

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Department of Geography & Geoinformation Science
Fall Semester 2018

MAJOR WORLD REGIONS
GGS 101 – 001
Course Syllabus

Instructor: Ian S. Ward
Office: Exploratory Hall, Rm 2222
*** Mailbox:** Exploratory Hall, Suite 2400 (MS 6C3)
Office Hours: T & TR, 9:00 – 10:00am, or by appointment

Class Location: Music / Theater
Building 1005
Meeting Time: 12pm-1:15pm TR
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.

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

Text: 1) de Blij and Muller, *Geography: Realms, Regions, and Concepts, 16th edition*, John Wiley & Sons.
2) *National Geographic Concise Atlas of the World. 4th edition.*

Student Requirements:

To successfully complete this course, students must complete all assigned readings and exercises as well as attend class; neither the textbook nor lecture notes alone will suffice. 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.

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) **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 making it to one of the regular semester exams, you may choose that exam as the one you drop.
- 3) **THE FINAL EXAM WILL NOT BE ADMINISTERED EARLY OR LATER;** please plan ahead.
- 4) Exams begin and end as indicated in the class schedule: No additional time for late arrivals.
- 5) **Exams will NOT be issued to those individuals arriving after the first person in the classroom has finished their test and has left the room. NO EXCEPTIONS.**
- 6) Examinations will be multiple choice using SCANTRON® format. That means on test day, students will be expected to come to class with a #2 pencil and a SCANTRON® answer sheet (available in our campus bookstore). Note: Please purchase only the green and white SCANTRON® forms (as opposed to the red and white forms).
- 7) No books or notes or electronic devices of any kind may be used during any examination in this class. **All electronic devices, including all phones, must be turned OFF at all times.**
- 8) Hats with bills or rims cannot be worn during examinations.
- 9) Once your tests and projects 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.

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.

Classroom Expectations:

- 1) **NO LAPTOPS or TABLETS or PHONES** are to be used by students during lecture.
- 2) **CELL PHONES** must be **SILENCED** before class begins.
- 3) **NO TEXTING**, which is obvious given expectation #1. I want your full and undivided attention. This also means that if you need to sleep, stay at home.
- 4) **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 aisle seat that is available and do not walk across the room.
- 5) **CHIT-CHAT IS UNACCEPTABLE** during lecture. If you have a question, raise your hand and let me know.
- 6) **KEEP THE ROOM CLEAN.** If you pack it in, pack it out; leave your seat better than you found it.

Note Taking:

- Lectures will be accompanied by the use of electronic slides, maps, and photographs. While lecture slides are generally not posted on Blackboard, selected slides and slide-sets will periodically be posted online as pdf files. Students wishing further explanation of the class material, or would like to review all class slides, are encouraged to come by during office hours. Office hours are built into classes to help you. Please take advantage of them.
- If at any point during the lecture 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. You will provide all answers on

SCANTRON® forms for both exercises, which will then be submitted in class. You must use the *National Geographic Concise Atlas of the World, 4th edition* to complete the exercises.

Late Policy on Map Exercises:

A maximum of a one week extension with a minimum of a two letter-grade deduction beginning at the start of class the day it is due. To receive the highest credit possible, assignments must be turned-in on-time (at the beginning of class the day it is due). 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.

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 (mandatory)	→	25%	=	250 points		
1 st Map Exercise	→	12%	=	120 points		
2 nd Map Exercise	→	13%	=	<u>130 points</u>		
			=	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:

1st Map Exercise:

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

2nd 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:

8 / 28 Class begins	11 / 22 Thanksgiving (<i>No Class Thursday</i>)
9 / 4 Last day to drop with no tuition liability;	12 / 6 Last day of class
Last day to add course - must be enrolled for a grade!	12 / 13 FINAL EXAM 10:30AM – 1:15PM
10 / 9 Columbus Day recess (<i>No Class Tuesday</i>)	

Tentative Class Schedule

(as of 28 August 2018)

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
1	8 / 28	Introduction / Why study Geography?	Introduction
	8 / 30	Weather & Climate	Introduction
2	9 / 4	Weather & Climate / History of Cartography	Introduction
	9 / 6	Cartography / GIS / Remote Sensing	Introduction
3	9 / 11	Introduction to Europe	Chapter 1
	9 / 13	Europe	Chapter 1
4	9 / 18	Europe	Chapter 1
	9 / 20	Europe	Chapter 1
5	9 / 25	Europe	Chapter 1
	9 / 27	Subsaharan Africa	Chapter 6
6	10 / 2	EXAM I	STUDY!
	10 / 4	Subsaharan Africa	Chapter 6
7	10 / 9	NO CLASS	Chapters 6 / 7
	10 / 11	North Africa	Chapter 7
8	10 / 16	North Africa / Southwest Asia	Chapter 7
	10 / 18	SW Asia	1st Map Exercise Due Chapter 7
9	10 / 23	Southwest Asia / North America	Chapter 3
	10 / 25	North America	Chapter 3

Tentative Class Schedule

(as of 28 August 2018)

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
10	10 / 30	North America	Chapter 3
	11 / 1	North America / Middle America	Chapter 3 / 4
11	11 / 6	EXAM II	STUDY!
	11 / 8	Middle America	Chapter 4
12	11 / 13	Middle America	Chapter 4
	11 / 15	Middle & South America	Chapter 5
13	11 / 20	South America 2nd Map Exercise Due	Chapter 5
	11 / 22	NO CLASS	Chapter 5
14	11 / 27	South America	Chapter 5
	11 / 29	South America	Handout
15	12 / 4	EXAM III	STUDY!
	12 / 6	Australia / NZ / Pacific Realm	Chapter 11 / 12
16	12 / 11	NO CLASS	STUDY!
	12 / 13	FINAL EXAM	Exam Time: (10:30am to 1:15pm)

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this a hard class?

Like any class, this all depends on how much effort you put into it. It's not designed to be difficult, but it can easily become so if you skip on class attendance, assigned readings, and time for studying your notes. Please see me as soon as possible if you think you are having trouble with understanding any of the material in the class.

I have never taken a geography course in my life. Will I be at a disadvantage?

Not necessarily, though any previous exposure to geography can only help. This is meant to be an introductory course, though those who are new to geography may need to spend a little more time studying throughout the semester. I am committed to working closely with each of you to get you up to speed, no matter your prior level of knowledge.

Why does the class not cover East and South Asia?

Because of the time constraints of the semester, this particular section of World Regional Geography will be concentrating on Europe, Africa, Southwest Asia, the Americas, and the Australia / Pacific realm. Other sections of the course being taught at GMU will cover East and South Asia, but may not cover some of the areas addressed in this section.

I have a disability and need extra assistance. What do I need to do?

If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance, you should (1) make sure this documentation is on file with Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; <http://ds.gmu.edu>) to determine the testing accommodations you need; and (2) talk with me to discuss how we can coordinate on this. In addition, you may also find that coming to my office hours will help, especially with going over lecture material together.

Why can't I use my laptop, tablet, or phone in class?

For the way this class is structured, I have found that these electronic devices are a major distraction, not only for those around the students using them, but for the users themselves who are often tempted to explore that wonderful universe known as the World Wide Web... where Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc... seem to be popular watering holes. Sketching maps and diagrams, something that you'll frequently be doing in class, is often impossible to do on these computers. However, having a paper notebook and a pen in front of you is all you'll need to take good notes. I'm aware that it sometimes takes longer to write notes than to type them, and I make time accommodations for this during my lectures.

Do I need to bring my book to every class?

No, I don't expect this. However, some students find it useful to do so because it allows them to use the maps and illustrations in the book during the lectures. If you find that you're having trouble understanding where these different geographic regions are, bringing the highly illustrated book to class might be something you'll want to consider.

Do you offer Extra Credit?

Generally speaking, no. However, the exception is that there will often be 2 or 3 extra credit questions at the end of each exam related to the areas of the world that are covered in those particular exams.

Why can I not use my Yahoo account to contact you with questions?

Students MUST use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. I will not respond to messages sent from... or send messages to... a non-Mason email address. I have specifically been instructed by the University administration to abide by this to preserve student privacy.

How do we know if class is cancelled?

In the event that class is cancelled I will try to let you know as far in advance as possible. I will do this as an in-class announcement (time permitting), and (or) via Blackboard.

What if I am sick and miss an exam?

There are no make-up exams allowed in the class. However, each student is allowed to drop one regular semester exam during the course. Either take all three semester exams and we'll drop the lowest grade (highly recommended), or, if a situation arises, skip one of the exams. Keep in mind that unlike the 3 regular semester exams, the Final Exam is mandatory.

I'm starting my vacation early this year and will not be around for the Final Exam. Can I make it up?

Unfortunately, we cannot accommodate this. The Final Exam date is listed in the syllabus and is fixed by the university, so please plan accordingly. Students may consider joining another section of the class early in the semester that may have a Final Exam date that is more conducive to your travel plans.

What if I need to leave early in the middle of class?

I understand that sometimes people have prior engagements. I simply ask that students let me know before class that they'll be leaving before class ends.

Do you curve grades?

No. The average grade in the class typically ranges from a low to middle "B".

When mid-semester grades are posted, we will have taken only one exam. However, the syllabus says that we can drop one exam in our final course evaluation. How then is our mid-semester grade handled?

While it is true that one regular semester exam is dropped in your final evaluation, the grade from the first exam must be used in the calculation of your mid-semester grade. NOTE: The mid-semester grade does NOT go on your permanent record... rather it is used as a benchmark to give students an idea of where they stand academically halfway through the semester. Because of the way this particular class is structured, mid-semester grades (required by the University) can be a bit misleading. A student who fails the first exam, (perhaps by simply choosing not to take the exam), but who goes on to do well on everything else, could very well end up earning an "A" for their final grade. This is despite their mid-semester grade equating to an "F". With that said, mid-semester grades often serve as a wake-up call to some and suggest that changes in study habits are necessary. Please see me if you have additional questions or concerns regarding mid-semester grades.

Some professors get upset at texting in class. What is your policy?

Yes, I do get upset. Please do not text during class. **I want your undivided attention the same way I would have it if we were meeting one-on-one.**

I see that you require the 16th edition of the textbook. Can I get by with the 15th edition?

Yes, but it might be slightly more difficult for you to follow the class. Page numbers that I mention in class will be different, as will some of the material that I cite in my lectures. Clearly, the information in the older edition will not be the most current available, and some of the topics I cover may not be addressed in the book. With that said, an early edition may be the most economically viable option for you. If you do go this route, keep in mind that I always have a copy of the 16th edition in my office, so you are always welcome to stop by and look at it during office hours if you want to compare information or read through sections you may not have.

I already have an atlas at home. Do I really need the exact one specified in the syllabus to complete the map exercises?

Yes. There are a number of questions in the exercises that require analysis of thematic information that is uniquely displayed in this book.

I would like to meet with you during your office hours, but I have a class during that time. Is there an alternate time that I can meet with you?

Yes, but there's a catch. I have a full-time position off campus, and I generally leave for my other job immediately after finishing my last class (this semester it's 1:30pm on Tues/Thurs). However, I can sometimes schedule some extra time to meet with you if I coordinate with my team at work. Please let me know ahead of time so I can see if this is possible and proceed with making the necessary arrangements.

Ian S. Ward



Originally from Honolulu, Hawaii, Ian Ward is a geographer serving as an adjunct professor at George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, and a full-time independent consultant and regional analyst for the U.S. Government. He holds a B.A. in Geography and M.S. in Geographic & Cartographic Sciences from GMU. Having always had a strong interest in ornithology and ichthyology, his initial academic interest was in the field of biogeography. His undergraduate research produced the very first intensive population and mapping study of bald eagle populations at Mason Neck State Park, VA, an effort that won praise from the Fish & Wildlife Service and professional recognition from the Association of American Geographers. After a short stint as a GIS analyst for the Latin America Science Division of The Nature Conservancy, Ian went back to school to earn his master's degree, working as both a research and teaching assistant during this time, and was awarded a graduate fellowship for outstanding academic achievement. He served as president of the *Eta Omicron* chapter of *Gamma Theta Upsilon*, the International Geographic Honor Society, and remains active in the organization today. After graduating, he was invited to continue teaching and joined the faculty of the Department of Geography & Geoinformation Science at Mason in 1998. He currently teaches courses on physical geography, world regional geography, the geography of Latin America, and is a regular guest lecturer at GMU's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. In 2013, he became a member of the faculty at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, where he also teaches courses on Latin America, North Africa, and the Middle East. The following year he accepted an invitation to become an affiliate faculty member with GMU's Latin American Studies Program (LAS). In April 2015, Mr. Ward was presented with a *GMU Teaching Excellence Award* in recognition of his work with course planning and preparation, curriculum development, fostering innovative teaching methods, advising, and undergraduate and graduate mentoring.

In 1994, Ian ventured abroad for the first time taking a trip to Buenos Aires, Argentina, an experience that was to have a profound impact on him and that would inspire his professional work for the next two decades. This initial trip led to many more treks, primarily to South America and Europe, and his professional focus increasingly began to shift to regional analysis. In subsequent years, he has made approximately 25 trips overseas, from hiking the Patagonian Andes, to exploring the heart of the Amazonian Rainforest. He truly believes that there is no better way to enhance one's university experience than to travel abroad... a philosophy that he stresses and promotes in each of the classes he teaches.

Ian enjoys many hobbies including SCUBA, fishing, aquariums, cycling, sports cars, photography, travel, music, and tango dancing. However, it is his passion for aviation and aviation history that are among his most favorite. Ian is a former volunteer in the Aeronautics Department at the National Air & Space Museum and lifetime member of the Experimental Aircraft Association, and he can regularly be found at aviation events throughout the country during the year. Though owning his own real airplane is not possible right now, he does maintain a collection of over 2,000 model airplanes.