

# GGS 340: HEALTH GEOGRAPHY

## COURSE SYLLABUS, SPRING 2022, 3 CREDITS

### INSTRUCTOR

Name: Dr. Timothy Leslie  
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### COURSE BASICS

Meeting times: Tuesday, 5:55 - 7:10pm  
Location: 2103 Exploratory Hall  
Modality: 50% In Person,  
50% Asynchronous Online  
Course URL: [mymasonportal.gmu.edu](http://mymasonportal.gmu.edu)

**SUGGESTED TEXT** No required textbook. Readings will be available electronically

**PRE-REQUISITES** None. Students will find an understanding of introductory human geography concepts is beneficial.

### OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

This course surveys health geography, a subdiscipline of geography which encompasses a broad range of topics regarding human and environmental health. At its core, health geography is the study of human-environment interactions and the influence of these interactions on population health – i.e., how people interact with their physical and social environment to promote health and wellbeing or to increase their vulnerability to disease and/or illness. The approach taken in this course will focus on examining health-related issues (e.g., disease, illness, health care access, nutrition) from the perspective of populations. Major health issues and health care systems will be evaluated and discussed. The course covers three major integrated approaches to health geographic research: ecological (relationships between people and their environment), social (human behavior), and spatial (mapping and spatial analysis).

### GRADING SCHEMA

Assessment	Weight
Asynchronous Modules	50%
In-Class Elements	25%
Final Exam	25%

Exams will be a mix of multiple choice, true/false, fill in the blank, and free response. I **do not** provide review sheets for exams.

## GGG COMPUTER LAB ASSISTANCE

All students in GGS courses should receive “swipe” access (using your Student ID) to the GGS Student Computer Lab (Room 2102, Exploratory Hall) upon the start of the semester. If you are having problems with door access, please e-mail the GGS department ([ggs@gmu.edu](mailto:ggs@gmu.edu)) with SWIPE ACCESS in the subject line of your email.

If you experience problems with the computers (e.g., software or hardware issues) in the GGS Student Computer Lab, please email College of Science IT ([cosit@gmu.edu](mailto:cosit@gmu.edu)) for technical assistance.

## OUTLINE & SCHEDULE (subject to change)

WEEKS	IN-CLASS	NOTES
Week 1, Jan 25	Course Overview, Disease Selection	
Week 2, Feb 1	Modules Discussion	
Week 3, Feb 8	Optional Class	
Week 4, Feb 15	Discussion 1	Discussion 1 Reflection Due Before Class
Week 5, Feb 22	Optional Class	
Week 6, Mar 1	Discussion 2	Discussion 2 Reflection Due Before Class
Week 7, Mar 8	Module Discussion	
Mar 15	No Class: Spring Break	
Week 8, Mar 22	Optional Class	
Week 9, Mar 29	Discussion 3	Discussion 3 Reflection Due Before Class
Week 10, Apr 5	Modules Discussion	
Week 11, Apr 12	Optional Class	
Week 12, Apr 19	Discussion 4	Discussion 4 Reflection Due Before Class
Week 13, Apr 26	Exam and Module Discussion	
Week 14, May 3	<b>Exam</b>	
Final Exam Period, May 17	No Class	

## STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

When part of this course, you are expected to be respectful of your peers and your instructor in both words and actions. This has several components:

- Come to class. There is a strong positive correlation between the percentage of classes a student has attended in the course and the student's final grade for the semester. Please come to class on time - coming late to class disturbs class activities and our learning process.
- Be present while in class, with both the material and your classmates. You are expected to focus on class and refrain from activities that are unrelated to the class during course time, regardless of the screens present. Cell phones and other communicative devices are not generally part of the pedagogical elements of this course. There is a firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions.
- Manage your time proactively. Keeping track of course deadlines and the upcoming assignments leads to substantially increased submission quality, and reduced student anxiety. Some labs and assignments can take more time than they might you might initially expect.

## READING REFLECTIONS

I am a proponent of writing to develop critical thinking skills. Writing facilitates learning and helps sharpen and crystallize fuzzy thinking. In a sense, we do not know what we think exactly until someone tells us to express it in writing; what you have to say and how you say it are inextricable. Making sense of the “quantum haze” whirling around in our head via clear, expressive writing is a lifelong challenge, and is a challenge that, like any art or craft, takes practice. For each day of in-class discussion, students will write a brief essay (about 500 words) expressing your reaction to the readings. You should seek interesting ways to express ideas through word choices, analogies and metaphors, phrasing, and varying sentence structure.

I provide a potential prompt for you to respond to, but you are free to write in other ways that you connect to the readings. In some instances, a personal observation, experience, activity, or event may stimulate a response to the readings. Feel free to draw upon your outside experiences in crafting these reaction essays, as making connections in this way can be illuminating.

When crafting essays keep in mind the nexus of the readings, the course content, and the current cultural zeitgeist. Producing finely polished products regularly is not the chief objective. The primary purpose is to have you express *your* thoughts and ideas vis-à-vis the reading. I am looking for agility, flexibility, and creativity in expression, but also a clear tie to the readings presented. Reflections are not to be a set of containerized responses to each assigned reading with little relation to each other, but a cohesive presentation that follows a common theme. You are expected to bring the readings together and not treat them as a set of bullet points that are progressively fleshed out.

## TECHNICAL EXPECTATIONS

Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use the Blackboard learning system. Students are required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system and a stable broadband Internet connection.

Elements of the course may also incorporate web-conferencing software such as Blackboard Collaborate and Zoom. For these sessions, students are required to have a device with a functional camera and microphone for usage when they are speaking. At other times, I do not require cameras to be turned on but do appreciate it.

The ability to manage files without assistance is an underlying requirement for completing the course activities.

- You will likely want some form of portable (or easily accessible) electronic storage. Some of the files can become very large and numerous. I strongly suggest using a cloud service such as [OneDrive](#) (provided by Mason) or [Dropbox](#). Saving your work to a Mason machine or virtual machine is NOT reliable.
- Organizing your digital space is crucial to reliable progress and submission. I encourage developing a subfolder and naming convention that relies on something consistent such as dates or revision number (e.g. avoid “project-draft-TL-15\_submitted\_final\_final”, I recommend something along the lines of “ProjectText\_Jan3”). Please save frequently while working on any assignments and keep separate backups.

Students seeking to use ESRI proprietary software off-campus and/or on non-Windows machines are directed to the [Citrix Virtual Lab](#), for which instructions are provided on the course website. Adobe products are limited to on-campus usage. Software keys for self-installation are not provided for any software.

When posting in an electronic space, where it is in the classroom chat or course discussion board, be cognizant of your grammar, spelling, diction, and tone. The same rules established for face-to-face discussions apply in these electronic spaces. Emoji or acronyms and abbreviations have no place in a classroom context.

I do not serve as technical support. For elements of the course website not related to unlocking or viewing course content, please contact [Mason ITS](#).

Students must use their Mason email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class.

Please copy Dr. Leslie on any e-mail correspondence to outside parties if it is related to this course.

## GRADING STRUCTURE AND POLICIES

Each student in a course will be afforded the same opportunities, held to the same requirements, and evaluated according to the same criteria, except as required by university policies on the accommodation of students with disabilities, or in the case of graduate and undergraduate students enrolled in the same course. The expected system is the following:

	A	A-	B	B-	C	D
Undergraduates	100 - 92	91.9 - 87	86.9 - 82	81.9 – 77	76.9 - 71	70.9 - 65
Graduates	100 - 93	92.9 - 87	86.9 - 81		80.9 - 71	

If you are not satisfied with your progress during the semester, please see me as early as possible; do not wait until the end of the semester to address these concerns.

Students who do not complete the course project through to its final step are ineligible for grades above B

## EXTRA CREDIT

In general, there are no offers for extra credit opportunities in this class, and requests are not entertained. Extra credit is extra work, and students who are having difficulty completing the required coursework seldom have the time to complete additional assignments. If extra credit opportunities do arise throughout the course of the semester, they will be announced and provided equitably to the entire class.

## SUBMISSIONS

All submissions will be done through Blackboard.

- For assignments with multiple submissions in Blackboard, only the grade of the most recent submission will be graded / counted.
- Assignments due on a University closure or delay date are still due on that day unless otherwise specified.
- Do not simultaneously email your submission to the instructor. This will result in a grade of zero on the submission in blackboard.
- Unless otherwise specified, you have **one** attempt to take any quiz or exam. No tests will be handed out after the first person to finish has turned in their exam.
- Unless otherwise requested, assignments should be submitted as PDF, with in-line text and tables (not screenshots).
- No links to documents stored on services such as Google Drive will be accepted, only the actual file will be graded.
- Students have 7 days after an assignment is graded to ask for reviews on the grade. All requests for grade considerations must be done via email.
- Drafts are not given feedback or graded unless students come to office hours with specific questions regarding written drafts.
- Students are responsible for ensuring that their submitted files are readable. You can view or download your files after uploading to confirm they are readable. Any corrupted file is treated as a non-submission.
- If you are interested in more detailed feedback on graded material, please follow up via email or scheduling a meeting with the instructor.
- Students can expect to have grades on submitted material within 4 business days of submission. Please wait to contact the instructor for at least that long.

## LATE WORK

Due dates are listed for all course elements. As a general policy, late work is penalized, and in some cases not permitted. Missing assignments are scored with a zero.

- The standard late work penalty is a 5% deduction for submissions between 6 and 48 hours of the due date, and 15% after 48 hours of the due date. These deductions are based on the total points possible for the relevant submission.
- There are posted end-of-semester cutoffs for all submissions to be graded, late or otherwise.
- If a student will miss classes due to a religious observance or participation in a University activity, they are obligated to notify the instructor within the first two weeks of the semester ([University Policy AP.1.6.1](#)). In such cases, a reasonable alternative opportunity will be provided.
- Valid documentation that could justify full credit for late submissions could include a conference program that includes your presentation, military obligations, or conflicts with university-sanctioned activities documented by an appropriate university official.
- Bad things can happen at the last minute, and I encourage you to avoid planning for submissions right before deadlines. While students will not be responsible for (documented) campus or blackboard problems that disallow submission, there are no accommodations for personal power outages, software glitches, or hardware malfunctions.

## SPECIFICATIONS GRADING

Most submissions are graded in the context of mastery of the outcomes for that assignment, with an emphasis on the fully mastering the relevant content. This pedagogical approach results in grades of “demonstrates mastery”, “minimally meets requirements”, and “insufficient” for many submissions. The numeric assignments associated with categories other than “demonstrates mastery” are substantial penalties with the intent that the student will revise and resubmit.

Aside from late penalties, students can resubmit as many times as necessary to meet the relevant learning objective without penalty.

Students who have not achieved mastery on a third submission must meet with the instructor before future grades are considered.

Some course content is gated until a student demonstrates mastery in an earlier portion of the course.

## NAME PREFERENCE

The University enables students and employees to use a chosen first name and indicate their pronouns where possible, except when use of a legal name is required by University policy or state/federal law. I use male pronouns (he/him), and my last name is pronounced LESS-LEE. My preference is that you address me as “Professor,” “Professor Leslie” or “Dr. Leslie.” If there is a specific way that you would like me to address you—including certain pronouns—I encourage you to let me know as well as to update your Mason file in Patriotweb. The Mason Code of Student Conduct expects that students will use the preferred name of their classmates and instructor.

## INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY

The best way to get ahold of me is by scheduling an appointment or sending me an email.

1) Scheduling an appointment is managed through Navigate ([navigate.gmu.edu](https://navigate.gmu.edu)).

- To schedule an appointment, first login. On the home page, click “Get Assistance”. On the following page choose “Academic Advising” for the type of appointment, “Faculty office hours” for the meeting type, and “Geography Course Office Hours” for the Major/Program/Service. In the third page, choose “Department of Geography & Geoinformation Science” as your location, and then type my last name (it should pop up after a few letters) in the Staff member box. The next page lets you pick a time slot, and the final page confirms the appointment. If you are having trouble seeing my availability, please check that you are in the proper semester in the drop-down box in the upper right corner of the screen. If these time slots do not align with your availability, please email me with at least three possible meeting times and we will find a mutually convenient alternative.
- An online walkthrough for this process is also available on the course website.

2) My email is listed at the top of this syllabus. **I am usually quick to respond to student e-mails, within reason.** Students who e-mail me Monday - Thursday can ordinarily expect a response within 24 hours, often sooner. Students who e-mail after 5 PM on Thursday or over the weekend can ordinarily expect a response by noon on the following Monday. As email accessibility can be variable during the day, questions regarding course elements due the same day should be sent with tempered expectations.

Student e-mails tend to do several things that try my patience. Starting in 2022, my policy is that I will not respond to certain e-mails students send. These include emails surrounding:

1. The student could answer his/her own inquiry by reading the syllabus, watching the relevant videos, or reading the instructions fully. I have endeavored to provide useful content – if there are missing elements, please let me know and a solution will be implemented.
2. The student missed class. I do not need to know the exact reason for a missed class. An e-mail is unnecessary unless the impromptu absence involves missing an exam.
3. The student wants to know what topics were missed during a class that was missed. The answer is always “you missed what was on the syllabus.”
4. The student is protesting a grade without reference to specific points of objection. These e-mails tend to be expressive utility on the part of the student and do not require a response from me. Students interested in improving their knowledge of material should schedule a meeting.
5. The student is requesting that a module be made accessible without meeting the necessary requirements. The answer is “no”.
6. The student is asking to round up a grade. The answer is “no”.
7. The student is asking for an extra credit opportunity, which is addressed elsewhere in this syllabus. The answer is “no”.

### **LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

I can only write a letter of recommendation for you if you have completed a semester in a course I have taught with a B or above.

### **LATE ARRIVAL OF THE PROFESSOR**

George Mason’s policy is that if the instructor does not arrive within 15 minutes that the course meeting for the day is cancelled. This seems like an anachronism. I will inform students via e-mail in advance of class (with as much notice as possible) if class is cancelled for the day. I will also contact our departmental support staff if something happened on the way to work. Failing that, assume the worst happened to me. I ask that students make sure that my story gets the proper treatment on a *Lam-and-Order* episode. I also ask that my story be narrated by Idris Elba.

## **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

George Mason University supports and recognizes that an inclusive and welcoming community is linked to our strategic goals and key to building a sense of belonging and well-being. I share this vision and am committed to its implementation at all levels and in all ways. The content presented in this course comes from an academic history that is overwhelming white and overwhelming male. As a white male (and as a person), I will do what is within my power to identify and step beyond racial, gender, and other boundaries in this shared educational space.

Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, economic status, ethnicity, gender expression and identity, national origin, first language, religion, age, and disability. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. We welcome and value individuals for their unique contributions. Attention to the breadth of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, where diverse opinions, backgrounds, and practices can be voiced, heard, and respected. All members of the learning environment are encouraged to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own. Such an environment fosters growth and productivity among students, faculty, and staff.

The reflection of Mason's commitment to diversity and inclusion goes beyond policies and procedures to focus on behavior at the individual, group, and organizational level. The implementation of this commitment to diversity and inclusion is found in all settings, including individual work units and groups, student organizations and groups, and classroom settings; it is also found with the delivery of services and activities, including, but not limited to, curriculum, teaching, events, advising, research, service, and community engagement. Notably, individuals are asked not to speak for the experience of others, nor to ask others to explain 'the mindset' of an identity they may have.

The University promotes continuous monitoring and self-assessment regarding inclusivity. Please contact me immediately if any elements of the course or institution, including my own statements, blindness, or actions, are inconsistent with the aspirations listed here, so that remedies can be implemented.

## **OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES**

I am committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people.

Federal law mandates the provision of services at the university-level to qualified students 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 for this class related to any sort of disability, detailed information about the Disability Services registration process is posted on their website. Students who suspect that they have a disability, temporary or permanent, but do not have documentation are encouraged to contact DS for advice on how to obtain appropriate evaluation. I encourage students who are considering using their accommodations to declare and discuss them with me as soon as possible, as I can only provide accommodations after receiving the authorizing documentation from Disability Services.

## **PRIVACY**

Student privacy is governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and is an essential aspect of any course.

- All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course site are private; any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.
- Live Video Conference Meetings (e.g. BB Collaborate, Zoom) that include audio or visual information from other students must be viewed privately and not shared with others in your household.
- As your instructor, I cannot discuss your educational record with your parents, your friends, or anyone except for you without explicit written permission. Because your GMU email is the only one that can be identified as belonging to you, the only way to communicate with you via email is through your GMU address. If you send communications from a non-GMU email account, you will receive a response telling you to use your GMU email.
- Outside video and/or audio recording is permitted only with the prior written consent of the professor or if recording is part of an approved accommodation plan. Recordings of class meetings that include audio or visual information from other students are private and must not be shared.
- No unauthorized guests will be permitted in class.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT, SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, AND INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE**

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living, and working environment that is free from discrimination and a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage any community member who believes that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted, or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support.

As a faculty member and designated “Responsible Employee,” I am required to report all disclosures of threats or occurrences of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact the Student Support and Advocacy Center (703- 380-1434), Counseling and Psychological Services (703-993-2380), Student Health Services, or Mason’s Title IX Coordinator (703-993-8730; [cde@gmu.edu](mailto:cde@gmu.edu)).

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity and dishonest practices. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to always follow:

- (1) all work submitted be your own;
- (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and
- (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification.

Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or APA format (or similar). It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes plagiarism and familiarize yourself with the Honor Code. Under no circumstances is it permissible to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters relating to academic work.

With independent submission, you may discuss your ideas with others and conference with peers on drafts of the work; however, it is not appropriate to give your paper to someone else to revise. You are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. If only your name appears on an assignment, your professor has the right to expect that you have done the work yourself, fully and independently. If the assignment involves collaborative work, the names of all contributors should appear on the work.

Participation in some kinds of online study sites violate the Mason Honor code: these include accessing exam or quiz questions for this class; accessing exam, quiz, or assignment answers for this class; uploading of any of the course materials or exams; and uploading any of your own answers or finished work. Posting any course materials on any web site or providing any course content to someone who is not a current student without my written permission will be treated as academic misconduct, regardless of intent.

There is not sufficient space here to list every possible behavior or action that constitutes cheating. Any action that undermines the academic integrity of the course, the students, or the university may constitute a violation of the policy. Don't cheat. You know exactly what I'm talking about.

The principle of academic integrity is taken seriously, and violations are treated gravely. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct, and ignorance is not an excuse. All Honor Code referrals from this course will recommend a sanction of at least course failure. The official GMU policies are available from the [Office of Academic Integrity](#).

## **OTHER GMU RESOURCES**

There are numerous campus resources that are available to help you succeed. For more details, please see a list of some of these resources online at <http://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus/>. A few of these include:

- Counseling and Psychological Services
- Mason Food Pantry
- Student Support and Advocacy Center

## **MODIFICATIONS**

This syllabus is subject to change at any time throughout the semester. Any syllabus changes or additions will be communicated and will be considered final.