

Sam Houston State University – Spring Semester 2008
Geography 161 – Introduction to Geography

MWF 10:00 – 10:50 am
Lee Drain Building #207

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Office hours: before or after class, or by appointment

Course Description: This course is designed to introduce you to the scope and nature of Geography as a field of study and as a mode of scientific inquiry. We will investigate both the physical and human patterns and processes that affect the Earth, in addition, to understanding these systems from a spatial perspective. We will also be relating current political, social, economic and environmental issues and events to the geographical processes examined. Topics will include an introduction to the discipline of geography; cartographic principles; basic physical geography concepts (landforms; weather; climate; biogeography); human-environment interaction; population dynamics; cultural, social and economic geography; and urbanization.

Required Materials:

- 1) Bergman, E. F. and W. H. Renwick, 2008. *Introduction to Geography: People, Places and Environment*. 4th Edition. Prentice Hall.
- 2) Additional readings will be distributed in class and/or placed on Blackboard throughout the semester.

Reading and study of the textbook is an important preparation for this course. It will help you to understand the material presented in class and gives you an opportunity to identify questions that you may have. The textbook may also be useful to you as a reference for key concepts and ideas. However, it is important to understand that *there is no substitute for attending class*. Due to the nature of the course, some of the material that will be discussed in class will NOT be found in the textbook. Class lectures are drawn from a variety of sources and goes beyond the information covered in the textbook.

Student Responsibilities and Grading Policies:

Students are expected to attend class on a regular basis. Failure to do so may result in the lowering of your grade. Your semester grade will be determined according to your performance on three exams; a project (paper OR presentation); and a final exam.

Exams (each exam is worth 20%)	-	60%
Project (a presentation OR a written paper)	-	20%
Final Exam	-	20%

Make-up exams are only given if there is a valid documented excuse. Please make sure to contact the instructor (by phone or email) if you will be missing class or need to make-up an exam.

Exams – The exam format will be a combination of subjective (multiple-choice, matching, true/false) and objective (short answer, essay) questions. Exam questions will be drawn from lecture, textbook readings, handouts distributed in class, visual presentations/projects, films, guest lectures, assignments, and class discussion. The final exam is cumulative but the majority of the questions will cover material from the last quarter of the semester.

Assignments – Throughout the semester, I will distribute homework assignments that will provide review questions based on class lectures. Questions may require calculation, drawing/labeling, and/or short-answer responses. These assignments serve to reinforce concepts learned in class, in addition, to prepare students for concepts that will likely appear on the exams. These assignments will not be graded, but will be used as “bonus points” towards the upcoming exam.

Project – Your project will consist of a class presentation OR a written paper. For this project, you will choose an area of interest (a country, geographic realm, city or region) and research an important issue for that area (e.g., Madagascar – focus on endangered species on the island; India – population problems there and what the government is trying to do about it). If you are doing a presentation, try to enhance your presentation by finding images of your geographic area (i.e., try doing a search on-line...www.google.com and click on images). Class presentations should be no longer than 10 minutes. Written papers of your area and topic should be no longer than 5 pages (typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font, bibliography). Project ideas should be determined by Friday, February 1st. If you are presenting, your presentation date will be sometime during the last two weeks of the semester (April 23rd, April 25th, April 28th, April 30th, May 2nd or May 5th). Written papers are due on the day of the final exam (Monday, May 12th).

Class Participation/Attendance – Class discussion will be encouraged throughout the semester. On some days, following lecture, there will be discussion topics that we will explore. Attendance and class participation is important, especially in the final tabulation of “borderline” grades.

Important Dates:

January 21 st	No class – MLK holiday
February 1 st	Project Topic Due
February 8 th	Exam 1
March 5 th	Exam 2
March 10 th – 14 th	No class – Spring Break
March 21 st	No class – Good Friday/Easter
April 18 th	Exam 3
April 23 rd , 25 th , 28 th , and 30 th	Presentations
May 2 nd and 5 th	Presentations
May 7 th	Last day of class
May 12 th (11 am – 1 pm)	Final Exam and Papers Due

*Please be sure to contact me with any questions, comments, and/or concerns.
Welcome to the course and I look forward to working with you!*