

Geography G326: Geography of North America

Instructor: Brian Johnson
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Classroom:
Student Building 150
11:45 – 1:00 Mondays through Fridays

Office Hours:
Student Building 304
10:00 – 11:30 Tuesdays and Wednesdays
Additional office hours by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

In this class, we will study North America using a regional approach: by breaking the study area into semi-homogeneous units in terms of their human and physical characteristics. Inside of each region we will examine spatial characteristics and processes.

North America for our purposes means the contemporary United States and Canada. Cultural and natural similarities abound across these areas, making their combination into this course a convenient one. If, however, you are interested in Latin America, GEOG G323 Geography of Latin America is an excellent class that focuses on lands from Mexico south to Chile.

We will begin with an introduction to the regions and geographic themes of the course. While many of you are aware of places in North America, you will be challenged to think of the land in new configurations using geographic concepts. We will then spend time investigating the general environment and human settlements of North America. It will be quite helpful to examine the totality of North America's natural and artificial landscapes before delving into each individual region. Following this introduction, we will get into the core of the course, exploration of each individual region.

Your instructor is admittedly a suburban/exurban specialist, so lectures will most likely lean toward these parts of North America. Students are certainly encouraged to explore human and physical conditions in urban and rural spaces, as a diversity of research will benefit us all.

Like many geography classes, this course will *spatially* apply interdisciplinary research from geography as well as other fields such as anthropology, sociology, geology, and ecology. While basic understanding of social science and its methods is helpful for your success in G326, it is not a requirement. If you have concerns about your theoretical or methodological competence, please speak with your instructor as soon as possible.

Textbook Readings

Required textbook available at the IU Bookstore/TIS/Amazon.com/etc.:

Birdsall, S. S., E. P. Palka, J. C. Malinowski, and M. L. Price. 2005. *Regional Landscapes of the United States and Canada*. New York: Wiley. Sixth Edition. ISBN: 0471152269.

Readings for a particular day are to be completed before you come to class. In doing this, you will have sufficient background knowledge to fully understand that day's lecture and participate in classroom discussion. In addition, there may be additional journal article readings posted on Ereserves or Oncourse.

Grading

Scale

Midterm Exam Questions	10 points	200-194	A+
Final Exam Questions	10 points	193-186	A
		185-180	A-
Midterm Exam	40 points	179-174	B+
Final Exam	50 points	173-166	B
		165-160	B-
Article Executive Summary	10 points	159-154	C+
Article Review	30 points	153-146	C
Article Presentation	30 points	145-140	C-
		139-134	D+
Class Participation	20 points	133-126	D
		125-120	D-
Total	200 points	119-0	F

There is no extra credit. Also, I do not curve the grades. No exceptions. Honest.

Exam Questions Assignments

To better engage the course material and anticipate what will be on the exam, students will be required to turn in sample exam questions. Prior to each of the exams, students will type and turn in a mix of map, short answer, and essay questions for my review.

A successful student will write exam questions that draw from lecture and textbook material. Good questions will also use correct grammar, spelling, and format. Excellent questions will be shared with the class prior to exams to aid in test preparation. More specific question writing instructions will be forthcoming.

Exams

There will be two exams administered in this course. Exams will have a mix of map, short answer, and essay questions. For students to succeed on exams they must know the material as well as how to express their ideas in a coherent manner using formal, academic English. A successful student will write legibly, spell words correctly, and use proper syntax on written responses.

The Final Exam will ONLY be administered at the time listed on this syllabus. Don't ask if you can take it early, because the answer will be no.

Journal Article Executive Summary and Review

Each student will write an original review of a peer-reviewed journal article pertaining to North American geography. An executive summary of the proposed works will be turned in for approval. The finished reviews should meet the grammatical standards expected of a social and behavioral science research paper, be correctly referenced, and typed.

Finished reviews will be approximately 1,500 words long. Detailed information on paper requirements will be forthcoming. In the meantime, for general format requirements see:

Berry BJL. 1994. Canons of reviewing revisited. *Urban Geography* 15 1-1.

http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/book_reviews.shtml

Journal Article Presentation

Along with producing a written review, each student will present his/her journal article review to the class in an oral and visual presentation. The presentations will last approximately 15 minutes each and consist of a summary, analysis, and appraisal of the scholarly work.

During the presentations, students in the audience will be graded on their attentiveness and the quality of questions they ask the speaker. Detailed requirements will be forthcoming.

Class Participation

Students who want full credit for participation will attend class, actively pay attention, take complete notes, contribute to the discussion, ask intelligent questions, and complete class participation exercises. These model students will also refrain from walking in late/leaving early, talking at inappropriate times, reading the newspaper, cramming for another test, using a mobile phone, and generally annoying their fellow classmates and instructor.

Schedule

Readings	Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Chapter 4 Megalopolis, Chapter 5 North American Manufactur- ing Core, Chapter 6 Canada's National Core	Week 1		5/6 First Day of Class	5/7	5/8	5/9
Chapter 7 Bypassed East, Chapter 8 Appalachia and the Ozarks, Chapter 9 Changing South	Week 2	5/12 Journal Article Executive Summary Due	5/13	5/14	5/15 Midterm Exam Questions Due	5/16 Megalopolis Presenters
Chapter 10 Southern Coastlands, Chapter 11 Agricultural Core, Chapter 12 Great Plains and Prairies	Week 3	5/19 North American Manufactur- ing Core Presenters	5/20 Canada's National Core Presenters	5/21 Bypassed East Presenters	5/22 Midterm Exam	5/23 Appalachia and the Ozarks Presenters
Chapter 13 Empty Interior, Chapter 14 Southwest Border Area, Chapter 15 California	Week 4	5/26 No class- Memorial Day	5/27 Changing South Presenters	5/28 Southern Coastlands Presenters	5/29 Agricultural Core Presenters	5/30 Journal Article Review Due
Chapter 16 North Pacific Coast, Chapter 17 Northlands, Chapter 18 Hawaii	Week 5	6/2 Great Plains and Prairies Presenters	6/3 Empty Interior Presenters	6/4 Southwest Presenters	6/5 California Presenters	6/6 Final Exam Questions Due
	Week 6	6/9 North Pacific Coast Presenters	6/10 Northlands Presenters	6/11 Hawaii Presenters	6/12 Final Exam	

Exam and Presentation Attendance

Attendance on exam dates as well as your scheduled presentation date is mandatory. If you miss an exam or your presentation date, you will receive a zero on that exam unless you have had an emergency documented by a dated doctor's note or accident report attesting to your inability to make it to the exam.

Late Assignment Policy

Students who want an opportunity to earn full credit for their assignments will turn them in on time. Any assignments turned in after the due date will be penalized 10% for each day late. Assignments turned in more than 3 days late will be given a 0.

We will be using Oncourse (<https://oncourse.iu.edu>) for assignment submissions. Don't wait until the last minute to turn things in as computers can sense urgency and will automatically give you trouble at that point. **Students are encouraged to turn in assignments early. Remember, the due date is the last possible day something may be turned in; you can certainly turn your work in early.**

Miscellaneous

Each must student do his/her own quality work to receive credit. The minimum penalty for academic misconduct is a zero credit for the entire assignment, exam, or presentation. Any academic misconduct will be referred to the Dean of Students Office and dealt with in accordance with university policy, whose penalties for academic misconduct include failure of the course and/or expulsion from the university.

I reserve the right to change the syllabus. If changes are necessary, a new syllabus will be issued to the students to reflect these changes.