

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Department of Geography & Geoinformation Science
Spring Semester 2021

MAJOR WORLD REGIONS GGS 101 – 001 Course Syllabus

Instructor: Ian S. Ward
Office: Exploratory Hall, Room 2222
Office Hours: By appointment only:
conducted online via Blackboard Collaborate

Class Location: Exploratory Hall, 2103
Meeting Time: 4:30-7:10pm Mondays

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**.

Safe Return to Campus:

All students taking this course are required to take Safe Return to Campus Training prior to visiting campus. Training is available in Blackboard (<https://mymason.gmu.edu>). Students are required to follow the university's public health and safety precautions and procedures outlined on the university Safe Return to Campus webpage (www2.gmu.edu/safe-return-plan). Similarly, all students in face to face and hybrid courses must also complete the Mason COVID Health Check daily, seven days a week. The COVID Health Check system uses a color code system and students will receive either a Green, Yellow, or Red email response. Only students who receive a "green" notification are permitted to attend courses with a face-to-face component. If you suspect that you are sick or have been directed to self-isolate, please quarantine or get testing. Faculty are allowed to ask you to show them that you have received a Green email and are thereby permitted to be in class.

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 classes on campus and online; 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.

Basic Course Technology Requirements:

Activities and assignments in this course 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 10.13 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.*) Exams and map exercises will be delivered to you 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 are scheduled to be conducted in-class and in-person using Blackboard.** A link to the exam will be provided in the menu options on the class homepage on the day of the exam.
- 3) **Students will be using the computers in the classroom for exams.** Please log-on to a classroom computer in the first few weeks of the semester to check your ability to connect to Blackboard.
- 4) Students will have 1 hour 15 minutes to complete each exam.
- 5) **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, you may choose that exam as the one you drop.
- 6) **THE FINAL EXAM WILL NOT BE ADMINISTERED EARLY OR LATER;** please plan ahead.
- 7) **Start times for those students arriving late will not be adjusted.** Please try to come to class a bit early on exam day to ensure that you have the maximum amount of time to complete the exam.
- 8) No books or notes of any kind (hardcopy or electronic) may be used during any examination in this class. **Cell phones / laptops / tablets must be turned OFF at all times.**
- 9) Hats with bills or rims that obstruct your eyes cannot be worn during in-class examinations.
- 10) Test and project grades can easily be found on Blackboard. Please schedule to meet with me during office hours if you would like to discuss any of the material that was covered on the 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) MASKS must be worn at all times, covering both nose and mouth.
- 2) SOCIAL DISTANCING must be observed at all times.
- 3) ENTERING AND LEAVING THE ROOM: The first students entering the room must begin seating from the back of the room to the front. No exceptions. Leaving the room after lecture must be done as if exiting an airliner, with the front row leaving first, followed by the second row, ...and so on.
- 4) LAPTOPS may be used by students for note taking during lectures, but NOT for completing in-class exams. Please note that a student may be asked by the instructor to close their computer if it is

deemed a distraction in the classroom or an impediment to course learning (ie: watching YouTube, shopping, distracting other students, working on other assignments, etc...).

- 5) CELL PHONES must be SILENCED and put away before class begins.
- 6) NO TEXTING, which is obvious given expectation #5. I want your full and undivided attention. This also means that if you need to sleep, stay at home.
- 7) BE ON TIME - Students are expected to be on time for class on Tuesdays. Should circumstances arise that make you late, do not disrupt the class as you enter; take the first seat available at the front of the room. Make sure to maintain social distancing.
- 8) NO CHIT-CHAT during lecture. If you have a question or comment, please raise your hand.
- 9) KEEP THE ROOM CLEAN. If you pack it in, pack it out; leave your seat better than you found it.
- 10) 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 do not discard the question. Send me an email, or share it with me during an office hour meeting.

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. Many of the slides will be made available on Blackboard for students to print by Monday afternoon. These PDF documents will include room for students to take some notes. However, please keep in mind that not every slide will be included in these sets. Students having concerns or questions about the class material are encouraged to set up an online appointment with me during office hours. Online instruction will either be live on BB Collaborate or through recorded lectures, which will be made available on Blackboard. Note taking is highly encouraged during these instructional videos or when 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 three 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. You must use the ***National Geographic Concise Atlas of the World, 4th 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 and Student Privacy :

All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course site are private to this class; 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.

- Videorecordings — 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 copyrighted and not to be shared publicly online; they are the property of the instructor.

Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

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>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

Possibility of Campus Closure:

If the campus closes or class is canceled due to weather, 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 events or assignments.

Grading Scheme and Policy:

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

Exam I (in-class)	—————>	25%	=	250 points	} (only the 2 best scores counted)
Exam II (in-class)	—————>	25%	=	250 points	
Exam III (in-class)	—————>	25%	=	250 points	
Final Exam (in-class)	—————>	25%	=	250 points	} (mandatory)
1 st Map Exercise (home)	—————>	12%	=	120 points	
2 nd 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:

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:

1 / 25	Class begins
2 / 1	Last day to add course - must be enrolled for a grade!
2 / 12	Last day to drop course with 100% tuition refund
2 / 16	Last day to drop course with 50% tuition refund
2 / 17 – 3 / 1	Unrestricted Withdrawal Period
3 / 1	EXAM 1 (to be taken in class using Blackboard)
3 / 15	MAP EXERCISE 1 due (submit using Blackboard)
3 / 29	EXAM 2 (to be taken in class using Blackboard)
4 / 19	MAP EXERCISE 2 due (submit using Blackboard)
4 / 26	EXAM 3 (to be taken in class using Blackboard)
4 / 26	Last day of class
5 / 3	FINAL EXAM (to be taken in class using Blackboard)

Lectures and Class Schedule:

In-class Lectures – These are scheduled to occur each Monday afternoon beginning at 4:30pm. Though the official class period runs to 7:10pm, lectures will frequently—but not always—end by 6pm. On these occasions, 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 likely will be two or three weeks where in-class instruction will be replaced completely by recorded lectures. These occasions will be announced a week in advance.

Live Virtual Online Lectures – Though none are scheduled for the semester, these may be necessary from time-to-time due to inclement weather or other 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 supplement the in-class lectures and will be posted on Blackboard under “NOTES AND RECORDED LECTURES (Supplemental Class Material)”. Students are required to watch these lectures and take notes on them at a time of their convenience (preferably well within the week that they have been assigned and posted).

Tentative Class Schedule

(as of 25 January 2021)

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
1	1 / 25	Introduction Course Design / Why we study Geography? Meteorology & Climatology	Introduction
2	2 / 1	Meteorology & Climatology History of Cartography	Introduction
3	2 / 8	History of Cartography Map Design / Remote Sensing / GIS Introduction to Europe	Chapter 1
4	2 / 15	Europe	Chapter 1
5	2 / 22	Europe	Chapter 1
6	3 / 1	EXAM I	Chapter 6
		Subsaharan Africa (Lecture 2 nd half)	
7	3 / 8	North Africa Southwest Asia	Chapters 6 / 7
8	3 / 15	1st Map Exercise (Due beginning of class)	Chapters 7
		Southwest Asia	
9	3 / 22	North America	Chapter 3

Tentative Class Schedule

(as of 25 January 2021)

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
10	3 / 29	North America (Lecture 1- half)	Chapter 3
		EXAM II	
11	4 / 5	Middle America	Chapter 4
12	4 / 12	Middle & South America	Chapters 4 / 5
13	4 / 19	2nd Map Exercise (Due beginning of class)	Chapters 5
		South America	
14	4 / 26	EXAM III	Chapter 11 Chapter 12
		Aust. / NZ / Pacific (Lecture 2- half)	
15	5 / 3	FINAL EXAM	STUDY! Exam Time: (4:30pm to 7:10pm)

