

DISTANCE EDUCATION GGS 315: GEOGRAPHY OF THE UNITED STATES

Fall Semester 2015

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Faculty

Patricia Boudinot

Email

pboudino@gmu.edu : the best way to contact me as I check my emails several times a day

Virtual Office Hours

We can meet by appointment on Skype.

Also I encourage the students to come to my office at Exploratory Hall, Room 2201, during my office hours on Wednesday between 2pm and 4 pm

Honor Code

“Students members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal and/or lie in matters related to academic work.”

In this course, you are not to:

- Access sources/information during an on-line exam/quiz
- Give help or information/work to a friend/spouse/relative/classmate

[Read the Honor Code for a list of definitions and examples](#)

Content

During the four first weeks of the semester, the students will be exposed to a topical geography: the investigation or the analysis of the distribution of a single phenomenon, one at a time, in the Northern American Region.

Then the students will be exposed to a regional geography: defining and understanding the natural as well the human characteristics of regions chosen within the United States.

Course Prerequisites

There are no formal prerequisites. However, students should have a working knowledge of how to use the internet and computer workstations.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. locate and define the North American region and its sub-divisions
2. build geographic description skills by using an accurate description vocabulary
3. develop critical thinking skills through geographic discussions
4. understand, describe, and analyze the North American region and its sub-divisions through visits, scientific presentations, and reading academic literature
5. develop a project that demonstrates knowledge of the local geographic environment and technologies.

Online Learning Community

Working online requires dedication and organization. Students must check their GMU email messages on a **daily** basis and communicate any questions or problems that might arise promptly.

Netiquette

In our online learning community, we must be respectful of one another. Please be aware that innocent remarks can be easily misconstrued. Sarcasm and humor can be easily taken out of context. When communicating, please be positive and diplomatic. I encourage you to learn more about [Netiquette](#).

Recommended Textbook

The Geography of North America: Environment, Political Economy, and Culture, Hardwick, Susan W.; Shelley, Fred M.; Holtgrieve, Donald G., Published by Prentice Hall

The textbook is not required, it is recommended.

Performance-based assignments

All the deadlines are expressed in EST Eastern Standard Time.

There is no-late submission policy in this course so all the assignments will have to be submitted on time. Therefore, I expect all students to submit all the assignments: any missing assignment will be graded as zero.

All students will be evaluated by the tasks which appear below.

Course orientation quiz

The course orientation quiz which will be offered as soon as Week 0 and it is due no later than Thursday September 10, 2015 at 11:59 pm.

Please review the syllabus.

The course orientation quiz will last 15 minutes, will display eight questions: each question, worth .25 point, will be multiple choice or True/False.

Exercises

Five exercises are scheduled this semester.

Each exercise displays three questions: a map, a description and a critical thinking.

Discussions

Five discussions are scheduled this semester. Each discussion will be open on Blackboard on Wednesday at 6 a.m. and it will close the following Monday at 11:59 pm.

There are two mandatory steps to completing the Discussion

Step 1: submit your initial post .

Step 2: read your classmates' posts and reply to four of them .

Please note that your initial post and your four replies will be accurate and will range between 50 to 60 words. Please understand that I expect all the students to post and reply on TWO DIFFERENT DAYS.

Project

This is a group project due during Week 10 and no later than the end of Week10.

1. **Project Step 1:** Each group will be created by me and each group will be assigned to a project. Each student will be notified on the second Wednesday of the semester.

2. **Project Step 2:** Submit your Bibliography during Week 5.

3. **Project step 3:** Submit your rough draft during Week 8.

Please note that I expect the Steps 2 and 3 to be submitted on time. In case of the absence of a step submission at the due date, I will deduct three points to the final project grade.

The project will be a PowerPoint presentation, 10 slides, not including the title slide. Each slide should include visual images such as photographs, maps, and links to videos. Each slide will include the text written within the notes section.

Optional: You can record your presentation with narration using the free, online tool Screencast-o-matic.

Final Exam

The Final Exam is scheduled between Wednesday December 16 at 6 am and Thursday December 17 at 11:59 pm.

I expect all the students to take it: any missing Final Exam will be graded as zero.

The Final exam will display 60 questions, multiple choice and True/False, including four extra credit questions. Each question will be worth .5 point.

One month prior the final exam, I will post one announcement and I will send an email. This post/email will bring information regarding the items to review.

Grading Percentage

Course orientation quiz	2%
Final Exam	28%
Discussions	20%
Exercises	20%
Project	30%

Grade cutoffs will be as follows:

A 90% – 100%

B 80% - **89.99%**

C 69% - **79.99%**

D 60% - **68.99%**

F less than 60%

Technology requirements:**Hardware:**

You will need access to a Windows or Macintosh computer with at least 2 GB of RAM and to a fast and reliable broadband internet connection (e.g., cable, DSL). A larger screen is recommended for better visibility of course material. You will need speakers or headphones to hear recorded content and a headset with a microphone is recommended for the best experience. For the amount of Hard Disk Space required to take a distance education course consider and allow for: 1. the storage amount needed to install any additional software and 2. space to store work that you will do for the course. If you are considering the purchase of a new computer, please go to <http://itservices.gmu.edu/services/services-students.cfm> to see recommendations.

Software:

This course uses Blackboard as the learning management system.

You will need a browser and operating system that are listed compatible or certified with the Blackboard version available on the myMason Portal. See [supported browsers and operating systems](#).

Log in to [myMason](#) to access this course.

Access to a Computer Workstation with:

Web browser (See Blackboard [supported browsers and operating systems](#))

Adobe Acrobat Reader ([free download](#))

Flash Player ([free download](#))

Windows Media Player ([free download](#))

Microsoft Office Word ([purchase](#))

Note: If you are using an employer-provided computer or corporate office for class attendance, please verify with your systems administrators that you will be able to install the necessary applications and that system or corporate firewalls do not block access to any sites or media types.

Students Expectations:**Academic Integrity**

Students must be responsible for their own work, and students and faculty must take on the responsibility of dealing explicitly with violations. The tenet must be a foundation of our university culture. [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/distance>].

MasonLive/Email (GMU Email)

Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account. [See <https://thanatos.gmu.edu/masonlive/login>].

Patriot Pass

Once you sign up for your Patriot Pass, your passwords will be synchronized, and you will use your Patriot Pass username and password to log in to the following systems: Blackboard,

University Libraries, MasonLive, myMason, Patriot Web, Virtual Computing Lab, and WEMS. [See <https://thanatos.gmu.edu/passwordchange/index.jsp>].

Responsible Use of Computing

Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu>].

Students are expected to follow courteous Internet etiquette

Students Services:

University Libraries

University Libraries provides resources for distance students. [See <http://library.gmu.edu/distance>].

Writing Center

The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>]. You can now sign up for an Online Writing Lab (OWL) session just like you sign up for a face-to-face session in the Writing Center, which means YOU set the date and time of the appointment! Learn more about the [Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) (found under Online Tutoring).

Counseling and Psychological Services

The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu>].

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), also known as the "Buckley Amendment," is a federal law that gives protection to student educational records and provides students with certain rights. [See <http://registrar.gmu.edu/privacy>].

Important dates

Last day to drop class without tuition penalty: Tuesday September 8, 2015

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Schedule

Each week will open on a Tuesday morning at 6 am and will end on the following Monday at midnight.

Within every week:

All the readings, other than the recommended textbook readings, appearing in the Reading Assignments need to be READ.

All the short videos appearing in the Reading Assignments need to be WATCHED.

The video lectures need to be WATCHED.

The assignments need to be SUBMITTED ON TIME.

Students will check their mail box on a DAILY basis.

Weeks	Assessments	Activities	Lesson Objectives
Week 0 08/25	Course-orientation quiz Due no later than 09/10 at 11:59 pm	Read Course Welcome Watch the orientation video	Get familiar with the virtual education world
Week 1 09/01	Student Introduction	Textbook Reading Page 2 to Page 9 Other readings found in the reading assignments Videos: Geography of North America Different types of regions GIS Demo	Understand the area and the boundaries of North America
Week 2 09/08	Discussion 1 The post and the four replies are expected to be entered on two different days no later than 09/14 at 11:59 pm Get familiar with your project topic and Google Earth	Textbook Reading Page 44 to Page 48 Page 55 to Page 62 Other readings found in the reading assignments Videos: USA and Canada: location and immensity USA and Canada: the similarities USA and Canada: the lack of balance	Comparison: USA and Canada
Week 3 09/15	Exercise 1 Due no later than	Textbook Reading Page 17 to Page 25	Acquisition of physical geography vocabulary

	09/21 at 11:59 pm	<p>Other readings found in the reading assignments</p> <p>Videos; American landforms Physiographic Regions Natural advantages and natural disadvantages</p>	
Week 4 09/22	<p>Discussion 2 The post and the four replies are expected to be entered on two different days no later than 09/28 at 11:59 pm</p>	<p>Textbook Reading Page 26 to Page 35</p> <p>Other readings found in the reading assignments</p> <p>Videos: Weather/Climates Factors influencing the climates Paul Houser's interview: the drought</p>	Acquisition of climates essentials
Week 5 09/29	<p>Exercise 2 Due no later than 10/05 at 11:59 pm</p> <p>Final Project: submit the bibliography no later than 10/05 at 11:59 pm</p>	<p>Textbook Reading Page 351 to Page 362</p> <p>Other readings found in the reading assignments</p> <p>Videos: American Census American Population pyramid American Population diversity</p>	Acquisition of Population essentials
Week 6 10/06	<p>Discussion 3 The post and the four replies are expected to be entered on two different days no later than 10/12 at 11:59 pm</p>	<p>Textbook Reading Page 128 to Page 141</p> <p>Other readings found in the reading assignments</p> <p>Videos: Megalopolis: location, site and situation Megalopolis: an urbanized region</p>	Acquisition of urban trends
Week7 10/13	<p>Exercise 3 Due no later than 10/19 at 11:59 pm</p>	<p>Textbook reading Page 188 to Page 199</p>	Acquisition of a natural hazard

		<p>Other readings found in the reading assignments</p> <p>Videos: Coastal South Hurricane, a natural hazard</p>	
<p>Week 8 10/20</p>	<p>Discussion 4 The post and the four replies are expected to be entered on two different days no later than 10/26 at 11:59 pm</p> <p>Final Project: submit the rough draft no later than 10/26 at 11:59 pm</p>	<p>Textbook reading Page 204 to Page 220</p> <p>Other readings found in the reading assignments</p> <p>Videos: Great Plains Great Plains's challenges</p>	Acquisition of an example of biogeography
<p>Week 9 10/27</p>	<p>Exercise 4 Due no later than 11/02 at 11:59 pm</p>	<p>Textbook reading Page 228 to Page 240</p> <p>Other readings found in the reading assignments</p> <p>Videos: Rocky Mountains; a geological mystery Rocky Mountains: their natural beauties Rocky Mountains: a settlement force</p>	Acquisition of subduction and landforms carved by glaciers
<p>Week 10 11/03</p>	<p>Submit your project no later than 11/09 at 11:59 pm</p>	None	None
<p>Week 11 11/10</p>	<p>Discussion 5 The post and the four replies are expected to be entered on two different days no later than 11/16 at 11:59 pm</p>	<p>Textbook reading Page 282 to Page 296</p> <p>Other readings found in the reading assignments</p> <p>Videos: California: a natural disaster</p>	Acquisition of water management system and transform faults

		California: a famous climate San Francisco	
Week 12 11/17	Exercise 5 Due no later than 11/23 at 11:59 pm	Textbook reading Page 303 to Page 315 Other readings found in the reading assignments Videos; Pacific Northwest: an identity of its own Pacific Northwest's physical features Pacific Northwest's salmon	Acquisition of explosive volcanoes and Cascadia
Week 13 11/24	None	None	Happy Thanksgiving
Week 14 12/01	None	Textbook reading Page 323 to Page 332 Other readings found in the reading assignments Videos Hawai'i: the American newest state Hawai'i: a volcanic archipelago	Acquisition of effusive volcanoes and tourism
Week 15 12/08	None	Textbook reading Page 110 to Page 121 Other readings found in the reading assignments No video	Acquisition of official language
Week 16 12/15	None	None	Final Exam due between Wednesday December 16 at 6 am and not later than Thursday December 17 at 11:59 pm

The 50 American States



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