

**Department of Geography
University of Oregon**

GEOG 208: *Geography of the United States and Canada*

Winter, 2015 T/Th 12-1:20 pm in 123 Global Scholars Hall

CRN: 22415



GEOG 208 Instructional Team:

Dr. Connie Johnston (cjohnst4@uoregon.edu)
Office hours – T - 2:00 – 4:00 and by appt. - 165
Condon Hall

Fulfills Gen-Ed requirements:

Social Science Group
Multi-Cultural: American Cultures

Course goals:

This survey course provides students with a broad-based regional approach to understanding the physical and human processes shaping North America. Our goal throughout the class is for you to emerge with an enhanced awareness of the importance of using the geographic perspective and geographic concepts and skills to help understand issues in the ‘real world.’ Emphasis during class discussion and in readings is on the comparative geographies of various North American regions. Weekly discussion sections taught by Graduate Teaching Fellows are designed to help you master the use of maps, fieldwork, and other interactive learning approaches related to the themes, issues, and case studies discussed in lectures.

Learning Outcomes:

- Identify and understand local, regional, and national processes of environmental and human change.
- Learn more about the role of geographic analysis in explaining the occurrences and interrelationships of economic, cultural, social, and physical elements in the landscape.
- Enhance your critical thinking, writing, and speaking skills about issues that affect people and places in the United States and Canada.
- Improve your ability to think spatially about geographic issues framing life and landscape in North America.

Required textbook: *Geography of North America: Environment, Political Economy, and Culture* (Pearson Prentice Hall, 2013 – 2nd edition) - available in the UO Duck Store and on

reserve in Knight Library. Please be sure to use the new 2013 edition of this text to avoid confusion throughout the term!

Assessments and grading:

Two exams (80 pts. each):	160 (40%)
Weekly discussion section assignments: (6 X 20 pts. each):	120 (30%)
Collaborative group research project and written summary:	80 (20%)
In-class writing assignments and participation (4 X 10 pts. each):	<u>40</u> (10%)
Total points possible:	400

Grading scale -

We will use the following grading scale: A+ >97; A 93-97; A- 90-92; B+ 87-89; B 83-86; B- 82-80; C+ 77-79; C 73-76; C- 72-70; D+ 67-69; D 63-66; D- 60-62; F < 60.

- **Attendance and In-class Writing Assignments**

GEOG 208 involves active discussions of assigned readings, issues, projects, and interactive learning activities. Thus, it's especially important to keep up with reading assignments, attend class regularly, and participate in lecture and discussion section activities. **Please bring a supply of 3x5 index cards** and a pen/pencil **every day** as we will give pop quizzes and/or other in-class assignments that will require you to write something that can be handed in or passed to another person. These unannounced assignments are worth 10 points each for a grand total of 40 points credit in lecture by the end of the term. You will also need to **take notes** in some form or fashion. If you choose to do this on an electronic device, you must comply with the "Laptop Use Policy" (see end of syllabus).

- **Midterm and Final Exams**

Each of the two exams in this course is worth 80 points. The questions will be a combination of multiple choice, true-false, concepts to define, and essay questions (short and long). The midterm exam will cover selected information from content covered in your text and during lectures and discussions during Weeks 1-5. The final exam will include information discussed in class and in readings during Weeks 6-10 and is not cumulative. Note that our final exam date (scheduled by the University) is **Tuesday, March 18, from 1-3 p.m.** **Please be aware of our exam date as you make your plans to leave for spring break.** You will be advised of materials you need to bring to the exam the week prior.

- **Weekly Discussion Section Assignments**

Our class will meet twice each week for lecture to discuss your assigned readings and other information about the U.S. and Canada. You are also required to meet for one additional hour per week in a small group discussion (led by your assigned Graduate Teaching Fellow). In most of these discussion sections, you will complete a 20 point assignment based on topics and assigned readings listed in the syllabus for that particular week. Some of these activities will be done individually and others will be completed collaboratively with other students in the class.

- **Collaborative Group Research Project and Written Summary/Reflection**
With three to four other members of your discussion section, you will research a “real world” issue or event related to one of the regions we will discuss this term. This issue/event will be of your group’s choosing, but must be relevant to the course and to geography overall. During week 9 you will do a short group presentation to your discussion section and you will individually hand in a written summary/reflection of the project. Groups are to be in place by the end of week 2 and an outline of your project submitted during week 6. **(More detailed instructions for this assignment will be posted on Blackboard.)**

Logistics:

Readings, course Blackboard site, and communication –

Readings other than the main text will be posted on our course Blackboard site at least one week prior to the relevant class. The current list of assigned readings will, for the most part, remain the same but please note that we may make some changes throughout the course of the semester.

You are responsible for checking our Blackboard site not only for readings but also for assignment instructions and other items of interest. Any PowerPoint presentations will be posted on the site as well. We will otherwise communicate with you as a class and individually via your University of Oregon e-mail account. Therefore, you are also responsible for checking your U of O e-mail account regularly (at least once per day). Please use this account when you e-mail us as well.

Students with disabilities -

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with Dr. Johnston. Please bring a notification letter from Disability Services outlining your approved accommodations. For more information, see <http://aec.uoregon.edu/>.

The Rules:

Affirmation of community standards –

The University of Oregon community is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and the development of integrity. In order to thrive and excel, this community must preserve the freedom of thought and expression of all its members. A culture of respect that honors the rights, safety, dignity, and worth of every individual is essential to preserve such freedom. We affirm our respect for the rights and well-being of all members.

We further affirm our commitment to:

- Respect the dignity and essential worth of all individuals.
- Promote a culture of respect throughout the University community.
- Respect the privacy, property, and freedom of others.
- Reject bigotry, discrimination, violence, or intimidations of any kind.
- Practice personal and academic integrity and expect it from others.
- Promote the diversity of opinions, ideas, and backgrounds, which is the lifeblood of the University.

Classroom behavior –

Above all, **students should conduct themselves as adults in the classroom.** Discussion (and even debate!) should be civilized, respectful to everyone and relevant to the topic at hand. It goes without saying that threatening or violent behavior will not be tolerated.

Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices (excluding laptop computers used appropriately—see *Laptop Use Policy* below) before you enter the classroom. **Use of such devices for non-class purposes is disruptive and disrespectful to those around you, your instructor, and your GTFs.** If you are found to be using such a device in class, you will be given one warning (cumulative over the course of the term). If you continue to use a device, it will be confiscated and returned to you after class. Additionally, materials that are not related to our course should not be read during class.

Please also be on time! Arriving late and packing up your things early is disruptive to others around you, the GTFs, and the instructor.

Disruption of class by any means will result in a warning. After one warning, if the disruption continues, you will be asked to leave the classroom for the remainder of class. For more information, see the UO Student Conduct Code:

<http://uodos.uoregon.edu/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=puLfAzFDbsg%3D&tabid=69>.

Laptop Use Policy

You may use laptops/other electronic devices **only** to take notes for this class. In order to use such a device in class you must do the following:

1. **Write an e-mail** to either your GTF or to Dr. Johnston by **Monday, January 13** explaining why you need to use the device in class; and
2. **Sit in the first 3-4 rows of the classroom for every lecture.** If you sit elsewhere and/or are found to using the device in a manner other than explained in your e-mail, you will lose the privilege of using your laptop in class for the rest of the term.

Absences for exams

Failure to take an exam on the date it is scheduled will result in a grade of ZERO for that exam. No accommodations will be made after-the-fact for a missed exam. If you anticipate in advance that you will not be able to take an exam on the scheduled day/time because:

- 1) You are traveling to an official University-sponsored event (e.g., an academic conference, an Intercollegiate Athletics event, Club Sports, or the Oregon Marching Band), or
- 2) You have a pre-scheduled medical appointment

You must **contact your instructor a minimum of two weeks in advance** of the anticipated absence and provide **appropriate documentation.** Such documentation includes a signed letter (on official letterhead) or form from your instructor, professor, coach, or medical professional that indicates the details of the event/appointment.

Academic misconduct

From the University website

(<http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct/tabid/248/Default.aspx>):

“Academic Misconduct” means the violation of university policies involving academic integrity. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Intentional tampering with grades, resubmitting assignments for more than one class without the permission of the professor; and
- (b) Intentionally taking part in obtaining or distributing any part of a test that has not been administered;
- (c) Cheating;
- (d) Plagiarism;
- (e) Knowingly furnishing false information to a University Official; and
- (f) Fabrication.”

Please refer to the website for University definitions of cheating, plagiarism (and how to avoid it), and fabrication: <http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html>. ***This is serious! Make sure you know the rules and follow them.***

Reading Assignments and Lecture/Discussion Topics:

Week 1: Introduction to the Geography of North America

1/7: Introduction to the course

1/9: The basic geography of Canada

Assigned reading: Text, Ch. 1

Week 2: North America’s Physical Environments and Historical Settlement

****Project groups to be in place by Thursday of this week****

1/14: Physical/environmental geography of North America: Landforms, weather and climate, biogeography

Assigned reading: Text, Ch. 2

1/16: Historical settlement of North America: Land systems and political-cultural expansion

Assigned reading: Text, Ch. 3

Week 3: Population, Urbanization, and Economies of North America

1/21: Cultural and demographic patterns and urbanization

Review: Text, Ch. 3

1/23: Political economy

Assigned reading: Text, Ch. 4

Week 4: Begin Regions of North America

1/28: The Atlantic Periphery

Assigned reading: Text, Ch. 5

1/30: Quebec
Assigned reading: Text, Ch. 6

Week 5: Megalopolis and Midterm-alopolis

****No discussion this week****

2/4: Megalopolis
Assigned reading: Text, Ch. 7

2/6: **Midterm Exam (Chapters 1-7)**

Week 6: Great Lakes and Plains and Belts of Corn

****Group project outline due****

2/11: The Great Lakes and Corn Belt
Assigned reading: Text, Ch. 8

2/13: The Great Plains
Assigned reading: Text, Ch. 11

Week 7: The South, y'all!

2/18: Inland and Coastal
Assigned reading: Text, Chs. 9 and 10

2/20: Mexamerica
Assigned reading: Text, Ch. 14

Week 8: Mountains, the Stuff between Them, and California

2/25: The Rocky Mountains and the Intermontane West
Assigned reading: Text, Chs. 12 and 13

2/27: California, dude
Assigned reading: Text, Ch. 15

Week 9: The “outer edges” of North America

****Group presentations in discussion and individual project papers due this week****

3/4: The Pacific Northwest
Assigned reading: Text, Ch. 16

3/6: Hawai'i and the Pacific Islands
Assigned reading: Text, Ch. 17

Week 10: Last But Not Least—the Far North and the Future

3/11: Brrrr!

Assigned reading: Text, Ch. 18

3/13: Our continent's future and course retrospective

Assigned reading: Text, Ch. 19

TUESDAY, MARCH 18: FINAL EXAM, 1-3 P.M.

ONE FINAL, IMPORTANT ITEM:

This syllabus (other than the grading policy and course standards) is subject to change! Therefore, it is imperative that students attend lectures, discussions, check their e-mail inboxes, and stay up-to-speed with all course information posted on our Blackboard site.