

**Course Title: GEO131: The World's Regions (4 Credit)**

**Class Time & Location:** Section C: 12:25 – 2:05 T/Th, 210 Lindner Hall      **Office hours:** Mon 1:00- 2:00      Tue 9:30-10:30  
 Wed 11:00-12:00      Thu 10:30-11:30  
 or by appointment

**Instructor:**      **Dr. Ryan Kirk**, Department of History and Geography  
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**Required Text:**      **None, but you must buy a pack of 5x8 lined index cards for in-class writing**  
*(Note: Required and suggested readings will be provided in pdf format or html links, and will typically consist of journal articles, news articles, web sites, or book sections. Readings will be posted on Moodle)*

**Course Objectives:** 1) Increase geographic literacy  
 2) Explore how the world has changed geographically over the past 20 +/- years  
 3) Evaluate causes and effects of regional similarities and differences  
 4) Develop core knowledge of major themes of geography across the globe  
 5) Gain experience in geographic (i.e., spatial) reasoning and analysis  
 6) Improve writing, critical analysis, communication, and research skills

**Course Overview:** In this course we look at the changing world from a geographic perspective. We will begin by defining what geographic inquiry means and then we will explore the different world regions via the four overlapping themes of economic geography, geopolitics, environmental geography and cultural geography. The central question we will explore, which is also the topic of the major course project, is **"How has the world changed geographically since you were born, and how might it change over the next 20 years?"** If you are a traditional age student, you were like born after the end of the Cold War and have lived through the birth and boom of the internet, 9/11, and economic collapses in 2000 ("The Dot Com Bust") and 2008 ("The Great Recession"). Across the world you have been alive as the former Soviet Union countries have struggled to redefined themselves, as Japan's rise as a world power stalled, as China's economy increased 8-fold, as the global population increased by 1.5 billion people, and as new styles of supranational organizations like NAFTA, The European Union, and the WTO were founded. Over 100 wars have been fought globally during that time. Indeed, the world is in constant flux. We will explore how these events have altered the patterns of where and how we interact, and will think about how these patterns will change in the years ahead.

| Grades: | Component  | Percentage of Final Grade |
|---------|--|---------------------------|
|         | Campus Speaker Review (2 total, 2.5% each)             | 5%                        |
|         | In-class Writing Exercises                             | 4%                        |
|         | Participation  | 4%                        |
|         | Region Papers (1200-1500 words, 3 total, 10% each)     | 30%                       |
|         | Portfolio (2000+ word paper with multiple reflections) | 20%                       |
|         | Quizzes (4, 6% each, all cumulative)                   | 24%                       |
|         | Final Exam (map exam, multiple choice, essays)         | 13%                       |

**Attendance & Policy:** A primary goal of this class is learning to think like a geographer, and a key method of meeting this goal is practicing geographic reasoning for 200 minutes per week in class. Thus, participation is vital, and attendance will be taken. **The attendance policy is very simple: you are given 2 free unexcused absences, but your final grade will be reduced 2% for each additional unexcused absence.** Excused absences include: 1) sanctioned Elon events, 2) family emergencies, and 3) documented illnesses with Doctor's or health clinic note. Sending me an e-mail saying you are sick is not enough. Without a doctor's or health clinic note, the absence is counted towards your unexcused tally.

**Participation:** The participation grade rewards demonstration of the following characteristics. I take notes regularly on your performance towards these characteristics.

- Preparedness:** The student comes prepared for each class session, having completed readings and addressed research topics.
- Attentiveness:** The student is regularly engaged in class sessions and is not regularly sleeping, browsing on laptops, texting, etc.
- Contributive:** The student regularly contributes to discussions and group projects.
- Professionalism:** The student arrives on time, is respectful in discussions, is not distractive, and assists other students where possible.

**Campus Speaker Review:** Elon host dozens of speakers with expertise on important issues around the world. You are to attend two talks from speakers addressing a global issue, and then write a 500-700 word reflective essay that a) summarizes their talk, and b) evaluates the role of geography in the topic they discuss. Grading is weighted 50% effort, 30% depth of discussion, and 20% on writing quality. **Reviews must be submitted within 7 calendar days of the event, and the speaker reviews must be completed before Thanksgiving Break.** Further instructions, a grading rubric, and a list of speakers are available on Moodle.

**In-Class Writing exercises:** On most days that we have a reading due, we will link in-class content to the readings via discussion questions. For nearly all of these days, you will write answers to discussion questions on 5x8 cards and submit them for a grade to demonstrate understanding of the readings and ability to connect ideas.

**Region Papers (3):** Three region paper questions will be assigned, and you will have a choice between two topics to research and write on. The paper categories for the three papers are listed below. Specific questions to address during organized class discussions and in the paper will be handed out two weeks before each paper is due:

**Region Paper 1 Choice**

- a) Trade Blocs in the Americas
- b) Immigration in Western Europe

**Region Paper 2 Choice**

- a) Water Conflicts in N Africa/SW Asia
- b) Failed States in Sub-Saharan Africa

**Region Paper 3 Choice**

- a) Natural Disasters in S & SE Asia
- b) Legacy of Cold War in former Soviet Countries

Papers will have a **strictly enforced word limit of 1200-1600 words**. The major goals of the region papers are for you to gain experience with a) researching and filtering large quantities of information, b) efficiently synthesizing and crafting a summary, c) writing clearly and effectively, and d) analyzing how some of your fellow students tackle the same paper topic. Thus, these papers focus on quality, not quantity, so expectations are high. General instructions, sample papers of various grade qualities, and a sample grading rubric are available on Moodle. We will discuss research and writing strategies throughout the semester. Grading is weighted 75% content and 25% writing quality. You may rewrite and resubmit one of your 3 papers, along with a reflective essay of what you changed and why, for up to a 15% grade bonus on that assignment. These paper re-writes are due by the start of the last day of class.

**Geographic Reflection portfolio:** The major project in this course will be a portfolio combining personal reflection and critical analysis on the following topic: **The question you will address in the final paper is: How has the world changed geographically since you were born, and how might it change over the next 20 years?** You will complete several low-stakes reflections throughout the semester on various aspects of this topic, then will write a 2000+ word paper synthesizing your answer. You must include at least 10 citations to support your analysis. Further instructions and a grading rubric are available on Moodle.

**Quizzes (4) & Final Exam (1):** Quizzes will be given roughly every 3<sup>rd</sup> week to help improve geographic literacy. Place name geography is admittedly tedious, but knowing where countries, cities, and physical features are is core to global literacy, so we will pursue the topic aggressively, including spending time every day on the material. Quizzes will consist of map location identification and multiple-choice questions related to the names and locations of countries, megacities, and dominant physical features, as well as the definitions of a specified list of geographic terms. All quizzes are weighted cumulative, which means that, after the first quiz, each subsequent quiz will be weighted 2/3 for the material of the current period and 1/3 for all previous periods. **The final exam in the course will consist of two parts: first, a cumulative geographic literacy exam** that will follow the same format as the quizzes; second, a long essay question designed for you to be able to demonstrate geographic reasoning skills.

**Grading Policies:**

Overall grading is criterion-referenced, in which grades are designed to measure how well students perform relative to predetermined standards. Final grades are rigid and based on a standard scale: (e.g., > 90% = A, > 80% = B, etc). Individual assignments, however, may be curved upwards (never downwards) at the discretion of the instructor.

Bonus Points may be added on any of the assignments at the discretion of the instructor, based on any of the following criteria that indicate an "above-and-beyond" effort or quality-level: 1) professional presentation, 2) clarity of argument/presentation, or 3) thoroughness of argument/presentation. In addition, you will **receive up to a 4% bonus on each individual region paper for which you visit the Writing Center** and discuss the assignment with a writing consultant.

Grades on each assignment can be contested to the instructor up to 2 weeks after the assignment is returned for errors or perceived injustice. Send an e-mail or bring a written statement to office hours containing sound reasons why a grade should be changed.

Incomplete grades are assigned at the discretion of the professor when, due to extraordinary circumstances, e.g., hospitalization, a student is prevented from completing the work on time. Requires a written agreement between the professor and student *before* the final exam.

Submitting Assignments: Due dates are specified in the course schedule (below). **Assignments are due by midnight on the due date.** Assignments are to be submitted in electronic format barring explicit directions to the contrary or previous arrangement. Assignments will be submitted electronically via Moodle. A separate sheet for instructions and requirements will be provided.

Late Assignments: Extensions on Region Papers may be granted if requested in advance with appropriate justification. **Without an approved extension, Region Papers may be submitted up to 3-days late for 80% partial credit, or up to 7-days late for 60% partial credit.** Region Papers will not be accepted later than 7 days after the due date without an approved extension. Map Quizzes may be rescheduled if arrangements are made at least 1 day prior to the quiz date.

Academic Integrity Policy: Students are expected to abide by the Elon Academic Honor Code (available at <http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/handbook/violations/default.xhtml>). In this course, plagiarism and cheating during in-class quizzes are the most important concerns. Alleged violations will be dealt with according to University policy.

Special Assistance: Please inform the professor of any special needs for accessibility and learning, and appropriate measures will be taken to aid success in the course. If you are a student with a documented disability who will require accommodations in this course, please register with Disabilities Services in the Duke Building, Room 108 (278-6500) for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs.

**How to succeed in this course:** This class breaks down to 1/3 memorization (Map Quizzes/Final) and 2/3 critical analysis, participation and communication (Speaker Review, In-Class Writing exercises, Participation, Region Paper & Geographic Portfolio). During our in-class time, we will have lots of free-flowing discussions about large themes. The information in these discussions will likely be useful for your in-class writings, your region papers, and your portfolio. Thus, taking notes on ideas and key points during discussions may prove valuable. A general rule of thumb is that you are expected to spend 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. For this course, that outside time means keeping up on readings, studying Place Name Geography and geographic terms, efficiently researching and writing, and anonymously reviewing other student's papers. We will discuss resources and tips for improving writing, analysis, and research skills.