

# **GEOGRAPHY OF THE UNITED STATES & CANADA**

**MW 3:30-4:45 • Humanities 114**

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*office hours: Tue. & Thur. 1:30-3:30*

## **Course Description**

The geography of the United States and Canada is an upper division course designed to give students an understanding of the regional geography of both the United States and Canada. This includes an examination of the settlement history, cultural characteristics, natural resources and economic development of various regions that comprise North America. Key concepts that students will consider include site & situation, migration, sequent occupance, effective settlement, relative location and regional development. While many of the themes that will be discussed should be familiar to students, geography's unique spatial perspective should give students a new perspective on them.

## **Course Objectives**

- I. Students will question the ontological and epistemological basis underlying regional conceptions of the United States and Canada.
- II. Students will explore the relationship between humans and the land and its effects vis-a-vis regional social and economic differentiation in the United States and Canada.
- III. Students will examine the role that the physical landscape played in the creation of transportation corridors and migration patterns.
- IV. Students will share ideas on how American and Canadian landscapes have been utilized by authors to create a sense of place in their narratives and test the accuracy of such usage.
- V. Students will utilize the concepts of site and situation to explain settlement patterns in the United States and Canada, and how such factors overlay with broader economic factors to create our present landscape.

## **Reading Materials**

Students are expected to purchase a copy of the textbook (John Hudson. *Across This Land: A Regional Geography of the United States and Canada*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) at the Campus Bookstore and complete all reading assignments in the course schedule. Students are encouraged to complete the reading assignments ahead of time, to write-out the answers the reading questions and to ask questions during class.

## **Lectures & Attendance**

Lectures are designed to clarify the material in the textbook and expand upon it where appropriate. Because other students will be presenting material in class, it is especially important that you attend every class as a courtesy to them. Attendance will be taken and will points will be deducted from your final grade: one point for each absence after an allotted three for the semester.

## **Grading**

Grades will be determined on the basis of two exams, two papers and attendance. The exams will be weighted equally and each will count for 30% of your final grade--the final exam will not be cumulative. The first paper will be an exploration of how American regions are portrayed in film and literature and will count for 15% of your final grade. The second paper will be a research paper on the historical geography of a city in the American West, based largely on documents made available to you in the library. This paper will count for 20% of your final grade and the class presentation that you make on it will count for another 5% of your final grade. More information about both of these papers will be forthcoming. Grading will be assessed on a straight scale. In fairness to all students, there will be no extra credit work given. Students looking to get lecture notes from classes they miss should consult with other students in class.

## **Academic Integrity**

It is unfortunate but violations of academic integrity are all too common on university campuses and it is in fairness to those students that attend lectures and study diligently that any transgressions must be taken seriously and enforced. Any person caught cheating will automatically receive a zero for that assignment or exam. A letter will also go to the Dean so that additional actions can be taken if such actions are repeated. Please note that allowing someone to look at your test is considered cheating. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism please come see me before you hand in any written work.

## **Special Needs**

All students at SUNY-New Paltz are entitled to be treated, and evaluated, in a fair manner. Any students with learning or physical disabilities should notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that all necessary accommodations are made. Also, any students for whom English is a second language should also come see me at the start of the semester.

## **Class Schedule**

### Week 1

August 25 Introduction

### Week 2

August 30 Chapter 1: Newfoundland & Labrador

Chapter 3: Maritimes

September 1 Chapter 2: Quebec

### Week 3

September 6 no class (Labor Day)

September 8 Chapter 4: New England

### Week 4

September 13 Jane Zaring (1977). "The Romantic Face of Wales." *Annals of the A.A.G.*

Stephen Hannah (1996). "Is it Roslyn or is it Cicely?" *Urban Geography*.

September 15 Chapter 5: New York & Ontario

Week 5

September 20 Chapter 6: Middle Atlantic  
September 22 Chapter 7: Southern Appalachians  
*1<sup>st</sup> draft of landscape paper due*

Week 6

September 27 Chapter 8: Interior Low Plateaus  
Chapter 9: Ozarks and Ouachitas  
September 29 Chapter 10 Southeastern Piedmont & Coastal Plain  
*Peer reviews of landscape paper due*

Week 7

October 4 Chapter 11: Florida Peninsula  
October 6 Chapter 12: Gulf Coastal Plain & Alluvial Mississippi Valley  
*Final draft of landscape papers due*

Week 8

October 11 **Mid-Term Exam**  
October 13 Chapter 13: Corn Belt

Week 9

October 18 Chapter 14: Lower Great Lakes  
October 20 Chapter 15: Texas & Southern Plains

Week 10 (*Friday is last day for course withdrawal*)

October 25 video--*Last Stand of the Tall Grass Prairies*  
October 27 Chapter 16: Prairie Wheat Lands

Week 11

November 1 Chapter 17: Southern Rocky Mts. & High Plains  
Chapter 18: Missouri Plateau  
November 3 Chapter 19: Northern Rocky Mts. & Columbia-Snake Plateau

Week 12

November 8 Chapter 20: Great Basin  
Chapter 21: Colorado Plateau & Desert Southwest  
November 10 video--*An American Nile*  
*1<sup>st</sup> draft of historical geography paper due*

Week 13

November 15 Chapter 22: Upper Great Lakes  
Chapter 23: Canadian Shield  
*Peer reviews of historical geography paper due*  
November 17 Chapter 24: Far North

Week 14

November 22 Chapter 25: Pacific Northwest

November 24 no class--Thanksgiving

Week 15

November 29 Chapter 26: California

December 1 video--*The Mercy of Nature*

***Final draft of historical geography papers due***

Week 16

December 6 Chapter 27: Hawaii

December 8 no class

Week 17

December 15 **Final Exam (Wednesday) 2:30-4:30**