

Metropolitan State University
Spring 2015
Geog 201: Intro Geography

Instructor: Andy Trcka
Classroom and Time: Midway Campus (Saint Paul) Room N, Mondays 6:00PM – 8:30PM
Office: Classroom
Office Hours: By Appointment (After Class is Ideal)
Contact: (cell) 612-237-6187, andrew.trcka@metrostate.edu
Class Dates: 01/12/2015 - 05/04/2015 (15 sessions)

Required Text Books and Materials

The Power of Place: Geography, Destiny and Globalization's Rough Landscape, Oxford Press (2009), Author: Harm De Blij

A Walk in the Woods, Anchor Books (1998), Author: Bill Bryson

National Geographic Pocket Atlas of the World, National Geographic (2012), Author: National Geographic

Book of Student's Choice (For Book Report)

Articles supplied by Instructor (No Cost)

Course Catalog Description

This course introduces students to the methods, themes, theories and techniques used by geographers to understand where things are and why they happen in particular locations. Students will examine the relationship between humans and their environments. Geographers use the examination of location to answer questions of political, economic, social and environmental concern. This course is designed to help students think critically about the role human and physical geographies play in shaping individuals' personal surroundings.

Learning Outcomes

Our world is a confusing mix of customs, conflict and landforms. This course will help erase confusion by examining human interaction with built environments, describing natural landscapes and exploring elements of culture. Together, these topics frame nationalities. At the conclusion you will understand how people interact within cultures and relate to built and natural environments. You will also be able to identify countries of the world and recognize major physical features (e.g. mountain ranges, major lakes and locations of minerals). It is the instructors hope students will have a desire to travel upon completing the course.

E. Learning Outcomes (MN Transfer Curriculum)

Goal 05 - Hist/Soc/Behav Sci

1. Develop and communicate alternative explanations or solutions for contemporary social issues.
2. Employ the methods and data that historians and social and behavioral scientists use to investigate the human condition.
3. Use and critique alternative explanatory systems or theories.

Goal 10 - People/Environment

1. Propose and assess alternative solutions to environmental problems.
2. Discern patterns and interrelationships of bio-physical and socio-cultural systems.
3. Articulate and defend the actions they would take on various environmental issues.

University Policies

The last day to withdraw from spring semester classes is April 13th (a W will appear on your transcript). If you do not finish the class or fail to withdraw from the class, you will receive a grade of F.

The academic progress policy may affect students who withdraw from classes. Be aware that a W (withdraw) is different from a D (drop). A drop occurs at the very beginning of the term (no later than January 18th this term); a withdrawal occurs after the first week (between January 19th and April 13th this term). Withdrawing from this class may put you at risk for academic probation. If you have questions about your situation, contact your academic advisor as soon as possible.

The deadline for registering for fall 2014 graduation is February 15th. More information is available by [clicking here](#).

Class Attendance

This class is designed so that each session erects a bridge from one week to the next. Moreover, classroom participation is an essential component of an active learning environment. Therefore, regular class attendance is extremely important in this course. Nonetheless, life happens; contact the Instructor if you are going to miss class. Attendance will be taken weekly.

ADA Statement

Reasonable accommodations that make sure that all materials, discussions, and activities that are part of this course are assessable will be provided to students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systematic, and psychiatric disabilities. To discuss accommodations for this course please visit the Disability Services Office (L224) or contact by phone (651-450-8628 or TTY 651-450-8369) and contact the instructor in writing before the second class meeting.

Assignments

- 10 Points: In Class Exercise – Vernacular Region Analysis
- 10 Points: What does the Midwest Mean to You?
- 10 Points: Travel Itinerary to East Asia
- 10 Points: Essay – Invasive Species in Your Neighborhood
- 10 Points: Book Review – Why Did I Choose this Book (In-Class Presentation)
- 10 Points: Population Pyramid Exercise
- 10 Points: Map your Food
- 10 Points: What Local Project is Affecting your Neighborhood?
- 10 Points: Summary of your Group's Trail Proposal
- 30 Points: Book Report
- 30 Points: Conflict Summary – Description of a Problem Facing your Country

Explanation of Grading

Assignments will be grading in a methodology similar to grading diamonds. Assignments will be graded according to cut, clarity and weight.

- (1/3 of total) Cut – Did you present sufficient arguments and/or counter-arguments
- (1/3 of total) Clarity – How well did you support your arguments
- (1/3 of total) Weight – Is the length of your submission verbose enough to support your arguments

I genuinely appreciate suggestions for course improvements. Please let me know if something is not working or unclear. If you have any questions – about requirements, course content, etc. – please contact me. I strive to make this an academically valuable course and provide you a fair grade commensurate with your effort. To this end, your suggestions and comments are welcomed and appreciated.

Grade Scale

A	92-100%	C+	78-79%
A-	90-91%	C	72-77%
B+	88-89%	C-	70-71%
B	82-87%	D	60-69%
B-	80-81%	F	59%

The instructor reserves the right to take high quality participation and attendance into positive consideration in any overall evaluation.

Makeup

Makeup exams or assignments must be completed before next class session. Talk with instructor prior to missing exam to make arrangements for rescheduling an exam. Makeup exams may have to be completed at the Metro State Testing Center on the St. Paul Campus.

Language Skills

Oral and written English language skills of students are expected to be strong. Competency, in part, is based on the student's ability to successfully demonstrate mastery of assigned course materials. If you are uncertain whether your skills are sufficient for this course, you should speak with the instructor for referral to resources to evaluate and strengthen your skills. The Center for Academic Excellence, 651.793.1460, is a great resource. Consultants offer free individualized help to students.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty (i.e. plagiarism or cheating) is a very serious breach of student and university conduct codes and protocol (see Student Conduct Code Policy #1020 and Student Conduct Code Procedure #112). University Procedure #112, Section 6(a) defines the following as a violation or act of academic dishonesty:

Cheating or plagiarism; including submission of work that was already submitted for credit in a previous course at Metropolitan State without consent of the second instructor. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to use by direct quotation or paraphrase of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement, and unacknowledged use of materials (such as papers or other materials) prepared by another person or agency.

The academic consequence for a plagiarized assignment is a grade of F for the assignment and may include the possible sanction of failing the course. Any evidence of cheating on an examination shall lead to an automatic failure of the exam and other possible sanctions, including the possibility of failing the course. Any incident of plagiarism or cheating will be reported to the Judicial Affairs Officer.

Schedule of Topics by Week

Please note multiple topics will be covered most weeks. It will be necessary to keep up with readings to fully understand weekly topics. Assignments and readings are to be completed prior to class.

Please Note:

1) Assigned Readings Are Listed Directly Underneath the Week They Are To Be Read.

Example: For Week 3 the class topics are *Maps and Borders*. The Assigned Reading is De Blij Ch. 9, Reading Maps and Facing Threats (De Blij, *Why Geog Matters*, Ch 2), Polish Cadastral Mapping Article

2) Weekly Topics and Assignments are Subject to Change.

Week 1 (Jan 12) *Syllabus, Explanation of Class*

Reading/Assignments: No assignments or readings

----No Class January 19th Go See Selma and Enjoy Martin Luther King Day! ----

Week 2 (Jan 26) *Regions & Nationalism*

Reading/Assignments: De Blij Ch 1, Jagged World (David Brooks)

Due: In Class Exercise – Vernacular Region Analysis

Week 3 (Feb 2) *Maps & Borders*

Reading/Assignments: De Blij Ch. 9, Reading Maps and Facing Threats (De Blij, *Why Geog Matters*, Ch 2), Polish Cadastral Mapping Article

Due: What does the Midwest Mean to You?

Week 4 (Feb 9) *Geo-Politics*

Reading/Assignments: From Emperor To Citizen, Nixon Visits China (China History Podcast), Ukraine: Room for Debate (NY Times)

Week 5 (Feb 16) *Religion*

Reading/Assignments: De Blij Ch. 3, America's History of Religious Tolerance (Smithsonian Magazine)

Due: Travel Itinerary to East Asia

Week 6 (Feb 23) *Islands*

Reading/Assignments: Earth's Changing Environment (De Blij, *Why Geog Matters*, Ch 3), Climate Change Sceptic (NY Times)

Week 7 (Mar 2) *Physical Geography*

Reading/Assignments: De Blij Ch 5, A Brief History of Everything (Handout), A River of Doubt (Handout)

Due: Essay – Invasive Species in Your Neighborhood

----No Class March 9th Enjoy Spring Break! ----

Week 8 (Mar 16) *Population*

Reading/Assignments: De Blij Ch. 6, 7 Billion (National Geographic)

Due: Book Review – Why Did I Choose this Book (In-Class Presentation)

Week 9 (Mar 23) *Food & Health*

Reading/Assignments: De Blij Ch. 4, National Geographic Food Article

Due: Population Pyramid Exercise

Week 10 (Mar 30) *Urban Geography*

Reading/Assignments: De Blij Ch. 8, A Walk in the Woods (pages 1 – 100), Location Affordability Portal (Online Tool), How to Keep Minneapolis and Saint Paul Prosperous (MinnPost)

Due: Map your Food

Week 11 (Apr 6) *City Planning*

Reading/Assignments: Jane Jacobs – The Death & Life of Great American Cities (Intro Chapter), Saint Paul Bike Plan, A Walk in the Woods (pages 101 – 200)

Due: What Local Project is Affecting your Neighborhood?

Week 12 (Apr 13) *City Planning (Wrap Up) & Trail Planning Exercise*

Reading/Assignments: A Walk in the Woods (pages 201– 394), Spike Lee Gentrification Article (NY Times)

Due: Summary of your Group's Trail Proposal

Week 13 (Apr 20) *Migration (Focus on Inequality) & Sports*

Reading: De Blij Ch 7, A Call To Action (Intro Chapter)

Due: Book Report

Week 14 (Apr 27) *USA & North America*

Reading: De Blij Ch. 2, 25 Maps and Charts that Explain America Today (Washington Post), Lego Depictions of USA

Week 15 (May 4) *Summary & Wrap Up*

Reading: De Blij Ch. 10

Due: Conflict Profile – Description of a Problem Facing your Country