

GGS103-Human Geography

SYLLABUS

Course Information

Course Number: GGS103 DL1
Course Title: Human Geography
Term: Fall 2025
Class Meetings: ONLINE
Location: Canvas

Professor Contact Information

Professor: Piash Debnath, M.S.
Email: pdebnat2@gmu.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment/Zoom

Course Description:

This course explores the dynamic relationship between people, culture, and the land they inhabit. Students will engage with key concepts of cultural geography including population patterns, cultural identities, migration, language, religion, economic systems, urbanization, and geopolitics—all examined through a spatial lens. With a global focus, the course emphasizes how human societies shape and are shaped by the environments they occupy. Students will critically analyze cultural landscapes and gain insights into regional and global.

Course Prerequisites: None

Required Textbooks (Available Free Online)

Title: Introduction to Human Geography: A Disciplinary Approach Author: Steve Graves <https://sites.google.com/site/gravesgeography/introduction-to-human-geography?authuser=0>

Title: Introduction to Human Geography. Open Geography Education

Author: Adam Dastrup <https://humangeography.pressbooks.com/front-matter/introduction/>

Mason Core Information

This course is part of the Mason Core curriculum and fulfills requirements for Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Mason Core Learning Outcomes for Social and Behavioral Sciences

By completing this course, students will be able to:

- Explain how individuals, groups, and societies behave and interact in a variety of contexts.
- Use concepts and methods from the social sciences to analyze human behavior, institutions, and cultures.
- Evaluate claims about social phenomena using evidence-based reasoning.
- Apply disciplinary perspectives to contemporary social issues.

Course-Specific Outcomes (GGS 103 – Human Geography)

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Interpret how population, migration, and settlement patterns shape cultural and economic landscapes.
- Compare languages, religions, and ethnic identities across world regions and explain their spatial distributions.
- Analyze the role of political systems, borders, and geopolitics in structuring human activities.
- Explain processes of urbanization and sustainable development in a global context.
- Apply geographic concepts and tools to investigate the interactions between humans and their environments.
- Critically evaluate how globalization links diverse cultures and societies while also producing inequality and conflict.

Grading Policy:

Mid-Term Exam (1)	20	points	20%
Final Exam (1)	20	points	20%
HW Exercises (3)	5	points each	15%
Discussion Board (3)	6	points each	18%
Final Project (1)	26	Points	26%
Orientation Quiz (1)	1	Point	1%
Total Possible Points	100		100%

Grading Scale:

A+	97	–	100%
A	96	–	90%
B+	87	–	89%
B	80	–	86%
C+	77	–	79%
C	70	–	76%
D	60	–	69%
F	59	–	0%

Course & Instructor Policies

Exams: There will be a Midterm and Final exam consisting of multiple choice and/or short answers, open notes. Both Exams are worth 20% of the total grade.

HW Assignments: There will be 3 HW Exercise assignments worth 5 points each.

Discussion Board: The Discussion Board assignments will take place on Canvas and should be completed in essay format. There will be a total of **three (3) discussions**, each worth **6 points**. (will go through AI detection for essay and replies)

Assignment Breakdown:

- **Essay Portion (4 points):**
Write an essay of **750 words minimum**, double-spaced, and include **at least 2 references**. You may attach a Word file or write directly in the discussion board.
- **Peer Replies (2 points):**
Respond to **at least 2 peers**. Each reply must be a minimum of **4 sentences** and should directly address specific points or ideas from the peer's essay.

Individual Voiceover Project:

The Final Project will be worth 26 points total. The project will be an individual voiceover PowerPoint presentation or video presentation. The topic will be given to the student as well as further detailed instructions on Canvas. 1 point will be dedicated towards Final Project Step 1, which will be assigned early in the weekly modules.

Assignment Submission Policy: Assignments must be submitted on time. Late submissions will incur a 50% deduction if turned in within 24 hours of the due date. Assignments will not be accepted beyond 24 hours after the due date.

In case of emergencies, students must provide appropriate documentation or proof. As this is a fully asynchronous online course, extensions for emergencies are not guaranteed. Students are expected to notify the professor via email as soon as an emergency arises, rather than waiting until a few hours before or after the due date. Extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Online Conduct and Communication: Students are expected to maintain a respectful and professional online environment. Interactions with classmates should be appropriate and courteous. When emailing the professor, please follow proper email etiquette. Include:

- A greeting (e.g., “Good afternoon, Professor”),
- A clear subject line (e.g., “Exercise 2 Help”),
- A signature (e.g., “Best regards, Jane Doe”),
- The course number (e.g., “GGS 103

All email communication must be sent using your university email account. Direct messages via Canvas are not permitted.

Technical Requirements and Responsibilities: Students must ensure they have a stable internet connection throughout the semester and a very reliable computer with a webcam required. Any tests or quizzes interrupted due to connection issues may result in automatic submission and a grade of zero. Technical issues, such as laptop malfunctions or battery failure, are not valid excuses for resubmitting quizzes, exams, or assignments.

When submitting assignments, it is the student’s responsibility to preview the submission to ensure the correct format and file have been uploaded.

The following software is required for this course: Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Google Earth. All assignments must be submitted in Word format (.doc or .docx) unless otherwise specified. Files submitted in unsupported formats, such as .pages, will not be accepted.

Important Dates:

Last day to drop with a tuition refund	Sept 8th
Unrestricted withdrawal last day	Sept 30th
Selective withdrawal last day	Oct 27th
Last day of class	Dec 8th

Plagiarism, Honor Code, and AI Policy: Plagiarism is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated. Students are expected to complete their own work. When citing sources, please use APA format and refer to the school’s plagiarism policy for guidance.

The use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT, is strictly prohibited for completing assignments. Violations of this policy will be treated as academic dishonesty. Additionally, providing false information, such as fake doctor’s notes or misleading emails to gain special accommodations, constitutes a violation of the honor code.

Assignments are opportunities for personal growth, critical thinking, and applying your acquired knowledge. Your individual effort and creativity are essential in demonstrating your understanding of the course material. Dependence on AI undermines these objectives and compromises the integrity of the learning process. We appreciate your commitment to academic honesty and dedication to upholding this course's principles by refraining from using Generative AI in your assignments.

Academic Standards

Academic Standards exist to promote authentic scholarship, support the institution's goal of maintaining high standards of academic excellence, and encourage continued ethical behavior of faculty and students to cultivate an educational community which values integrity and produces graduates who carry this commitment forward into professional practice. As members of the George Mason University community, we are committed to fostering an environment of trust, respect, and scholarly excellence. Our academic standards are the foundation of this commitment, guiding our behavior and interactions within this academic community. The practices for implementing these standards adapt to modern practices, disciplinary contexts, and technological advancements. Our standards are embodied in our courses, policies, and scholarship, and are upheld in the following principles:

- **Honesty:** Providing accurate information in all academic endeavors, including communications, assignments, and examinations.
- **Acknowledgement:** Giving proper credit for all contributions to one's work. This involves the use of accurate citations and references for any ideas, words, or materials created by others in the style appropriate to the discipline. It also includes acknowledging shared authorship in group projects, co-authored pieces, and project reports.
- **Uniqueness of Work:** Ensuring that all submitted work is the result of one's own effort and is original, including free from self-plagiarism. This principle extends to written assignments, code, presentations, exams, and all other forms of academic work.

Violations of these standards—including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating—are taken seriously and will be addressed in accordance with university policies. The process for reporting, investigating, and adjudicating violations is outlined in the university's procedures. Consequences of violations may include academic sanctions, disciplinary actions, and other measures necessary to uphold the integrity of our academic community. The principles outlined in these academic standards reflect our collective commitment to upholding the highest standards of honesty, acknowledgement, and uniqueness of work. By adhering to these principles, we ensure the continued excellence and integrity of George Mason University's academic community.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for understanding how these general expectations regarding academic standards apply to each course, assignment, or exam they participate in; students should ask their instructor for clarification on any aspect that is not clear to them.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <https://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu. Phone: (703) 993-2474.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for registering with Disability Services and communicating about their approved accommodations with their instructor *in advance* of any relevant class meeting, assignment, or exam.

FERPA and Use of GMU Email Addresses for Course Communication

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) governs the disclosure of education records for eligible students and is an essential aspect of any course. **Students must use their GMU email account** to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. Instructors will not respond to messages sent from or send messages regarding course content to a non-GMU email address.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for checking their GMU email regularly for course-related information, and/or ensuring that GMU email messages are forwarded to an account they do check.

Title IX Resources and Required Reporting

As a part of George Mason University's commitment to providing a safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and working environment for all members of the University community, the University does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender in any of its education or employment programs and activities. Accordingly, **all non-confidential employees, including your faculty member, have a legal requirement to report to the Title IX Coordinator, all relevant details obtained directly or indirectly about any incident of Prohibited Conduct** (such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, gender-based stalking, dating/domestic violence). Upon notifying the Title IX Coordinator of possible Prohibited Conduct, the Title IX Coordinator will assess the report and determine if outreach is required. If outreach is required, the individual the report is about (the "Complainant") will receive a communication, likely in the form of an email, offering that person the option to meet with a representative of the Title IX office.

For more information about non-confidential employees, resources, and Prohibited Conduct, please see [University Policy 1202: Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence](#). Questions regarding Title IX can be directed to the Title IX Coordinator via email to TitleIX@gmu.edu, by phone at 703-993-8730, or in person on the Fairfax campus in Aquia 373.

Student opportunity: If you prefer to speak to someone *confidentially*, please contact one of Mason's confidential employees in Student Support and Advocacy ([SSAC](#)), Counseling and Psychological Services ([CAPS](#)), Student Health Services ([SHS](#)), and/or the [Office of the University Ombudsperson](#).

*Dates
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Date Every Week starts Monday morning 6am to Sunday 11:59pm	Topics	Readings	Assignments Due : All Weekly Assignments due Sunday 11:59pm
Week 1 Aug 25 th -31 st	Syllabus Week	Syllabus Get Familiar with Canvas	Orientation Quiz & Introductions
Week 2 Sept 1 st - 7 th	Geography Intro	Graves Chapter 1	Exercise 1
Week 3 Sept 8 th -14 th	Population	Dastrop Chapter 2.1	None
Week 4 Sept 15 th – 21 st	Agriculture	Graves Chapter 3	Discussion 1
Week 5 Sept 22 nd – 28 th	Ethnicity	Graves Chapter 9	None
Week 6 Sept 29 th – Oct 5 th	Religion	Graves Chapter 6	None
Week 7 Oct 6 th – 12 th	Language	Dastrop Chapter 3.3	Exercise 2
Week 8 Oct 13 th – 19 th	Fall Break Oct 13th Midterm Week <i>Available 10/16-10/19</i>	None	Final Project Step 1 Midterm
Week 9 Oct 20 th – 26 th	Migration	Dastrop Chapter 2.4	None
Week 10 Oct 27 th – Nov 2 nd	Geopolitics	Graves Chapter 7	Discussion 2
Week 11 Nov 3 rd – 9 th	Urban Geography	Graves Chapter 11	Exercise 3
Week 12 Nov 10 th – 16 th	Sustainable Development	Dastrop Chapter 5	Final Project Step 2 Discussion 3
Week 13 Nov 17 th – 23 rd	FINAL PROJECTS	None	FINAL PROJECTS
Week 14 Nov 24 th - Dec 1 st	Thanksgiving Break	None	None
Week 15 & 16 Dec 2 nd -14 th	Final Exam <i>Available 12/04-12/07</i>	None	Final Exam

assignments are subject to change. Please check Canvas for up-to-date readings and assignments