

**Honors Geography 110
Cultural Geography
Department of Geology and Geography
Ohio Wesleyan University
Fall 2009
Course Syllabus¹
Professor: Dr. David M. Walker
Office: SWSC 237**

Office Hours: 11-12 MWF and by appointment

I am in my office many times other than office hours. If my door is open, students are welcome and invited to come in if they wish to see me. I am also happy to make appointments to meet with students at other times.

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Learning is not understanding the "true" nature of things, nor is it (as Plato suggested) remembering dimly perceived perfect ideas, but rather a personal and social construction of meaning out of the bewildering array of sensations which have no order or structure besides the explanations (and I stress the plural) which we fabricate for them.

Prof. George E. Hein

A. Course Overview

This course is a general introduction to cultural and world regional geography. Cultural Geography is a very large topic and is one of the most vibrant and hotly contested subfields in the discipline of geography. Much of what is deemed Cultural Geography may also fall under the rubric of Human Geography (one of the two major subfields of the discipline of geography: Human and Physical), which incorporates many aspects of what we would generally consider society, and everything the loaded term society stands for. World regional Geography is the study of societies and cultures that are delineated along regional lines across the globe: so, world regional Geography studies 'regions' that have been socially produced, not just regions that have been drawn along political lines. Throughout history each distinct region has been categorized as sharing similar cultural and societal characteristics (i.e., Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East)

First of all, what is the study of Geography? Geography is the study of relations between society and the natural environment. Geography looks at how society shapes, alters and increasingly transforms the natural environment, creating humanized forms from stretches of

¹ As per the usual caveat, this syllabus is a work in progress. I may alter the syllabus throughout the semester depending on events that emerge, new readings that surface, if I choose to include films as a pedagogical tool, invite guest lecturers, or if I choose to include in the syllabus any contemporary news-worthy events pertaining to the class.

pristine nature, and then sedimenting layers of socialization one within the other, one on top of the other, until a complex natural-social landscape results. Geography also looks at how nature conditions society, in some original sense of creating the people and raw materials which social forces "work up" into culture, and in an ongoing sense of placing limits and offering material potentials for social processes like economic development. The "relation" between society and nature is thus an entire system, a complex of inter-relations. These processes are what geographers call the "socio-spatial dialectic" (Edward W. Soja, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 70, No. 2, Jun., 1980, pp. 207-225).



- people modify the spaces they live in
- people in turn are modified by the spaces they live in

In this course we will study how cultural geographies and world regions have emerged through the socio-spatial dialectic. This means that we will study specific examples of how people modify the spaces in which they live and in turn are modified by those spaces and the cultures that materialize from these happenings. In addition, we will analyze the historical, economic, social, and cultural processes that coalesce to form the societies of the world's regions. Yes, both cultures AND physical geographic regions are the products of agents' social construction. For example, Europe is considered the Europe that is today, the actual physical boundaries as well as the distinct cultures that exist in Europe, based on particular historical contexts and trajectories, cultural antecedents and the other myriad aspects of culture (language, food, music, politics, religions, etc.) that—through the socio-spatial dialectic—have played a role in socially constructing and shaping the physical borders and cultural identities of European societies. These particular traits are what differentiate Europe from other socially produced regions in the World. In fact, cultural identities are often formed in the face of the other. Therefore, Europe's cultural and regional identity is reaffirmed in juxtaposition to the post-colonial societies of Africa, Latin America and beyond. Indeed, the identities of these aforementioned regions also have been buffered by their interactions (albeit often on exploitative

playing grounds) with European nations (Colonialism is a big part of how the world is divided into the regions and distinct societies that exist today).

We will study cultural and world regional Geography both thematically and geographically. This means we will study specific ideas and theories related to cultural and regional Geography (Colonialism, Imperialism, Development, Post-Colonialism, Women and Development, Identity, and Urbanization) and we also will study how these themes have played out—through the socio-spatial dialectic—in the regions themselves (i.e. the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, etc.).

We will begin the course by exploring a number of processes and issues that, through the socio-spatial dialectic, helped form the cultures and regions of the world today. These processes (mentioned above) include matters such as conquest and colonialism, imperialism, political economy, post-colonialism, post-W.W.II development policies, the institutions that helped forge these policies and their impacts on different societies and regions around the globe.

We will focus on specific case studies of regions and at times particular countries around the globe. We will consider the histories and developmental and physical characteristics of these places/spaces. We will ask questions about the cultures of each place in order to gain a better understanding of how, through the socio-spatial dialectic, each particular place came to be.

Finally, the last section of the class is dedicated to regional or country specific presentations (given by you, the students of Geography 110) that are linked to at least one of the thematic topics outlined in the first section of the course. By now you will have gained the knowledges that allow you to provide—through the socio-spatial dialectic—a detailed analysis of the cultural and regional geographies of a specific place.

Objectives of the Course:

- Students should be able to explain how cultural geographies across the globe have emerged through the socio-spatial dialectic.
- Students should be able to explain how world regions have emerged through the socio-spatial dialectic

Note on methodology:

Each one of the themes that are outlined in the beginning of this syllabus and the regions covered in readings and the classes are not neatly compartmentalized. The world itself is a messy place. Analyzing how certain places have come to be requires a heterogeneous approach to the social construction of societies and regions. So, when we begin to discuss the contemporary societies of Africa or Latin America, often we will simultaneously refer to colonial practices as well as post-WWII development policies as these two themes overlap when considering a place like West Africa or Brazil. Inversely, regions themselves are often inter-dependent – and are becoming ever more inter-twined with the advent of ‘globalization’ – and the innumerable processes that fuel this phenomenon. For example, in order to discuss the societies of Latin

America necessitates an understanding of the interconnectedness Latin America has with Europe – in the form of conquest, colonization and the formation of mercantilist, capitalistic systems – and with Africa – in relation to forced African Diaspora (slavery), the introduction of knowledges and technologies from the African continent to the Americas, and how these inter-continental processes impact the social construction of Latin America, Europe and the African Continent. Themes and regions covered in this class cannot be separated out one from another.

Required Reading

- Weatherby, Joseph N. et. al, *The Other World: Issues and Politics of the Developing World*, 8th edition
- Art, Robert J. , *Longman Atlas of World Issues*
- Kinkaid, Jamaica, *A Small Place*
- Reading packet, available from the library eres system. Password is “culture” – be sure to type it in lower-case

B. Class Conduct

You are required to bring text, articles and atlas with you to class on a daily basis as we will frequently refer to the readings during lectures. It is useless for you to show up to class without your texts or without having read the texts. The required texts for this class are:

- Weatherby, Joseph N. et. al, *The Other World: Issues and Politics of the Developing World*, 8th edition
- Art, Robert J. , *Longman Atlas of World Issues*
- Kinkaid, Jamaica, *A Small Place*
- Reading packet, available from the library eres system. Password is “culture” – be sure to type it in lower-case

You must be willing to read in order to receive a passing grade in this class.

Expectations on readings vis-à-vis lectures

Students are expected to do the readings for each class period and to participate in class discussions about the readings. The lectures will be based on the readings as well as specific examples of cultures and regions from around the globe and my own travels and lived experiences. Lectures are not based solely on the texts. So, it is important to do the readings as well as come to class to participate in the lectures.

Attendance is required

You cannot pass this course without coming to class. I will take attendance daily. Throughout the semester:

- You are allowed two unexcused absences—no questions asked.
- Each additional unexcused absence will result in a demotion of your grade by one letter.
- I will excuse absences if you provide me with an official written document – such as a doctor’s note in case of illness. Excused absences are exempt from the two rules stated above.

Do not come to class late!!! This disturbs me and the rest of the class.

Class decorum

I do not mind if you eat or drink in the class- just do so discreetly. However, it is not tolerable for you to read magazines, newspapers, fill out crossword puzzles, *fiddle with cell phones, black berries etc., , sleep!*, or do work for other classes during Geography 345. Please take care of these duties before or after class.

- If you repeatedly leave the classroom to check your cell phone, you will be counted as absent, unexcused.
- If you repeatedly text or fiddle with your cell phone, blackberry, etc., you will be counted as absent, unexcused.
- If you sleep in class, you will be counted as absent, unexcused.

Plagiarism and Cheating

The Dean’s office is responsible for dealing with cases of plagiarism and cheating. Make sure you understand how these offenses are defined and what the punishment for either is. You can find this information in your copy of Students Rights and Responsibilities.

Course Requirements

Reading Reactions 15 points each for a total of 150 points.

You must write a summary and critique of the designated readings assigned for each class. These summaries form the basis of class discussion and are handed in (hard copy) at the end of each class.

These **two-page** (double-spaced, 12pt font, regular margins) submissions consist of questions and reactions to the assigned readings. These written reactions will be used to structure class conversations. Although you will include descriptions of the texts, the emphasis in these papers should be on your analysis of the arguments. Thinking deeply about the assumptions and intellectual frameworks of the readings in these papers is of utmost importance; such questioning will further your own interpretations and add depth and vitality to our class conversations.

Your short essay should include:

a) A concise (1-1.5 paragraph) summary of the main points of the readings.

b) Your critical analysis of the article might address the following questions: What are the main arguments? What strategies do the authors use to make their point? What are the research questions? What methods are employed? What theories are used? What data are employed? You may address other questions as you see fit.

c) What questions or issues do the assigned readings raise in your mind? What things do the authors do well, what things do they do less well? What points of agreement and disagreement emerged between you and the text?

d) During (or at the end of) your discussion develop at least three well-conceived, well-articulated, and non-rhetorical questions pertaining to the readings. These questions can be broad in scope, meaning you may query a particular theme across the readings, or quite specific, you may have questions about a certain passage or argument in one text.

Why am I doling out Reading Reaction Assignments? This assignment is a form of active pedagogy. Theorists have proven that through active pedagogical techniques students make sense of or develop meaning from knowledge through the facilitation of a higher order of thinking skills, not just knowledge and a recall of facts, but comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of knowledge. The implementation of active learning techniques requires that students engage with the subject matter by participating in an activity and then reflecting on her/his experience with the activity. Writing reaction papers, crafting three questions and discussing your papers in class will encourage you to internalize key concepts and make linkages between theory and practice in relation to urban processes and cities.

One in class tests worth 50 point. The test will cover the readings ***and*** lectures of the class. The tests will consist of short essay questions.

- October 9th

One take-home essay question worth 100 points. The take-home test will cover the readings and lectures of the class. I will hand out the test on Wednesday, **November 18th**. The tests will be due on Wednesday **December 4th**. The take home test will consist of three essay questions. The total length of all three essay questions will be 9-12 pages, 3-4 pages per question.

A book response worth 50 points.

You need to read the short essay/novel by Jamaica Kincaid, *A small Place*, and write a five page book response incorporating the themes of the class (i.e., colonialism, post colonialism, development, underdevelopment, women and development). When you read the book, think about these themes and then choose one that you believe appropriate in order to engage with Kincaid's short essay. This is not a book report. This assignment is a book response. You do not

need to recount the entire text but only weave one of the themes of the class through *A small place* (hint: underdevelopment and the library, etc.). Merely recounting Kincaid's narrative from *A Small Place* will not produce a satisfactory grade.

- Jamaica Kincaid's, *A small Place*, **Due Monday October 19th**

Media Project/Current events Project: A weekly media analysis of geographical data worth 50 points (10 points each).

You are to turn in 10 media reports (worth 5 points each). The syllabus lists which days you are to turn in a media report. These due dates are non-negotiable. You can only access articles from the New York Times (www.nytimes.com) or The Guardian (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/>). Articles from other publications will not be accepted. You are to write a one page response to an article (and turn in a copy of the article itself) that is related to a global theme that is connected to the class and pertains to the week's readings (i.e. the week we read about South East Asia, you choose a pertinent article, the week we read about Sub-Saharan Africa, the same etc.). For example, in the second week when we are conducting readings on development and underdevelopment you can access articles pertaining to Chinese investment in Africa (this is just an example). This topic is excellent as it exemplifies the messy nature of economics, politics and cultures across two distinct regions. Currently the media is also focusing heavily on oil issues and U.S.-Venezuelan relations: another pertinent topic when we begin to discuss the heterogeneous region called Latin America. I expect you to use geographical language in your one page write up and to connect the articles to the themes in the class.

One long-term assignment: In class group presentations worth 200 points.

For this in-class group country project, you will be divided into groups. Each group will vote on a representative. The representative will randomly choose a piece of paper with the name of a country written on it from a hat. This will be your assigned country. For each country there will be guidelines that you must follow in order to give a successful, in-class, group, power-point presentation. Each member of the group will be required to cover one particular aspect of the country and provide a presentation on this aspect of the country. You will be graded for your individual contribution to the overall group project. You will not be graded in mass. You need to focus on the history, culture (this means religion, language, food, music, rituals and custom etc.), economics, health care and politics etc. (not all of these topics, but choose a contemporary issue that interests you) of the country within the rubric of a contemporary topic. Each member of the group will download her/his section of the assignment onto a disk. You will provide me with these after you present. I encourage you to share a sample of music from the country you will present. It is also good (and fun) to bring a culinary example from the country. Language and food can tell us much about the formation of a place. Most importantly, this is an opportunity for you to learn while simultaneously having fun. This assignment is designed to provide you with an opportunity to shine and show us how to conduct a great presentation. Please have fun with this assignment, and remember it is much easier to get up in front of the class if you are well prepared (I know from experience!).

Finally, **please to not get caught up in the mundane statistics**: it is best to weave a contemporary topic through the cultural geography of the country in order to make the presentation more interesting. Do not bore us with too many dates and statistics. Tell how the county was formed by using a cultural geographical approach.

Requirements for in-class group presentation:

- A very brief history of the country (how was it formed, through Colonialism?)
- Cultural description of the country
- Economic aspects of the country
- Contemporary issue(s) about the country (this will vary from place to place)

You will gradually work on the in-class, country presentation.

- Wednesday **September 4th**. A review of required resources. (**Your presence is required! (You will be fined 50 points for missing this presentation).**)
- **October 26th** Individual Annotated Bibliography² due. 5 peer review geography journal sources; 2 websites pertaining to geography of your country; required Maps. **50 points**
- Friday **November 21st**, individual outline of presentation due. **50 points.**
- **Date of Final Presentations to be announced. 100 points.**

To insure the success of the in-class Group Presentations, attendance is mandatory (nobody like to give a presentation to an empty classroom). It will be impossible to receive full credit on your own presentation unless you attend all of the other presentations (If you miss one day of presentation, **15 points** will be taken off your presentation grade, 2 days **30 points**, etc.).

Required Field Excursion: Freedom Museum in Cincinnati and its Environs. Cost: \$10 plus you pay for your lunch. October 23rd. **YOU MUST ATTEND THE FIELD EXCURSION OR YOU CANNOT TAKE THE CLASS!!!**

So, there are 650 possible points in the class. You all start out the same and then build up your points throughout the semester. Your grade will be determined on the percentage of points you receive.

Grade percentages

90-100 = A

80-89 = B

70-79 = C

60-60 = D

Grading

² For instructions on how to prepare an annotated Bibliography, please refer to, <http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm>

Absolutely no late papers will be accepted and no make up tests or presentations will be given. If you have an emergency, and are unable to turn in a paper or attend class during a presentation, the only acceptable method for doing so will be with an excused letter from the Dean's office. No other form of excuse or letter will be accepted.

Thematic Context

Week One: Class Introduction: What is Cultural Geography? What is World Regional Geography?

- August 24th = Class Introduction. Read Syllabus
- August 26th = What are the themes of Cultural Geography? Read: Marston, Chapter One pg. 1-29
- August 28th = what is the study of World Regional Geography? Marston ,Chapter One pg. 29-49 **and** "Beyond Culture: Space, Identity and the Politics of Difference", by Akhil Gupta and James Furguson .

1st reading reaction due

Week Two: Colonialism and its Legacies

- August 31st = Colonialism: From the Dictionary of Human Geography **and** The West and the Rest Into., by Sir Stuart Hall
- September 2rd = The West and the Rest , by Sir Stuart Hall **2nd reading reaction due**
- September 4th = Weatherby, Chapter Two, The Old and The New: Colonialism Neocolonialism, and Nationalism.

1st Media Response Due: Relate Article to Colonialism, Neocolonialism and/or Nationalism

Week Three: Imperialism, Political Economy and the Emergence of World Systems Theory of Capitalism

- September 7th = No Lecture: Go to Library to Familiarize yourself with the resources found there
- September 9th = Weatherby Chapter Three: Political Economy pg. 49-74 **and** Stiglitz and His Discontent, by Timothy Koechlin
- September 11th = Spaces of Resistance in Seattle and Cancun, by Joel Wainwright

3rd reading reaction due

Week Four: Post WWII Development: The Emergence of the unholy alliance

- September 14th = “Development”, by Gustavo Esteva
- September 16th = “The Invention of Development”, by Micahel Cowen and Robert Shenton:
4th reading reaction due
- September 18th = “The development of underdevelopment”, by André Gunder Frank.

2nd Media Response Due: Relate article to Development

Week Five: Women and Development

- View Documentary Black Gold: Complete Handout: Work On Country Presentations
- View Documentary Killer Bargain: Complete Handout : Work On Country Presentations

Week Six: Women, natural resources and development

- September 28th = Weatherby Chpt. 4: Women and Development.
- September 30th = Vandana Shiva: Resources
- October 2nd = Arturo Escobar: Imagining a post-development era

5th reading reaction due

Regional Analysis

Week Seven: North America

- October 5th = Rowntree North America pg. 44-57
- October 7th = Roundtree North America pg. 57- 73 **and**
Seeds of Change: Five Plants that Transformed Man Kind, by Henry Hobhouse, read the chapter called, “Cotton” pp. 141-153
- October 9th = Seeds of Change: Five Plants that Transformed Man Kind, by Henry Hobhouse, read the chapter called, “Cotton” pp. 153-178

First Test

Week Eight: North America

- October 12th = Black Rice, by Judith A. Carney, read chapter called, “ African Rice and the Atlantic World **6th reading response due**
- October 14th = Mid-Semester Break (do readings for field excursion)
- October 16th = Mid-Semester Break (do readings for field excursion)

Week Nine: Sub Saharan Africa

- October 19th = Weatherby Chapter 6 **Jamaica Kinkaid Paper Due**
- October 21nd = Seeds of Change: Five Plants That Transformed Mankind, by Henry Hobhouse, read chapter called, “ Sugar”: Sugar and the Slave Trade **7th reading reaction due**
- October 23th = Field Excursion: **Freedom Museum in Cincinnati and its Environs. Cost: \$10 plus you pay for your lunch.**

3rd media response due. Relate to Sub-Saharan Africa

Week Ten: Neoliberalism: Latin America, Iraq and China

- October 26th = Definitions of Neoliberalism **and**

The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism, by Naomi Klein, read chapter title “The Other Doctor Shock: Milton Freidman and the Search for a Laissez-Faire Laboratory”

8th reading reaction due

- October 28th= Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development, by David Harvey pp. 9-34
- October 30th= Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development, by David Harvey pp. 34-60

9th reading reaction due

Week Eleven: Case Latin America

- November 2nd = Weatherby Chapter 5 pp. 98-118

- November 4th = Weatherby Chapter 5 pp. 118-147
- November 6th = Latin America Transformed Globalization and Neoliberalism, by Gwynne et. Al.

10th reading reaction due

Week Twleve: Asia

- November 9th = Marston Chapt 11 South Asia
- November 11th^t = Marston Chapt 11 South Asia
- November 13th = Weatherby Chapter 7

4th media response due. Relate to Asia

Week Thirteen: The Middle East and North Africa

- November 16th= Weatherby Chapter 8
- November 18th = Weatherby Chapter 8
- November 20th = No Class Work on Your Country Project

5th media response due. Relate to Latin America

Week Fourteen: Thanksgiving Break

- November 23th
- November 25th
- November 27st

Regional/Country Presentations

Week 15: Presentations

- November 30th = No Class Work on Your Class
- December 2nd= Recapitulation
- December 4th= Country Presentation

Week 16: Presentations

- December 7th = Country Presentation
- December 9th = Country Presentation
- December 11th = Country Presentation

Week 17: Presentations

- December 14th, 1:30 PM-4:30 PM = Country Presentation