

# GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Department of Geography & Geoinformation Science  
Spring Semester 2025

## MAJOR WORLD REGIONS

GGG 101 – 004

Course Syllabus

**Instructor:** Ian S. Ward

**Office:** Exploratory Hall, Room 2222 (Fairfax)

**Office Hours:** Monday, 9:00 – 10:00am, outside our classroom,  
or by appointment online via Blackboard Collaborate

**Class Location:** Van Metre Hall, Rm. 466  
(GMU Arlington Campus)

**Meeting Time:** 10:30am -11:45am MW

**Email:** iward@gmu.edu

### Course Overview:

This course is designed as an introduction to the discipline of geography while providing the student an overview of the world's major regions as defined by their physical and cultural characteristics. It is also intended to present critical geographic concepts associated with applying a spatial perspective to understanding the world. The focus will be on developing a new frame of reference for integrating information in spatial terms.

**Course Objectives:** Based upon the readings, lecture notes, and independent study, students will be able to:

- 1) define a region;
- 2) describe world regions in terms of physical characteristics such as climate or landforms;
- 3) describe world regions in terms of cultural characteristics such as language or religion;
- 4) explain specific geographic concepts such as climate regions or culture hearths;
- 5) and demonstrate how these concepts help explain regional differences and spatial patterns of distribution.

**Global Contexts:** This course fulfills the Mason Core requirement for **Global Contexts**.

**Learning Outcomes:** Upon completing a *Global Contexts* course, students will be able to:

- 1) Identify and explain how patterns of global connections across nations and/or cultures have shaped societies to create interdependence and inequality.
- 2) Use a disciplinary lens to demonstrate knowledge of how at least one nation and/or culture participates in or is affected by global contexts.
- 3) Apply an understanding of one's own positionality within a globally interdependent and unequal world to analyze solutions to global problems.

**Text:** 1) Nijman, Shin, and Muller, *Geography: Realms, Regions, and Concepts, 18<sup>th</sup> edition*, Wiley & Sons.  
2) *National Geographic Concise Atlas of the World. 5<sup>th</sup> edition*.

### Student Requirements:

To successfully complete this course, students must complete all assigned readings and exercises, watch all recorded lecture material posted to Blackboard, and attend scheduled lectures on campus; neither the textbook, lecture notes, or lecture recordings alone will suffice. During our meetings, students are encouraged to participate in class discussion, but may also be called upon at any time to offer their comments and views on class topics. If any meetings are conducted online, students are asked to turn on their cameras so as to be seen.

### **Basic Course Technology Requirements:**

Recorded lectures, assignments, office-hours, and communication of class information will regularly use the Blackboard learning system, available at <https://mymason.gmu.edu>. Students are required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system (**recommended: Windows 10 or Mac OSX 10.14 or higher**) and a stable broadband Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, etc., with a consistent 1.5 Mbps [megabits per second] download speed or higher. *You can check your speed settings using the speed test on this website.*) While exams will be administered in class, map exercises will be delivered and completed through Blackboard. To ensure a 'problem-free' experience, it is HIGHLY recommended that you use Firefox or Google Chrome as your Internet browser. Experience has shown occasional issues with Safari, but migration to Chrome has significantly helped students successfully navigate Blackboard activities. I'm told Firefox is even better... a platform that is available through free download from the Web.

### **Examinations and Examination Policies:**

- 1) Three examinations, plus a Final Exam, will be administered during the course of the semester (see attached schedule for dates). **Only your top 2 scores from the FIRST 3 exams will be recorded.** A mandatory **Comprehensive Final** will be given at the end of the semester. This last grade will count toward your overall score and will not be considered for elimination.
- 2) **All exams will be conducted in class with students using SCANTRON® forms.** Examinations will be constructed around True / False and Multiple Choice questions. Students will be expected to come to class with a #2 pencil and a clean, unfolded SCANTRON® answer sheet (available in our campus bookstore). Damaged answer sheets will not be accepted. Note: Please purchase only the green and white SCANTRON® forms (*Form No. 882-E*)
- 3) Exams begin and end as indicated in the class schedule: No additional time for late arrivals.
- 4) **NO MAKEUP EXAMS WILL BE GIVEN.** Remember, you may drop one exam, so if during the semester you find yourself in a situation that will preclude you from taking one of the regular semester exams, that exam will count as dropped.
- 5) Start times for those students arriving late will not be adjusted.
- 6) **THE FINAL EXAM WILL NOT BE ADMINISTERED EARLY OR LATER;** please plan ahead.
- 7) No books or notes of any kind (hardcopy or electronic) may be used during any examination in this class. **Cell phones must be turned OFF at all times. Smart watches must be removed & stored.**
- 8) Hats with bills or rims that obstruct your eyes cannot be worn during in-class examinations.
- 9) Once your exams have been graded and handed back to you, please retain them for your records. Do not lose track of them until after your final grade has been posted.
- 10) Please schedule to meet with me during office hours if you would like to review your exams.

### **Academic Integrity:**

Academic integrity is essential and each individual is expected to do his or her own work; violations of the University Honor Code will not be tolerated and will result in course failure. A description of the University Honor Code is available for review in the University Catalog and on our class Blackboard page.

### **Campus Classroom Expectations:**

- 1) LAPTOPS and TABLETS may be used by students during lectures. However, if their use is deemed to be a distraction to the user, the instructor, or any other students in the class, the user will be asked by the instructor to turn off their device and take hand-written notes.
- 2) **NO CELL PHONES or HEADPHONES (of any kind)** are to be used by students during lecture. All cell phones must be silenced and put away before class begins.
- 3) **NO TEXTING** – I want your full and undivided attention. This also means that if you need to sleep, stay at home.
- 4) **SMART WATCHES** must be removed and stored during exams only.

- 5) NO PHOTOGRAPHY – photography of any kind is not permitted in the classroom.
- 6) AUDIO RECORDINGS may only be made with instructor and ODS authorization.
- 7) FACE COVERINGS ARE OPTIONAL – Although masks are optional, if you're more comfortable wearing a mask, feel free to continue. Students will be respectful of those choosing to wear masks.
- 8) BE ON TIME – Students are expected to be on time for class. Should circumstances arise that make you late, do not disrupt the class as you enter; take the first seat available in the room.
- 9) NO CHIT-CHAT during lecture. If you have a question or comment, please raise your hand.
- 10) KEEP THE ROOM CLEAN. If you pack it in, pack it out; leave your seat better than you found it.
- 11) GET INVOLVED – Whether or not you've had personal experiences abroad, you will undoubtedly have questions, comments, and maybe some personal experiences that you'll want to share during the semester. We want to hear from you. If you are hesitant about asking a question in class, that's ok, but don't discard the question. Send me an email, or share it with me during office hours.

### **Note Taking:**

- In-class lectures will be accompanied by the use of electronic slides, maps, and photographs. You are not required—nor is it necessary—to copy the contents of these slides word-for-word, but it is strongly recommended that you take good notes during lecture. Students having concerns or questions about the class material are encouraged to come to office hours or set up an online appointment with me using Blackboard Collaborate. There will be occasions when online instruction will be provided, which will be through recorded lectures posted on Blackboard. Note taking is expected during these instructional videos or if the class meets live online. Please see “*Lectures and Class Schedule*” for more information.
- If at any point during my in-class lectures you feel that I am changing slides too fast, please let me know and I will slow down.

### **Map Exercises:**

Two Map Exercises (250 points) will be assigned during the semester. The exercises will be made available on Blackboard at least two weeks prior to the due date. Due dates can be found on the semester schedule located at the end of this syllabus. Students are to work through the questions and then provide their answers via a link on Blackboard (deployed approximately 5 days before the due date). You must use the ***National Geographic Concise Atlas of the World, 5<sup>th</sup> edition*** to complete the exercises.

### **Late Policy on Map Exercises:**

There is a maximum of a one-week extension with a minimum of a two letter-grade deduction beginning at the time the assignment is due. To receive the highest credit possible, assignments must be turned-in on time. It is best to begin work on assignments as soon as possible to allow yourself plenty of time to prepare a well-researched product. These exercises are not meant to be difficult, but they do require a bit of thought, time, and effort. I would be happy to meet online with any students who are having difficulty with any of the questions.

### **Course Material:**

All course material posted to Blackboard is private to this class and may **NOT** be distributed to anyone outside of this course. In addition, as stated by Federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must **NOT** be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.

- Video recordings — whether made by instructors or students — of class meetings that include audio, visual, or textual information from other students are private and must not be shared outside the class.

- Live video conference meetings on Blackboard Collaborate that include audio, textual, or visual information from other students must be viewed privately and not shared with others in your household or recorded and shared outside the class.
- Instructional videos are not to be shared publicly online or elsewhere and are the property of the instructor.

### Email and Student Privacy

Students must use their MasonLive (GMU) email account to communicate with the instructor and to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information. All email communication will be conducted using professional email etiquette, including appropriate salutations, a clear message, and a signature (name of sender). Emails lacking this will not be responded to.

### Disability Accommodations:

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, <http://ods.gmu.edu>, or email at [ods@gmu.edu](mailto:ods@gmu.edu). All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Map Exercises, which typically take around 2 to 3 hours to complete, will be deployed on Blackboard 2-weeks before the due date. Because extra time is embedded in the assignment, the same due dates will apply to all students in the class, regardless of accommodation status.

### Possibility of Campus Closure:

If the campus closes or class is canceled due to weather, loss of power, health concerns, or other reasons, students should check Blackboard [or other instruction as appropriate] for updates on how to continue learning and information about any changes to lectures or assignments.

### Grading Scheme and Policy:

Your combined score of the following will determine your grade in this course:

|                                     |       |     |   |              |                                    |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-----|---|--------------|------------------------------------|
| Exam I                              | ————→ | 25% | = | 250 points   | } (only the 2 best scores counted) |
| Exam II                             | ————→ | 25% | = | 250 points   |                                    |
| Exam III                            | ————→ | 25% | = | 250 points   |                                    |
| Final Exam                          | ————→ | 25% | = | 250 points   | } (mandatory)                      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Map Exercise (home) | ————→ | 12% | = | 120 points   |                                    |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Map Exercise (home) | ————→ | 13% | = | 130 points   |                                    |
|                                     |       |     | = | 1,000 points |                                    |

### Point Translation:

|            |   |    |           |   |    |
|------------|---|----|-----------|---|----|
| 980 - 1000 | = | A+ | 800 - 819 | = | B- |
| 920 - 979  | = | A  | 780 - 799 | = | C+ |
| 900 - 919  | = | A- | 720 - 779 | = | C  |
| 880 - 899  | = | B+ | 700 - 719 | = | C- |
| 820 - 879  | = | B  | 600 - 699 | = | D  |
|            |   |    | 0 - 599   | = | F  |

## Grading Scales for Individual Course Activities:

### 1<sup>st</sup> Map Exercise:

|           |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|
| 108 - 120 | = | A |
| 96 - 107  | = | B |
| 84 - 95   | = | C |
| 72 - 83   | = | D |
| 0 - 71    | = | F |

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Map Exercise:

|           |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|
| 117 - 130 | = | A |
| 104 - 116 | = | B |
| 91 - 103  | = | C |
| 78 - 94   | = | D |
| 0 - 77    | = | F |

### Semester & Final Exams:

|           |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|
| 225 - 250 | = | A |
| 200 - 224 | = | B |
| 175 - 199 | = | C |
| 150 - 174 | = | D |
| 0 - 149   | = | F |

### Key Dates:

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 1 / 22          | 1 <sup>st</sup> day of class <i>(There will not be any in-class meeting on this day. Please see recordings on Blackboard.)</i> |
| 1 / 28          | Last day to add course - must be enrolled for a grade!   |
| 2 / 4           | Last day to drop course with 100% tuition refund   |
| 2 / 11          | Last day to drop course with 50% tuition refund  |
| 2 / 12 – 2 / 25 | Unrestricted Withdrawal Period with 100% tuition liability   |
| <b>2 / 24</b>   | <b>EXAM 1</b>  |
| 3 / 10 – 3 / 16 | <i>Spring Break – NO CLASS</i>   |
| <b>3 / 17</b>   | <b>MAP EXERCISE 1 due</b> <i>(answers submitted on Blackboard)</i>   |
| <b>4 / 2</b>    | <b>EXAM 2</b>  |
| <b>4 / 14</b>   | <b>MAP EXERCISE 2 due</b> <i>(answers submitted on Blackboard)</i>   |
| <b>4 / 30</b>   | <b>EXAM 3</b>  |
| 5 / 5           | Last day of class  |
| <b>5 / 7</b>    | <b>FINAL EXAM</b>  |

### Lectures and Class Schedule:

***In-class Lectures*** – These are scheduled to occur each Monday and Wednesday morning beginning at 10:30am. There may be occasions where students will be released from class early and asked to watch the remainder of the lecture in the form of a recording on Blackboard (*see Recorded Online Lectures below*). There also will likely be two (perhaps three) weeks where in-class instruction will be replaced completely by recorded lectures (asynchronous learning). These occasions will be announced in advance.

***Live Virtual Online Lectures*** – None are scheduled for the semester. Though unlikely, these may be necessary due to unforeseen circumstances. These will be announced as soon as possible, either in class the week before or via email (*and Blackboard*) up to the day of the lecture. On these occasions, class will be conducted through Blackboard Collaborate (*a link is provided for online access on your class Blackboard Main Menu*). BB Collaborate will also be used regularly for virtual office hours.

***Recorded Online Lectures*** – These will occasionally supplement or replace the in-class lectures and will be posted on Blackboard under “SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES AND RECORDED LECTURES”. Students are required to watch these lectures and take notes on them at a time of their convenience (within the week that they have been assigned and posted).

# Tentative Class Schedule

(as of 7 January 2025)

| WEEK | DATE   | TOPIC  | READINGS                                 |
|------|--------|--|--|
| 1    |        |  |  |
|      | 1 / 22 | Introduction / Why study Geography?<br><i>(No in-class meeting. Please see recordings on Blackboard)</i> | Chapter 1                                |
| 2    | 1 / 27 | Weather & Climate  | Chapter 1                                |
|      | 1 / 29 | Weather & Climate / History of Cartography   | Chapter 1                                |
| 3    | 2 / 3  | History of Cartography   | Chapter 1                                |
|      | 2 / 5  | Europe   | Chapter 5                                |
| 4    | 2 / 10 | Europe   | Chapter 5                                |
|      | 2 / 12 | Europe   | Chapter 5                                |
| 5    | 2 / 17 | Europe   | Chapter 5                                |
|      | 2 / 19 | Europe   | Chapter 5                                |
| 6    | 2 / 24 | <b>EXAM I</b>  | <b>STUDY!</b>                            |
|      | 2 / 26 | Europe / Sub-Saharan Africa  | Chapter 8                                |
| 7    | 3 / 3  | Sub-Saharan Africa / North Africa  | Chapters 8 / 7                           |
|      | 3 / 5  | North Africa   | Chapter 7                                |
| 8    | 3 / 10 | <b>Spring Break</b>  |  |
|      | 3 / 12 |  |  |
| 9    | 3 / 17 | SW Asia  | <b>1st Map Exercise Due</b><br>Chapter 7 |
|      | 3 / 19 | Southwest Asia   | Chapter 7                                |

# Tentative Class Schedule

(as of 7 January 2025)

| WEEK | DATE | TOPIC                                    | READINGS                                 |
|------|------|--|--|
| 10   | 3/24 | Southwest Asia                           | Chapters 7                               |
|      | 3/26 | North America                            | Chapter 2                                |
| 11   | 3/31 | North America                            | Chapter 2                                |
|      | 4/2  | <b>EXAM II</b>                           | <b>STUDY!</b>                            |
| 12   | 4/7  | North America / Middle America           | Chapters 2 / 3                           |
|      | 4/9  | Middle America                           | Chapter 3                                |
| 13   | 4/14 | Middle Amer. <b>2nd Map Exercise Due</b> | Chapter 3                                |
|      | 4/16 | Middle America                           | Chapter 3                                |
| 14   | 4/21 | South America                            | Chapter 4                                |
|      | 4/23 | South America                            | Chapter 4                                |
| 15   | 4/28 | South America                            | Chapter 4                                |
|      | 4/30 | <b>EXAM III</b>                          | <b>STUDY!</b>                            |
| 16   | 5/5  | Australia / NZ / Pacific Realm           | Chapter 12 / 13                          |
|      | 5/7  | <b>FINAL EXAM</b>                        | <b>Exam Time:</b><br>(10:30am to 1:15pm) |