

GGS 101: MAJOR WORLD REGIONS

COURSE SYLLABUS, SPRING 2026, 3 CREDITS

INSTRUCTOR		COURSE BASICS	
Name:	Dr. Timothy Leslie	Meeting time(s):	TR 12:00pm – 1:15pm
Office:	2207 Exploratory Hall	Location:	Horizon 1008
Email:	tleslie@gmu.edu	Modality:	100% In Person
TEXTBOOK(S)	Open Educational Textbook provided.		

OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

Welcome to the Major World Regions course, where we explore the patterns, problems, and prospects of the world's principal human-geographic regions. This course introduces the fascinating field of geography and examines the physical and cultural characteristics that define these regions.

We will investigate how local and global forces shape the character of different places and spaces, emphasizing areal differentiation and the role of geographic differences in interpreting the current world scene. By examining the unique and shared features of various regions, we will gain insights into their interactions and interrelations in an increasingly interconnected world.

This course also aims to build your familiarity with the geography of major world regions, helping you critically assess the unevenness of geographic processes and patterns and develop a deeper understanding of how geography influences global dynamics and challenges.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is part of the Mason Core curriculum and fulfills the Mason Core requirement in Global Contexts. In this course, you will analyze how global connections across nations and cultures shape societies, create interdependence and inequality, and influence possible responses to contemporary global challenges. Upon completion, you will be able to:

1. **Explain Global Interdependence:** Identify and describe the distribution of key human and physical geographic features across the globe and explain how global connections across nations and cultures have shaped societies, creating interdependence and inequality.
2. **Demonstrate Disciplinary Knowledge:** Use geographic concepts to analyze the physical and cultural traits of at least one nation or culture in the context of contemporary events and global interdependence, showing how regions participate in or are affected by global systems.
3. **Analyze Positionality and Solutions:** Apply an understanding of your own positionality within a globally interdependent and unequal world to compare world regions and analyze possible solutions to global problems, using maps, indicators, and regional profiles.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Your understanding and mastery of the course material will be evaluated through a variety of assessments. Each category is designed to measure different aspects of your learning experience, contributing to your overall grade as follows:

Course Element	Assessment %
Pre-Class Exercises	5%
Map Assignments	10%
Exams 1-3	60% (20% each)
Final Exam	25%

Pre-Class Quizzes (5%): Brief online quizzes help you warm up on a few key ideas, terms, and maps before class. They are low stakes: you may retake each quiz as many times as you like before its deadline, and only your highest score counts. The purpose is to give you immediate feedback on what you do and do not yet understand so that in-class time can focus on examples and questions instead of basic definitions.

Map Assignments (10%): These brief activities build your working “mental map” of the world. You will use simple outline maps to practice connecting country and region names with their locations. The tasks are designed to be quick and predictable so that, over the semester, recognizing where major regions are becomes automatic and makes the rest of the course easier to follow.

Exams (85% Total): All exams will assess material discussed in lectures, assigned readings, and activities. They will consist primarily of multiple-choice, true/false, and short-answer questions, evaluating your comprehension of regional themes, patterns, and processes. Instead of a separate study guide, the weekly pre-class exercises and in-class key-term lists function as your running study guide; if you can answer those, you are on track for exams. If you have questions or need clarification on any topics, please reach out.

- Exams 1-3 (60% of total grade, 20% Each): These exams will assess your understanding of course material in thirds, with each focusing on distinct sections of the course material.
- Final Exam (25%): The final exam is cumulative, emphasizing your ability to synthesize course concepts from throughout the semester.

A subset of responses to the short-answer questions on the final exam may be collected (with names removed) to assess Mason Core Global Contexts outcomes at the program level.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

	Topic	T/Th
Day 1	Overview	Jan 20
Day 2	A World of Regions	27
Day 3	World of People	29
Day 4 / 5	Europe	Feb 3 / 5
Day 6	Economic Geography	10
Day 7	Anglo America	12
Day 8	Development and Globalization	17
Day 9	<u>Test 1</u>	19
Day 10	Air, Rocks, Water	24
Day 11	Russia	26
Day 12	An Urban World	Mar 3
Day 13	Middle and S America	5
	<u>No Class - Spring Break</u>	10 / 12
Day 14	Politics and Culture	17
Day 15	Caribbean	19
Day 16 / 17	Sub Saharan Africa	24 / 26
Day 18	<u>Test 2</u>	31
Day 19	NASWA	Apr 2
Day 20 / 21	East Asia	7 / 9
Day 22	South Asia	14
Day 23	Central Asia	16
Day 24	SE Asia	21
Day 25	Australia and Oceania	23
Day 26	<u>Test 3</u>	28
Day 27	Course Summary	30
	<u>Final Exam</u>	May 7

GRADING

The expected grade breaks are the following:

A	A-	B	B-	C	D
100 - 92	91.9 - 87	86.9 - 82	81.9 - 77	76.9 - 71	70.9 - 65

Submission Policies:

- Unless noted otherwise, submissions will be conducted through Canvas. Students should familiarize themselves with its features, including file submission, to ensure smooth participation. Assignments should only be emailed to the instructor if explicitly requested.
- For assignments allowing multiple submissions, only the most recent submission will be assessed, so ensure the final version is correct and complete, as earlier versions will not be reviewed.
- Unless otherwise specified, assignments should be submitted as PDFs with in-line text and tables, not screenshots of tables. Links to documents stored on external services such as Google Docs or Drive will be treated as non-submissions.
- Files must be readable and, if applicable, formatted according to the guidelines. Corrupted or improperly formatted files, such as those with missing visual elements or unclear tables, may result in deductions or be treated as non-submissions.

Late Submission Policy:

- Late submissions will incur a deduction, which increases every 24 hours after the deadline. These deductions are based on the total points possible for the assignment.
- Extensions require valid documentation and timely communication. If extraordinary challenges arise, please reach out promptly to discuss options.
- All submissions must meet the posted end-of-semester cutoffs to be graded.

Grade Concerns and Opportunities:

- All requests for grade reconsiderations must be made via email. When requesting reconsideration, refer to specific points of objection and provide specific examples or references, such as rubric criteria or feedback points. This ensures a focused discussion and equitable grading practices. Assignments will be evaluated uniformly, consistent with university accommodation policies. For further grade disputes beyond the instructor's review, students should refer to the university's grade appeal policy.
- Extra credit opportunities are rare and not provided upon individual request. If they arise, they will be announced to the entire class and made available equitably.
- If you are not satisfied with your progress during the semester, please see me as early as possible to discuss concerns.

Feedback and Grading Timeline:

- Grades for submitted material will typically be provided within 4 business days of submission, though the timeline may extend for larger assignments such as projects or labs.
- General feedback is intentionally concise and limited; for detailed discussions, please follow up in class or during office hours.
- Grades are calculated according to the syllabus criteria, and students are graded equitably based on their performance. Requests for rounding up grades cannot be accommodated to maintain fairness for all.

GENERATIVE AI AND ACADEMIC STANDARDS

The use of content-generating AI tools is prohibited unless explicitly allowed in an assignment. Unauthorized use of generative AI tools will be treated as academic misconduct. Where AI use is permitted, guidelines will clarify acceptable applications to ensure fairness and uphold integrity. If you are unsure about whether generative AI is permitted for an assignment, please ask for clarification before submission.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

- Your active presence in class is a key component of your success. Our sessions are designed for hands-on learning, collaborative problem-solving, and direct engagement with the material, which are difficult to replicate if missed. You are responsible for reviewing any missed material and staying up to date.
- In class, questions may sometimes be turned back to you or the group to diagnose your thinking. If you are still confused after that, say so explicitly and I will shift to a more direct explanation.
- ***Notify me only if your absence involves an exam or major assignment.*** For excused absences due to illness or valid reasons, provide a general doctor's note specifying the period covered. If you will miss classes due to a religious observance or participation in a university activity, you are obligated to notify me within the first two weeks of the semester (University Policy AP.1.6.1). In such cases, a reasonable alternative opportunity will be provided.
- Please make every effort to be punctual. Arriving on time shows respect for your classmates and helps maintain the flow of our class activities. Late arrivals will not receive additional time to complete timed assessments.
- In the rare event that class is cancelled, I will notify you via email or Canvas as soon as possible. Please check these platforms regularly for updates.

FOSTERING A COLLABORATIVE AND RESPECTFUL ENVIRONMENT

At George Mason University, we deeply value the diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives each student brings to the classroom. This breadth of viewpoint enriches our learning and strengthens our ability to analyze complex geographic challenges.

This course may involve discussions on sensitive or controversial topics, and all students are expected to approach these conversations with openness, empathy, and respect. We aim to create a collaborative and supportive atmosphere that values curiosity, constructive dialogue, and mutual respect. Thoughtful contributions, whether sharing ideas, asking questions, or offering insights, enhance learning for everyone.

- Please use professional and considerate language in all interactions, as tone and word choice significantly impact how messages are received.
- I am committed to ensuring that every student feels supported and can thrive in this course. If something said or done in the classroom, by myself or others, causes discomfort, offense, or concern, I encourage you to bring it to my attention.
- Students are encouraged to use their chosen first name and pronouns. 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.' Please inform me of your preferences and update your Mason file for consistency.

TECHNICAL EXPECTATIONS

- Regular access to a computer with an updated operating system and a stable internet connection is required to participate in and complete course activities successfully. Test your setup early to avoid disruptions during assignments or exams.
- Materials on Canvas or other platforms are intended for students' use only. Sharing materials (e.g., lecture slides, recordings) with anyone not enrolled in the course is strictly prohibited.
- If students need to use ESRI proprietary software off-campus or on non-Windows machines, they can access it through the Patriot Virtual Computing & Labs (PVCL). Instructions are provided upon request. Students new to certain software packages are encouraged to review introductory tutorials before starting lab activities to build confidence and minimize delays.
- If students anticipate challenges in meeting technical requirements (e.g., lack of reliable internet access or appropriate hardware), they should inform me early in the semester so we can explore alternative solutions.
- Ensure your work is saved and backed up using reliable storage options such as OneDrive or Dropbox.
- Video or audio recordings are permitted only with prior written consent or as part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded sessions are for personal, private use only and must not be shared with others without explicit permission.

CONTACTING ME

I am here to support your learning and help you with any challenges you may encounter during the course. You can reach me outside of class in the following ways:

1. Zoom Appointments: Schedule a meeting through my [Calendly - Office Hours](#). If no available times fit your schedule, email me with at least three alternative meeting times, and I will do my best to accommodate you. Appointments are ideal for complex questions, such as in-depth assignment guidance or feedback on your work. A device with a functional microphone is required for participation. While using cameras during conversations is not mandatory, it is appreciated when speaking to facilitate communication.
2. Email: I respond to emails promptly Monday through Thursday. For weekend inquiries, expect a reply by noon on Monday. Before emailing, review the syllabus for common answers and include relevant details such as assignment names or due dates. For complex issues, consider scheduling a meeting through my Calendly link for in-depth discussion. Email is best for quick questions, while detailed discussions should be addressed in a scheduled meeting.

MODIFICATIONS

Occasionally, circumstances may require adjustments to the course schedule or policies. Any changes will be communicated promptly via email or Canvas. Students are responsible for regularly checking Canvas or email for updates, as all changes will take effect immediately upon notification.