

Course Title: GEO360: Geography of North America

Pre-requisites: none

Instructor: Dr. Ryan Kirk
 Department of History and Geography
 Department of Environmental Studies
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 Work: 336-278-6477

Office hours: M – F 10:00-11:00, or by appointment

Course Web site: We will use **blackboard** for communication, submission of assignments, and grading. For help getting established on blackboard see:
<https://blackboard.elon.edu/> → look for the “BB Help” tab at the top of the page

Required Text: *Our Patchwork Nation*, by Chinni and Gimpel, 2010

Besides the book, there is an additional cost of gas for our field trip and one field assignment. We will use volunteer drivers, and each person in the car should contribute to gas accordingly.

Additional required and suggested readings will be provided in pdf format or html links, and typically consist of scientific journal articles, news articles, web sites, or book sections. Selected books may also be found in the course reserves in Belk Library

Course Description: This survey course examines the major physical and human patterns across the North American continent as a basis for exploring the interrelated connections between the natural world and its human inhabitants. Through readings, multi-media exercises, case studies, and individual research, students will receive an introduction to both the physical and human geography of the region as well as experience in geographic reasoning and map analysis.

Course Goals: The primary goal of this course is to learn to think like a geographer in order to add or expand spatial reasoning as part of your analytical tool kit. This consists of 5 components:
 1) Develop core knowledge of major themes of geography across North America
 2) Gain experience in spatial reasoning and analysis
 3) Increase geographic literacy
 4) Expand appreciation for regional similarities and differences
 5) Improve critical analysis, communication, and research skills

Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:
 1) Discuss the geographic implications of a wide variety of issues
 2) Understand core themes of physical, environmental, political, and economic geography
 3) Locate the major political, cultural, and physical areas of the U.S. and Canada

Grades: Grading will be broken down into the following categories:

Component	Points	% of Final Grade
1) <u>Developmental assignments</u>		
Reading synopses	50	5%
In-class participation	50	5%
Geographic reflection exercises	200	20%
2) <u>Group Presentation</u>	50	5%
3) <u>Exams</u>		
Midterm	150	15%
Final Exam	250	25%
4) <u>Paper</u>		
Proposal	10	1%
Writing workshop reflection	15	1.5%
Annotated Bibliography	25	2.5%
Final Paper	200	20%
Total	1000	100%

Attendance Policy: Given the intensive nature of Winter Term courses and given that this is an experiential class more than a content-driven class, attendance is paramount. The attendance policy is very simple: **your final grade will be reduced 1.5% for the first unexcused absence and 3% for each additional unexcused absence.**

Excused absences include: 1) sanctioned Elon events, 2) documented illnesses (with Health Clinic Receipt, Doctor's note or e-mail from the Advising Center), and 3) family emergencies.

Participation: The participation grade rewards demonstration of the following characteristics:

- a) **Preparedness:** The student comes prepared for each class session, having completed readings and addressed assigned questions or research topics.
- b) **Initiative:** The student takes a lead in group-related work and seeks out ways for advancing our success of the course.
- c) **Contributive:** The student regularly contributes to discussions and group projects.
- d) **Professionalism:** The student arrives on time, is respectful in discussions, and assists other students where possible.

Reading synopses: For most of the assigned readings, you will be expected to write a short recap of the main themes and answer some pre-defined questions. Students may be grouped to evaluate different aspects or opinions within the readings. Grading will be based on effort as evidenced by demonstrated thoughtfulness.

Geographic reflection exercises: You will complete a series of exercises to explore geographic themes from your own lives. Examples of these exercises include mapping your geographic experiences in North America and exploring the geographic diversity in Alamance County. Instructions will be provided separately for each exercise.

Group presentation: In groups of 2-3 students, you will research and deliver a 12-15 minute presentation on a specific region of North America to provide both a broad overview of the region and a case study of a geographic theme within the region. The overview should cover the physical landscape, the demographic and economic characteristics, and the characteristics that define the region.

Mid Term & Final Exam: The mid-term and final exam will be similar formats, but the mid-term will be a 1-1.5 hour exam and the final will be a 2-3 hour exam. Both exams will consist of two parts: place name geography and open-note essay (but not open book) essay questions covering the major themes of the course. **You will need to purchase Blue Books for these exams.** The final will be cumulative.

Research paper: As the centerpiece project, you will develop a large research paper that explores a major geographic theme in North America. The paper will be developed through a multi-step process of research and reflection. The final paper will be at least 3000 words (approximately 10+ pages double spaced). The paper will be developed in a multi-step process over the course of the term.

Grading Policies:

Overall grading is criterion-referenced, in which grades are designed to measure how well students perform relative to predetermined standards for upper-level classes. The standard grading scale is guaranteed (e.g., 93.0+ = A, 90.0-92.9 = A-, > 87.0-89.9 = B+, etc). None of the individual assignments will be curved, but the instructor will evaluate final grade distributions and may consider curving grades upward.

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. Thus, a grade greater than 100% is possible.

Grades on each assignment can be contested to the instructor up to 3 weekdays 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 of the course on time. Requires a written agreement between the professor and student *before* the final exam.

Late Assignments: Without an approved extension, late assignments will be accepted up to 3 weekdays after the due date for 70% partial credit. No assignments will be accepted after 3 weekdays without an approved extension.

Academic Integrity Policy: Students are expected to abide by the Elon Academic Honor Code (available at <http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/handbook/judicialhonor.xhtml>). In this course, plagiarism and cheating during in-class exams 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

As all material is cumulative, the foremost key to success is consistency of effort. This means keeping up on readings, attending class or catching up on missed content, and regularly reviewing the place name geography and key concepts. Exams require a balance of memorization (for place name and term questions) and understanding concepts (for essays). I highly recommend establishing a simple routine for studying place names, for example by reviewing maps for 10-20 minutes each morning before you head out the door. The group presentation and final paper require dedicated research and synthesis efforts. We will regularly discuss how to interpret the materials for exams, but please ask if you feel anything is not clear.

Schedule

	Week	Activity	Reading	Due Items / Notes
Day	Week 1		PN = Patchwork Nation	
1	T Jan 3	Intro Themes & Regions		
2	W Jan 4	Geographic literacy Spatial reasoning Themes of Geography	1) PN: Intro & chapter on community corresponding to your hometown 2) deBlij.pdf	<i>Geographic reflection #1 due</i>
3	Th Jan 5	Historic settlement of N America Political Economy	1) birdsall.pdf 2) hardwick.pdf	
4	Fri Jan 6	Glencoe Mill tour & hike (<i>dependent on weather</i>)	1) emory.pdf	<i>Geographic reflection #2 due</i>
	Week 2			
5	M Jan 9	Economic patterns	1) PN, "The Economy" and assigned Communities	<i>Paper proposal due Geographic reflection #3 due</i>
6	T Jan 10	Alamance County Visits	1) PN, "Politics" and assigned communities	
7	W Jan 11	Culture	1) PN, "Culture" and assigned communities	<i>Geographic reflection #4 due</i>
8	Th Jan 12	Natural resources & Transportation	1) Borchert.pdf 2) CEC_water_report.pdf	
9	F Jan 13	Mid-term (<i>then long weekend</i>)		<i>Mid-term has closed note section (place name geography and terms) and open note section (essays)</i>
	Week 3			
	M Jan 16	No class – MLK, Jr. day		
10	T Jan 17	Modern settlement patterns Region Presentations	1) Theobald.pdf 2) Brown.pdf	
11	W Jan 18	Demographics & Immigration Region Presentations	1) Jackson.pdf 2) Brookings.pdf	<i>Annotated Bibliography Due</i>
12	Th Jan 19	Culture Region Presentations	1) McKnight.pdf 2) Woodard.pdf	
13	F Jan 20	Looking forward Region Presentations	1) American2050.pdf	<i>Geographic reflection #5 due</i>
	Week 4			
14	M Jan 23	<i>Course wrap up Review of major themes Final Exam preparation</i>		<i>Papers due in class & on Blackboard</i>
15	T Jan 24	Final Exam		<i>Exam has closed note section (place name geography and terms) and open note section (essays)</i>