

GEOGRAPHY 224
GEOGRAPHY OF NORTH AMERICA

BULLETIN INFORMATION

GEOG 224 - Geography of North America (3 credit hours)

Course Description:

Physical and human geography of North America with emphasis on the United States.

SAMPLE COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines the human and physical geography of North America with particular reference to the connections between and among political, social, cultural, physical, economic and environmental elements. To do so, students will use the perspective of regions to examine the geographic diversity and spatial relations and interactions within the regions of North America. The emphasis in the course is on geographic processes and relationships, rather than place.

ITEMIZED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of Geography 224, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate basic factual knowledge of the discipline of geography, its tools, and its terminology
2. Apply standard geographic theories and methodologies to explain observed patterns of human phenomena across the continent
3. Provide a narrative on various attributes of regions within North America, including the role of space in shaping patterns of race, ethnicity, economic development, and educational opportunities
4. Explain the 'why of where' — e.g. why cities are located where they are; why the depopulation of the Great Plains is economically significant; why ethnic diversity has transformed the border lands
5. Describe how differences in soil, climate, and vegetation influence the distribution of natural resources and the economic activities that depend on them
6. Explain why some places are more vulnerable to environmental hazards than others, including the role of race and socio-economics in shaping vulnerability and resilience to hazards.

SAMPLE REQUIRED TEXTS/SUGGESTED READINGS/MATERIALS

1. The text for this course is Birdsall et al., 2009. *Regional Landscapes of the United States and Canada 7th Edition*. New York: John Wiley and Sons. The book is available from the USC bookstore and others in town. It is also available from amazon.com and other online bookstores.

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS AND/OR EXAMS

- 1. Quizzes and Exams:** Chapter quizzes (which include a midterm and final exam) evaluate the student's comprehension of both the textbook and lecture material at the end of each module. There are 18 modules so some quizzes cover one chapter, while others cover multiple ones such as the midterm (3 chapters) and final (4 chapters). Question types range from objective (multiple choice, true / false) to short answer.
- 2. Written Dispatches:** Students are required to write five short essays (200-300 words) based on topics that typify or relate to one of the regions in North America. They are expected to research the material for these 'vignettes' and provide sources for their essays. Selected dispatches are shared in class.
- 3. Road Trip Exercise and Presentation:** Students will engage in a creative exercise to plan a "virtual road trip" across North America beginning in St. Louis and making 3 stops in three different regions. These theme-based road trips (major league baseball stadiums, oddball museums, beaches, famous golf courses, etc.) consist of a power point presentation (5-6 slides) presented to the class. The presentation includes the theme and why it was chosen, the route taken (including a map), and information about the significance or relevance of each stop to the theme. In addition to the presentation, students will provide a two page summary paper that provides more detailed information on the theme, route, and significance with appropriate referencing.
- 4. Map exercises, in class projects, homework:** A series of map exercises (identification of key political and natural features) will be done throughout the semester to insure cartographic literacy. Many of these will be in the form of homework assignments. In class projects will include small-break out groups to analyze and present geographic data in response to a question posed at the beginning of class. The questions are derived from the textbook readings, but also from current events. These inquiry-based questions require students to have both cartographic and numeracy literacy and to express conclusions based on such evidence.

SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE WITH TIMELINE OF TOPICS, READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS/PROJECTS

<u>Class 1</u>	Introduction and course expectations	
<u>Class 2</u>	Regions: how do they differ	Ch. 1
<u>Class 3</u>	Quiz Ch. 1	
<u>Class 4</u>	Landforms and landform regions Dispatch #1 Due	Ch. 2
<u>Class 5</u>	Climate, vegetation, and natural resources	Ch. 2

<u>Class 6</u>	Human systems: settlement and population	Ch. 3
<u>Class 7</u>	Urban systems and sprawl Quiz Ch. 2 & 3	Ch. 4
<u>Class 8</u>	Megalopolis: present and future Dispatch #2 Due	Ch. 4
<u>Class 9</u>	Manufacturing and de-industrialization Quiz Ch. 4	Ch. 5
<u>Class 10</u>	Case studies: Detroit and Pittsburgh Dispatch #3 Due	Ch. 5
<u>Class 11</u>	Canadian foundry Quiz Ch. 5	Ch. 6
<u>Class 12</u>	The outskirts	Ch. 7
<u>Class 13</u>	Appalachia and the Ozarks Dispatch #4 Due	Ch. 8
<u>Class 14</u>	Historic regional disparities	Ch. 9
<u>Class 15</u>	Midterm Exam (chapters 6, 7, 8, 9)	
<u>Class 16</u>	Vulnerability along the hurricane coasts Dispatch #5 Due	Ch. 10
<u>Class 17</u>	The heartland agricultural core	Ch. 11
<u>Class 18</u>	The Great Plains Quiz Ch. 10 & 11	Ch. 12
<u>Class 19</u>	Buffalo Commons and environmental issues Dispatch #6 Due	Ch. 12
<u>Class 20</u>	The empty quarter Quiz Ch. 12	Ch. 13
<u>Class 21</u>	Interior resources and land Dispatch #7 Due	Ch. 13

<u>Class 22</u>	Southwest border lands Quiz Ch. 13	Ch. 14
<u>Class 23</u>	The two Californias: South	Ch. 15
<u>Class 24</u>	The two Californias: North Quiz Ch. 14	Ch. 15
<u>Class 25</u>	Ecotopia I Quiz Ch. 15	Ch. 16
<u>Class 26</u>	Ecotopia II Dispatch #8 Due	Ch. 16
<u>Class 27</u>	Northern Native American lands	Ch. 17
<u>Class 28</u>	Hawaii Dispatch #9 Due	Ch. 18

Final Exam according to University exam schedule

Final Exam (chapters 16, 17, 18)