George Mason University
Department of Geography & Geoinformation Science

Spring Semester 2025
GGS 101-DL4: MAJOR WORLD REGIONS

Name	:	Ronald Luna, PhD	Meeting Times	:	Online
Office	:	Via Zoom	Location	:	Online
Email	:	rluna5@gmu.edu	Office hours	:	By appointment only
Dates	:	March 24-May 10	Credits	:	3.00

Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA)
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Office: tba   Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description:

This course is designed as an introduction to the discipline of geography. Students will gain knowledge of the patterns, problems, and prospects of the world's principal human-geographic regions and the role of geographic differences in interpreting the world's current scene. The course emphasizes real differentiation, similarities of these world regions, and how they interact/interrelate with one another in today's globalizing world. The skills and knowledge gained from this course will become the basis for students to ask critical geographic questions about various geographic processes, features, and patterns on the landscape at different scales.

Expected Learning Outcomes

This course is a global learning course. Upon course completion, a student will be able to:

- Understand the geographic approach to studying the spatial distribution of Earth's phenomena.
- Demonstrate a foundational knowledge of the world's physical characteristics, such as climate or landforms
- Describe world regions regarding cultural characteristics such as language or religion.
- Identify and describe how humans interact with and adapt to their environment
- Understand the relationship and importance of people and places.
- Distinguish between the different types of regional distinctions recognized in geography.
- Understand the spatial nature of geography and how each place or region is examined, analyzed, and compared with other locations or regions.
- Learn about geographers' geographical tools and data sources to study the Earth's surface.

Mason Core: This course fulfills the Mason Core requirement in Global Understanding.

Required Textbook

Geography: Realms, Regions, and Concepts

Nijman, Jan, et al.

Publisher: Wiley; 18th edition (August 4, 2020)

Learning Management Systems

- Blackboard is our course management system which provides access to course materials, assignments, and class discussions. You will log in to Blackboard using your George Mason username and password through this link: https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu.
- If you have computer problems, please contact ITS Support Center: httpp://itservices.gmu.edu; Email: support@gmu.edu; | Phone: 703-993-8870.

Safe Return to Campus & COVID-19 Requirements

As of today, there are currently no Covid-19-related university-wide policies that will affect teaching and learning, however, students are encouraged to check the Safe Return to Campus site to keep track of any updates and changes.

Course Activities

The course is designed to engage students with pre-class (online), in-person, and post-class activities. These activities are graded. The instructor expects students to prepare well, read assigned materials before class meetings, participate in all assigned activities, and discuss through Blackboard by due dates. Some activities will require teamwork, and the instructor will specify such activities.

Course Assignments and Grading Breakdown

Students are expected to submit high-quality assignments during this course via the Blackboard. All assignments are to be completed according to the dates outlined in the syllabus.

Breakdown of the class activities and assignments:

Planning and preparing	Critiquing and Revising
Quizzes	Students will be asked to complete a quiz based on information from that module. Quizzes will include both short-answer and multiple-choice questions.
Database Research	students will work with different datasets, building skills and accumulating knowledge they can apply and incorporate into their final project. The instructor will also provide reflection questions to expand on important concepts introduced in each dataset. Students will receive feedback from the instructor on ways to improve their analysis in anticipation of the final paper and project.
Reflection Assignments	students will be asked to submit a short-written response to a key question based on that week's module. Some reflection questions will incorporate material from course videos and/or datasets reviewed that week. Students will receive feedback from the instructor in anticipation of upcoming assignments or quizzes.
Videos/Articles	Several short documentaries and/or TED Talks will be posted on ELMS for your review. Material from these required videos/articles will be used to answer your reflection questions. Students are expected to watch the assigned videos or read the articles. All videos will be made available by the start of each week.
Final Project	In the final part of the course, students will begin working on their final project. The final project is composed of two sections: a Background Paper (50 pts) and a Development Plan (50 pts). The Background paper will assess students' understanding of colonial history and legacies. In addition, students will research development challenges and opportunities in their selected country. The Development Plan paper requires students to critically connect the various modules learned in class to the final part of the project. Students will write a development proposal that includes project objectives and development priorities, identify risks, and create implementation strategies with timeline and budget.

Point Distribution: Assignments fall into one of two categories (individual or final project).

Individual Assignments
Exam – 110 points
- Pre-module quiz 10 points
- Exam #1 – 50 points
- Exam #2 – 50 points

Current Event Paper – 150 points
- Reflection #1 – 30 points
- Reflection #2 – 30 points
- Reflection #3 – 30 points
- Reflection #4 – 30 points
- Reflection #5 – 30 points

Final Project-100 points
Background Report – 50 points
Final Development Plan - 50 points

Total: 360 Points

Grading Plus/Minus Grading:
All assignments will be given a numerical grade on a 100-point scale. At the end of the semester, your overall numerical grade will be calculated based on points earned with relative assignment weights applied. It will then be converted to a letter grade using the following scale.

100-93 = A
92-90 = A-
89-87 = B+
86-83 = B
82-80 = B-
79-77 = C+
76-73 = C
72-70 = C-
69-67 = D+
66-63 = D
62-60 = D-
59-0 = F

All grades will be determined by the above method. **There will be no extra credit assignments.**

Course & Instructor Policies

Writing Guidelines for Reflection Assignments:
All reflection assignments should follow the same writing guidelines, including:
- Title of your paper
- Double-spaced
- 12-point font
- Times New Roman font
- One-inch margins
- Page numbers top right corner
- Sections headings
- No extra spacing between paragraphs

Writing Guidelines for Final Project:
The background report and the final development plan should follow the same writing guidelines, including:

- Double-spaced
- 12-point font
- Times New Roman font
- One-inch margins
- Page numbers lower top right corner (excluding cover page)
- Sections headings
- No extra spacing between paragraphs
- At least three **minimum of three peer-reviewed** sources and **two databases highlighted** in the course material.
- Proper citation in paper
- A complete bibliography. Please adhere to proper APA citation format, including both in-text/parenthetical citations and final references. For more information, please see: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/

A sample paper with much of the format described above can be found here: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/18/):

Email: If you send an email to the instructor regarding this course, please put in the subject course number for a quick response. I aim to answer most emails within 24 hours during the work week.

Technology Requirements:
Make sure you have **strong** internet access throughout the semester. Tests/Quizzes where the connection is lost may result in a 0, as they will automatically submit. Microsoft Word/PowerPoint access and a reliable computer are needed. Submit assignments in Word or PDF unless otherwise specified. Please do not submit .pages or other format files. You have unlimited submissions on any assignment up to the due date.

Late Assignments: Late Assignments are strictly **NOT** accepted unless there is **prior** approval. Please see the announcements and class schedule for detailed due dates.

Plagiarism and Honor Code
Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Make sure to complete your own work. When doing please use proper citations. Please refer to the school's plagiarism codes. It is expected that students adhere to the George Mason University Honor Code as it relates to integrity regarding coursework and grades. The Honor Code reads as follows: "To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal and/or lie in matters related to academic work." More information about the Honor Code, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity website at http://oai.gmu.edu

American with Disabilities Act
If you think or know that you need an accommodation based on a disability, you are encouraged to contact a counselor for Disability Services in the Counseling Center to discuss possible accommodations. All information is kept confidential and may increase your chances of success in the academic setting. Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit https://ds.gmu.edu/ for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

Students with Disabilities
Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you

are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit http://ds.gmu.edu/ for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474.

GMU Nondiscrimination Policy

George Mason University is committed to providing equal opportunity and an educational and work environment free from any discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status, pregnancy status, or genetic information. George Mason University shall adhere to all applicable state and federal equal opportunity/affirmative action statutes and regulations.

TITLE IX

As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Responsible Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1412. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (703-380-1434) or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) (703-993-2380). You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730 or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

Student Support Services

George Mason University has several academic support and other resources to facilitate your success. Some of these resources are presented below:
   i.   Counseling and Psychological Services: http://caps.gmu.edu/
   ii.   Learning Services, University Career Services: http://careers.gmu.edu/
  iii.   The Writing Center [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/
  iv.   University Catalog: http://catalog.gmu.edu/
   v.   University Policies: http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu

Tentative Course Calendar: *Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.*

Week	Date	Topic description	Readings	Assignment short description and due date
1	3/24	Introduction | Course Overview	Introduction	Syllabus Quiz due 3/27
1	3/25	A Global Perspective	Chapter 1	
1	3/26	Development & Economy | Population Clusters	Chapter 1	
1	3/27	The North American Realm	Chapter 2	
2	3/31	The North American Realm	Chapter 2	Current Event Paper #1
2	4/1	The Middle American Realm	Chapter 3	
2	4/2	The South American Realm	Chapter 4	Current Event Paper #2
2	4/3	The South American Realm	Chapter 4	
3	4/7-4/11	**Exam 1 [Chapters 1-4]**		
4	4/14	The European Realm	Chapter 5	Current Event Paper #3
4	4/15	The European Realm	Chapter 5	
4	4/16	The Sub-Saharan African Realm	Chapter 8	Current Event Paper #4
4	4/17	The Sub-Saharan African Realm	Chapter 8	
5	4/21	The South Asian Realm	Chapter 9	
5	4/22	The South Asian Realm	Chapter 9	Current Event Paper #5
5	4/23	The East Asian Realm	Chapter 10	
5	4/24	The East Asian Realm	Chapter 10	
6	4/28-5/1	**Exam 2 [Chapters 5, 8-10]**		
7	5/5-5/9	Final Project		