, acceptable excuse for missing the exam, or if you are very late for the exam, you will be required to take the make-up exam during the last week of the semester; i.e., during the week before finals begin.**

Course Assignments and Grade Determination

Grading will be based on five (5) exams, five (5) homework exercises, and attendance. Each exam is worth **100** points and may consist of multiple choice, true-false, short answer questions. Tests total **500** points. The homework exercises will be worth a total of **170** points. Attendance is worth **30** points. Therefore, there are a total of **700** points possible for the course. Tests constitute 71.4% of your grade, homework constitutes 24.3%. The 30 points given for attendance counts as 4.3% of the grade.

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

A = 630-700 (90%-100%)
B = 560-629 (80% - 89%)
C = 490-559 (70%-79%)
D = 420-489 (60% - 69%)
F = less than 420 (less than 60%)

Importance of completing ALL assignments: If a student had 650 points at the end of the semester, then the student would receive 93% = A. However, if the student in this example had not turned in just one assignment worth 30 points, he or she would have received only 620 points (88.5%), i.e., a **B** instead of an A. Because the student did not submit this one assignment, he or she would not be eligible to have his or her grade raised to an A. The 50-point assignment is even more important because it constitutes 7.1% of a final course grade. For example, a student that could have had 90% will earn only 82.9% because of missing this one major assignment.

The following is an e-mail I once received from a student just before finals week that illustrates why the completion of all assignments is so important:

My question to you is, is it too late for me to make-up two homeworks? I'm sure it is and if that's the case, I do understand. I didn't think they were going to help me that much and I was very wrong. Lesson learned. Anyway, if there is the slight possibility that I could make them up please let me know. Again, I know that this is a bit ridiculous because I shouldn't have waited this long and I should have just done them to begin with.

To determine test grades, I determine the percent correct and then add 5%. The percent value is used as the grade for an exam.

No extra credit assignments will be given under any circumstances, so please do not ask. **Also, every grade counts, which means that I do not drop any grades.**

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 1 unexcused absence
- 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 and/or they showed significant improvement
- d) they did not submit late assignments

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

Use the following score form to calculate your grade

Do not lose this score form because it is your check against the final grade that I give you! (Grades will also be posted on the Blackboard course website; however, **Black Board will not keep a running course average – it will only indicate how many points you have.** To keep track of your average, you must use the form below.) To use this chart, first record the score you earned in the “Score column”. Then, add the points in this column together and place this value adjacent to your last grade in the “Cumulative Earned to Date” column. Finally, divide the “cumulative earned to date” value by the number to the immediate right in the “Total Points Possible” column and multiply by 100 to determine your percentage. For example, if you made a 27 and 85 on Homework 1 and Test 1, respectively, your cumulative points would be 112. Divide 112 (cumulative earned to date) by 130 (total points possible) and multiply by 100 to obtain 86.2%. This is your “running average”.

$$* \text{Percentage} = (\text{Total Points/Cumulative Possible}) \times 100$$

	<u>Score</u>	<u>Cumulative Earned to Date</u>	<u>Total Points Possible</u>	<u>(Average) Percentage</u>	
HW 1 (30)	_____	_____	30	_____	Maps/Grid
TEST 1 (100)	_____	_____	130	_____	
HW 2 (30)	_____	_____	160	_____	Physical Env. Spanola Map
HW 3 (30)	_____	_____	190	_____	
TEST 2	_____	_____	290	_____	
HW 4 (50)	_____	_____	340	_____	Pop. Pyramid Yap
HW 5 (30)	_____	_____	370	_____	
TEST 3	_____	_____	470	_____	
TEST 4	_____	_____	570	_____	
TEST 5	_____	_____	670	_____	
Attendance	_____	_____	700	_____	

Please note that the homework scores listed on Blackboard are NOT percentages; rather, they are the total number of points earned out of either 30 or 50 points possible. This distinction is why it is important for you to use the score form on this syllabus to keep track of your grades.

The number of points that must be earned on the final exam to obtain the grade you desire can be derived using the following equation:

$$\text{Number of points needed on final} = (700 \times \text{desired grade percentage}) - \text{Total points earned to date.}$$

Example: If you have earned 480 points prior to taking the final exam, and desire a B (80% or 0.8), the number of points that you will need on the final to obtain a B in the course is 80 points, as shown below:

$$\begin{aligned} 80\% \text{ of points possible} - \text{cumulative points earned} &= x \\ (700 \times 0.8) - 480 &= x \\ 560 - 480 &= 80 \end{aligned}$$

Study Tips

1. **Always come to class.** Students will not do well in the course if they skip class--this is virtually guaranteed.
2. **Take good notes:** Although the course lecture material is on Power Point, students should highlight key words and concepts and add additional information as needed to help them recall the material.
3. For those students who want to do well in college, **reading their textbooks is a necessity.** So, **read the chapters** in the book at the time they are being covered in lecture and highlight the key concepts. Highlighting helps students to stay focused on the material and helps them to actively process the information. In addition, it requires them to read the key points twice, and it also enables them to easily review for tests because they can simply reread the highlighted material rather than an entire chapter.
4. **Review the notes** from the previous lecture **at least once a week.** This should greatly enhance one's understanding of the material because it enables students to see the continuity and structure of the material. It also means that students learn the material in small amounts, which is much easier to do than trying to learn it all at once just before the exam.
5. When it comes time to **review for an exam**, first read the highlighted portions of the text, then concentrate on your notes. Students might also want to follow the procedures below:
 - a. The first time you review your notes, concentrate on absorbing the key ideas and understanding the organization of the material - why certain ideas followed others in the class and how they are related.
 - b. Once this is done, review the material again to learn the details - the "whys." Bear in mind that **tests in this course are absolutely not based on the mere memorization of definitions or on the recognition of verbatim statements from lecture;** rather, the test questions assume you already know the definitions and that you understand the concepts discussed in lecture. So, you will not be asked definitions; rather you will be asked to **apply** them, i.e., to **think** with them. Again, you cannot simply memorize your notes and expect to do well on the tests. You must truly understand the **meaning** of the notes in order to obtain a good grade.
 - c) **Pretend that you are teaching the material to someone else or that you must write essay responses to every question on the test.** If you can present an imaginary lecture in an organized, comprehensive manner, or prepare an essay response, then you understand the material. If you cannot, then you need to review some more. **THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT STUDY TECHNIQUE FOR ANY CLASS.**

*** Flash cards are good only for memorizing simple facts and definitions. They are NOT USEFUL AT ALL when trying to learn concepts and principles that you must apply. For this course, flashcards are of very little use because I don't ask definitions and very few simple memorization/recognition questions. This is because I want students to learn to think with the concepts and principles discussed in class and to be able to apply them to an analysis of events that occur in the real world.**

Course and University Policies

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.

PROPER COURSE BEHAVIOR

As stated above, students should:

- 1) *Refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. Cellular telephones and pagers must be turned off before class begins. Students are prohibited from eating or drinking in class, using tobacco products, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping, talking at inappropriate times, wearing inappropriate clothing, or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in a directive to leave class. Students who are especially disruptive also may be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy.*
- 2) Come to class on time—there is no reason to be late to class on a frequent basis. Habitual tardiness **is unacceptable**.
- 3) **Remain in class until it finished. It is extremely rude to get up and walk out of a class before a professor has indicated that the class is over. So, leaving early will count as an absence unless you have cleared it with me or unless it is an emergency.**
- 4) Again, do not bring food or drink into the class
- 5) **You cannot leave the class during an exam** – for obvious reasons - unless there is a medical emergency. If you think that you will need a Kleenex during the test, then bring it with you to class.
- 6) Hats must be removed and put away during exams.
- 7) During tests, cell phones and any other equipment capable of receiving, recording and/or transmitting information, must be put away in a book bag or purse. (In short, it must not be readily accessible or accessed during an exam.)

VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM: *Unannounced visitors to class 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 the occasional visiting of classes by responsible persons. Obviously, however, the visiting of a particular class should be occasional and not regular, and it should in no way constitute interference with registered members of the class or the educational process.

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 never give extra credit assignments to make up for grade deficiencies of any type.**

Schedule: This schedule is subject to change at any time based on class progress.

1/17 Introduction to Course: What is Geography Really About?
Read Chapter 1 (Introduction to Geography)

1/22 Nature of Geography
1/24 Grid, Time, Maps

1/29 Grid, Time, Maps
Homework 1 assigned: Geographic Grid, Time, Projections and Scale: Due 2/5

1/31 Grid, Time and Maps

2/5 The Begin the Physical Stage of Human Existence: Geology, Weather and Climate
Homework 1 due
Read the sections of Chapter 3 (Landforms) up to, but not including, the section on Ice Winds, and Waves. (Rock types, tectonics, volcanism, and mass movement) - stop reading when you get to the section on “Glaciers”
Read Chapter 2 (Weather and Climate): * Our emphasis for this course is on the factors that control energy, temperature, pressure and winds, and on climate types. We will *not* discuss fronts, hurricanes or tornadoes.

2/7 The Physical Stage of Human Existence: Geology, Weather and Climate

2/12 **Test 1: Nature of Geography, Grid, Time and Maps**
2/14 The Physical Stage of Human Existence: Geology, Weather and Climate Homework 2 assigned: Nature of the Discipline and Landforms - due 2/19

- 2/19 Physical Stage and Begin Population, Natural Resources and Energy; Read Chapters 5, (Population, Population Increase, and Migration), Chapter 8 (The Human Food Supply) and Chapter 9 (Earth's Resources and Environmental Protection) - The Geography of Natural Resources
HW 2 due
Homework 3 assigned: Using a base map, each student will “develop” a Physical Map of the imaginary Central American country of Spanola by showing a plausible location of mountains and climate types based on information provided about the country and on the principles of physical geography discussed in class. **HW 3 is due 2/21. This assignment must be submitted on time – it cannot be submitted late.**
- 2/21 Population, Natural Resources and Energy
HW 3 due
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- 2/26 Test 2: The Physical Stage of Human Existence: Geology, Weather and Climate (Assigned sections of Chapters 2 and 3)**
- 2/28 Population, Natural Resources and Energy
HW 4 Assigned: Population Pyramids; due 3/6
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- 3/4 Natural Resources and Human Impacts
3/6 Natural Resources and Impacts
HW 4 due
Homework 5 assigned: Read “The Islanders”, a chapter from Man on Earth which is at the reserve desk in the library and also available online. Do the questions that will be given to you in class. Due 3/20
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- 3/11 - 3/13 Spring Break
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- 3/18 Natural Resources
3/20 Nuclear and other forms of energy and begin Culture
HW 5 due
Read Chapter 6 (Cultural Geography) and Chapter 7 (The Geography of Languages and Religions)
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- 3/25 Test 3: Population, Natural Resources & Human Impacts: Chapters 5, 8 and 9**
3/27 Culture/Religion
-
- 4/1 Culture/Religion
4/3 Culture/Religion
-
- 4/8 Culture and Religion
4/10 Culture and Religion
-
- 4/15 Test 4: Culture and Religion - Chapter 6 and Chapter 7.**
4/17 Economic Geography; Read Chapter 12 (National Paths to Economic Growth)
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- 4/22 Economic Geography
4/24 Economic
-
- 4/29 Finish Economic and Begin Political Geography
Read Chp. 11 – A World of States
- 5/1 Political
-
- 5/6 Political
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Final Exam scheduled for Tuesday, May 13th from 11:00-1:00 (regular classroom). Covers chapters 11 and 12.