

AFRICA

This course surveys the patterns, connections, and evolution of environments, cultures, nations, and economies of Africa, with an emphasis on maps, regions, and images.

G&ES 309 (3 credits)

Spring 2011

When and Where: TR, 2:00-3:15, 152 ATS

Instructor: James T. Hathaway, member of Association of PA State College & University Faculties (APSCUF). APSCUF is committed to promoting excellence in all that we do to ensure that our students receive the highest quality education.
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Office Hours: M, 1:30-4:00; T and Th, 3:15-4:30; feel free to see me at other times

Required Texts: William G. Moseley, *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial African Issues*, 3rd ed. (McGraw Hill/Dushkin, 2008)
Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God* (1964)

Africa, the Liberal Studies Program, and University Outcomes for Student Learning and Development
As suggested by the course description at the top of page 1, in this class you will learn about how life, politics, and work are organized in Africa. An awareness of other people, places, and values is central to the “Cultural Diversity—Global Perspective” category of SRU’s Liberal Studies program. In turn, the Liberal Studies Program is an integral part of the eight University Outcomes for Student Learning and Development. Three University Outcomes in particular will be a focus of this course, and they are Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Oral and Written Communication, and Global Interdependence. These three outcomes are also part of the mission of the Department of Geography, Geology, and the Environment.

Student Learning Outcomes (or goals)

Goals and outcomes are two sides of the same coin. Both involve reaching a desired level of achievement, with goals referring to a level of accomplishment you are trying to reach, while outcomes refer to a level of accomplishment that you have reached at the end of a process of striving. The overall goal of this class is for you to use spatial thinking to gain knowledge of the US and Canada that will help explain why Americans and Canadians live the way they do. At the end of the course, you should achieve the outcomes listed in the table below.

| Learning Outcome | Outcome in Brief |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Apply to Africa the distinctive skills of the discipline of geography, beginning with primary elements of spatial thinking, such as location, place, links, and regions; and including more advanced elements such as analysis of spatial patterns across space and time | Geographic skills |
| See improvement in your ability to apply the skills common to all academic disciplines, including writing, speaking, collaborative work, and critical thinking (see list of critical thinking skills on page 7 below) | Academic skills |
| Locate important natural, political, and cultural features in Africa on blank maps; perform map analysis | Mapping |
| Describe the role of the environment in Africa's development | Environments |
| Describe how the environments, cultures, and economies of Africa are alike and how they differ, and how these similarities and differences came about | Cultures |
| Explain why some places are rich, why some places are poor, and what can be done about it | Economies |

Introduction to the Field of Geography

The geographer Phil Gersmehl¹ notes that geography, history, the humanities and science frequently deal with the same topics, but they look at the world from different perspectives:

- Scientists are concerned with process. The focus is on causes and effects that occur regardless of time or place. The key questions often begin with “how.”
- Historians are concerned with time. The focus is on the time of events and what happens before and after them. The key questions often begin with “when.”
- Humanists in disciplines such as philosophy or art deal with ethics and aesthetics. The focus is on how to judge things like morality and beauty. The key questions often begin with “should” or “how important.”
- Geographers are concerned with space. For geographers, space refers to the surface of the earth, as opposed, for example, to Star Trek’s “final frontier.” The focus is on locations of things, conditions in a particular place, and connections among places. The key questions often begin with “where.”

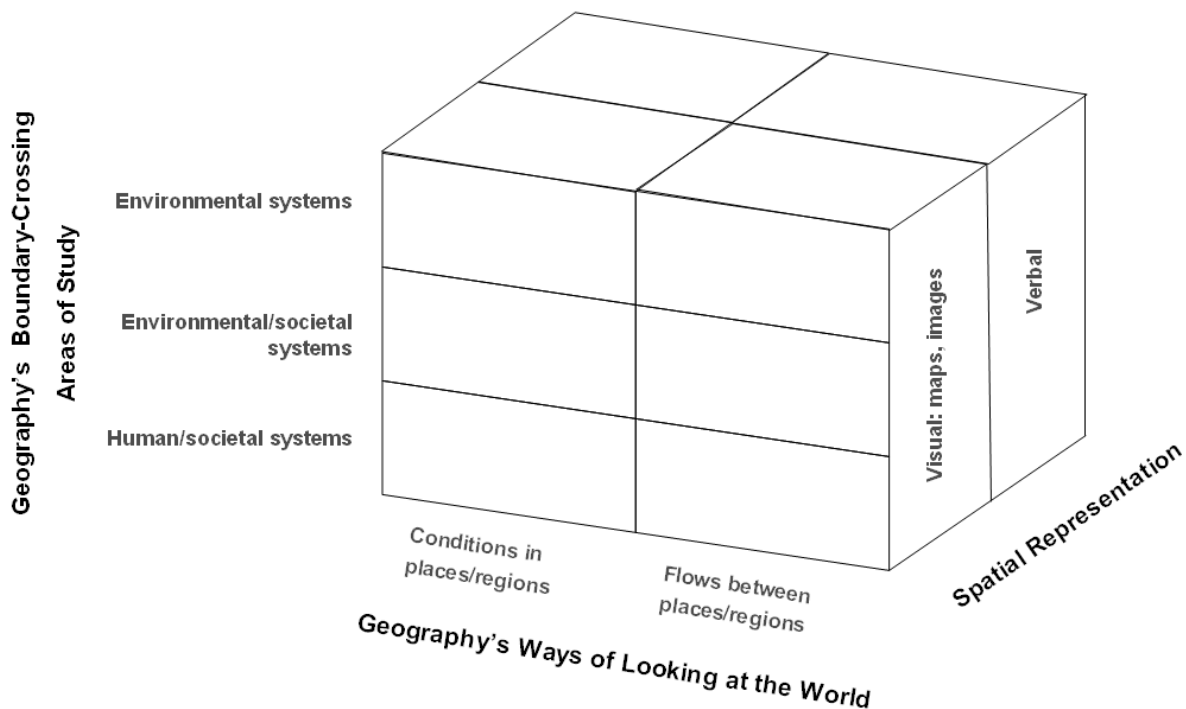
A geographer may borrow knowledge from other disciplines, but the focus is always on the location of things or the connections between locations. Geography’s main concept is location, and three other important concepts are place, links or connections, and regions. They are defined as follows:

- Location refers to position in space
- Place is the mix of natural and artificial features that give meaning to a location
- Links are the connections between places
- A region is a sizable area with generally similar appearance or internal links that tie it together

¹ *Teaching Geography* (Guilford, 2005)

As a way to comprehend the concepts and three perspectives of geography, I have produced the matrix shown below. The horizontal axis labeled “ways of looking” incorporates the ideas of place and space mentioned above. The vertical axis labeled “areas of study” shows that geographers often attempt to transcend the boundaries traditionally separating the various natural sciences (e.g., environment), social sciences (e.g., economies, cultures), and humanities disciplines (e.g., cultures, music) in order to provide a broad ranging analysis of selected phenomena. Spatial representation is the third dimension; it’s about how we portray different parts of the earth. The matrix simplifies reality and is therefore limited in what it can depict. For example, the time dimension is not shown. To understand conditions or flows in places or regions we need to ask how they got that way. Furthermore, we can ask ethical questions; for example, should a place be that way and can we change it?

The Matrix of Geographic Perspectives: How Things Are Connected²



At this point, let's define geography. The word comes from the Greek *geo*, the earth, and *graphein*, to write. Here are four definitions of geography:

- the study of place
- a scholarly discipline that focuses on spatial patterns and links
- the study of the earth's surface as the environment and space within which human beings live

² Adapted from *Rediscovering Geography* (National Academy Press, 1997)

- an integrative discipline that brings together the physical and human dimensions of the world in the study of peoples, places and, environments

Another way to get a handle on the field is to see how scholars have classified its educational and research traditions, as shown in the table below.

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| William Pattison, “The Four Traditions of Geography,” from <i>J of Geography</i> (1963) | Categories used by the main journal in US geography (<i>Annals of the American Association of Geographers</i>) |
| an earth science tradition | environmental sciences |
| a spatial tradition of mapping and location | methods, models, and geographic information systems |
| a people/environment tradition | nature and society |
| an area studies or regional tradition | people, place, and region |

Grading and Attendance Policy:

The components of your grade and important dates are shown below.

| | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Reading quizzes | 200 points | |
| 50-word sentences | 200 | |
| Place name quiz | 50 | Feb 3 |
| Midterm essay exam | 125 | March 3 |
| Class participation | 125 | |
| Discussion questions | 50 | |
| Final essay exam | 250 | 10:30-12:30, May 5 |
| Total | 1000 points (900-1000 = A, 800-899 = B, 700-799 = C, 600-699 = D, below 600 = F) | |

For most quizzes, you have about eight minutes to write a five- or six-sentence paragraph on some general topic from the reading assignment. The quizzes are open notes but not open book. In grading the quizzes I look to see if the paragraph; i.e., a sequence of lucid sentences that are all related to a single topic; has

- a topic sentence that states the main or controlling idea,
- three or four supporting sentences—they develop the controlling idea, using facts, arguments, analysis, examples, and other information,
- and a concluding sentence—it establishes the connections between the information discussed in the body of the paragraph and the paragraph’s controlling idea.

Here’s another way to think about the three conditions above: the topic sentence makes a claim; the supporting sentences provide data to support the claim; and the concluding sentence is where you show your creativity, because here you link the data to the claim. Thus the concluding statement should not be a restatement of the topic sentence. If these three conditions are met, you will receive an A for five or six quality sentences, a B for three or four quality sentences, and a C for one or two.

I will occasionally ask you to write a fifty-word sentence about the reading assignment.

I calculate your oral participation for most classes. The criteria for your oral participation grade are quality and consistency. An 'A' participant is consistently engaged in class discussion, always demonstrating that she or he has engaged the reading thoroughly and thoughtfully. The 'A' student has questions, ideas, or observations about the assignment and does not substitute quantity of participation for quality. This student listens to other participants and builds upon what they say; makes connections with other materials in and outside of the course. A 'B' discussant is less consistent than an 'A' but actively responds to questions posed by the teacher and other students. To get a 'B' in participation, you will need to talk regularly—more than once during a class session in which an assignment has been given. A 'C' means that your contributions have been infrequent and that your involvement did not work consistently to make the class a productive learning experience. A 'D' means that you rarely talked during the semester. I will occasionally ask for your written discussion questions at the beginning of class, and I will factor these into your participation grade.

The midterm exam and comprehensive final exam will consist solely of essay questions that come from a list of sample questions. You may bring one page (both sides) of handwritten notes to the midterm exam and two pages to the final exam. The minimum length for a satisfactory essay is six paragraphs. Longer essays usually get higher grades.

Attendance affects your grade. A student with excellent attendance will receive 10 bonus points. Each unexcused absence in excess of 2, however, will result in a 15-point loss (e.g., a student with 4 unexcused absences will have 30 points deducted from his or her course total). If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting the homework assignment from me or someone else and for completing it by the due date. Students who are late to class should see me afterwards to ensure that they were not marked absent.

Academic Integrity

The work (e.g., project, exam notes) that you submit must be your own, for both moral and legal reasons. Plagiarism is representing the work of others as your own (e.g., a paper that has two sentences that are similar to those in another person's paper). The sanctions for academic dishonesty under listed under SRU's Academic Policies and Procedures at http://catalog.sru.edu/content.php?catoid=2&navoid=202#acad_inte.

Withdrawal

The deadline for course withdrawal (grade of W) is Monday, April 4.

| Course Outline | quiz | date | week |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|------|
| 1. Introduction | | 1/18 | 1 |
| 2. Africa's people: what they share and how they differ | | | |
| a. Race and ethnicity, part 1 | | | |
| i. Discussion: The big picture | | 1/20 | 2 |
| b. Gender | | | |
| i. Discussion: The rise of Kenya's women runners | | 1/25 | |
| ii. Discussion: Female genital cutting | | 1/27 | 3 |
| c. Race and ethnicity, part 2 | | | |
| i. Film: Ghosts of Rwanda | | 2/1 | |
| ii. Film and discussion: Ghosts of Rwanda, genocide in Rwanda | Map Qz. | 2/3 | 4 |
| 3. Africa's site: human-environment interactions and resources | | | |
| a. The African biosphere and its impact on development | | | |
| i. Discussion: A deforestation crisis? | | 2/8 | 5 |
| ii. Film and discussion: Into the Tropics | | 2/10 | |
| iii. Discussion: The HIV/AIDS epidemic | | 2/15 | |
| b. Food production | | | 6 |
| i. Discussion: Green revolution? | | 2/17 | |
| ii. Discussion: Food production and population growth | | 2/22 | |
| <i>Guest presentation: Tom Daddesio (Modern Languages): Africa's music</i> | | 2/24 | 7 |
| 4. Site and situation, part 1: the production of past wealth and where it went | | | |
| a. The African slave trade and its consequences | | | |
| i. Film and discussion: The Slave Kingdoms | | 3/1 | 8 |
| Midterm Exam | Exam | 3/3 | |
| | Break | 3/8, 3/10 | |
| <i>Guest presentation: Cindy LaCom (English): SRU goes to Ghana</i> | | 3/15 | 9 |
| b. The clash of Western and African cultures | | | |
| i. Discussion: Chinua Achebe's <i>Arrow of God</i> | | 3/17 | |
| ditto | | 3/22 | 10 |
| ii. Discussion: colonialism and development in Africa | | 3/24 | |
| 5. Site and situation, part 2: the production of wealth and where it goes | | | 11 |
| a. The Nile Perch invades Lake Victoria | | | |
| i. Film: Darwin's Nightmare. | | 3/29 | |
| ii. Film and discussion: Darwin's Nightmare | | 3/31 | 12 |
| b. World financial institutions and Africa | | | |
| i. Discussion: Free market policies | | 4/5 | |
| c. International investment in Africa | | | 13 |
| i. Discussion: Is Chinese investment good for African development? | | 4/7 | |
| ii. Nigeria: Oil boom or oil doom? | | 4/12 | |
| d. Movie production in Nigeria | | 4/14 | 14 |
| i. Film: Welcome to Nollywood | | | |
| e. The distribution of wealth in South Africa | | | |
| i. Discussion, life under apartheid: La Guma's <i>Time of the Butcherbird</i> | | 4/19 | 15 |
| ii. Slide presentation: South Africa today | | 4/21 | |
| 6. Whither Africa | | | |
| a. The Afro-Atlantic dialogue | | | 16 |
| i. Discussion: The African diaspora | | 4/26 | |
| b. Conclusion: Closing comments, review | | 4/28 | |
| Final Exam (10:30-12:30) | | 5/5 | |

Critical Thinking Skills

We don't need no thought control, The Wall, Roger Waters

Critical thinking comprises a number of overlapping abilities or strategies. I've listed some below (for another set of definitions, see this web site: http://www.criticalthinking.org/aboutCT/define_critical_thinking.cfm).

1. **Observes.** One must both look closely and remain open to hidden or unexpected explanations to think critically. Gathering information in a systematic manner can increase one's willingness to accept evidence even it contradicts one's previous opinions. The recall and comprehension (putting what is recalled in one's own words) of what one sees are important steps in critical thinking.
2. **Analyzes.** In order to truly understand one must break down material into its component parts so that its organizational structure may be understood. In other words, analysis involves knowing the relationships between parts and recognizing the organizational principles that connect them.
3. **Recognizes ambiguity.** Ambiguity means having two or more meanings. Issues are often complex, and that complexity only emerges from confusion if one is able to recognize ambiguity.
4. **Comes to grips with complexity.** Here one recognizes that there are usually no easy answers to important issues or questions. Complex issues do not lend themselves to simple single-cause explanations.
5. **Identifies assumptions.** All reasoning is based on assumptions. An assumption is something taken for granted, i.e., accepted as true without proof, by a thinker but often left unstated. Since assumptions are not mentioned and thus not backed up with evidence, they offer insight into the validity of our own arguments as well as those of others.
6. **Assumes perspective of another.** You may have heard the phrase "walk a mile in their shoes." This saying implies a willingness to explore ideas contrary to one's own beliefs and the ability to see problems and issues in a broader perspective than one's own culture or interest group.
7. **Adopts multiple perspectives.** To adopt multiple perspectives means to see a problem from many angles. There are as many perspectives as there are people, but several important categories include race, class, and gender. Adopting multiple perspectives allows one to anticipate counterarguments and to address them even before one's position is questioned. Multiple perspectives can also lead one to reconsider one's own position.
8. **Synthesizes.** Synthesis puts parts together to form a new whole. It is the opposite of analysis. Synthesis involves seeing connections among various and seemingly unrelated facts and experiences (e.g., different texts, different courses, different personal experiences, or current events, etc.) Creativity is an important part of synthesis, since the connections one finds may be original.
9. **Recognizes bias.** A goal of critical thinking is fair mindedness. One tests one's own impressions in all ways possible. Recognizing bias helps one to see their own assumptions and thus to reduce personal prejudice and to recognize it in others.
10. **Evaluates.** To evaluate one must judge the worth or significance of something and to judge one must have definite criteria. Such criteria may be internal (e.g., how effectively is the purpose carried out?) or external (e.g., why might this work be of interest to someone? How does it compare to other works in its field?)