

# Geography of the United States

## GEOG 2580

### Syllabus

The *Undergraduate Calendar* of The University of Manitoba offers this brief description of GEOG 2580: "A Regional Study of the United States."

### Contacting your instructor

For information on contacting your instructor as well as other important information from your instructor see the Instructor Letter link in your course website.

### Course description

The University of Manitoba *Undergraduate Calendar* describes this course as follows:

A regional study of the United States. Lectures are the same as those given in one term of GEOG 2560 (or 053.256). May not be held with GEOG 2560, 053.256, 053.330, GEOG 3640, 053.364, GEOG 3650 or 053.365. Prerequisite: a grade of "C" or better in a minimum of three credit hours from Geography courses numbered at the 100 level, or written consent of department head.

### Why study regional geography?

The first step in achieving geographic literacy is knowing the locations of places and peoples, and the second level of literacy pertains to the physical (natural) and human characteristics of the diverse places of our world. An even higher and more complex comprehension and competence involves the dynamic relationships between peoples and places; these relationships explain the continuities and changes in their characteristics. The geographically literate person, for example, understands why communities are located where they are, how people have shaped these communities into distinctive places, and how these places have, in turn, affected peoples' lives. Geographic literacy also involves the use of knowledge to solve problems and make decisions in our daily lives. You may be interested in reading more about the importance of geographic literacy in *Why Geography Matters: Three Challenges Facing America* (Harm de Blij, 2005).

Regional geography deals with how people use the land, how air pollution at one location affects another location a great distance away, and how cultural groups develop and maintain distinctive ways of life. Knowledge of regional geography can add to one's knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the world around us. It can make survival possible by providing us with the knowledge we need to locate suitable places to grow food and to organize natural resources to provide clothing and shelter.

Aspects of regional geography play interactive and supportive roles in human life. For example, in studying the relationships between the Lakotas of the North American Great Plains and the environment, the study of movement becomes critical to explaining the nomadic way of life these people followed due to their reliance upon the buffalo.

### Regional geography and the United States

In attempting to better understand the world, geographers and others have long found it useful to subdivide earth space into smaller areas, or regions, for more detailed analysis. As an independent country within the world community, the United States is a region. It is on that basis that it is singled out as the area of study in this course; and within that framework we examine the physical and human elements of the American landscape. You will learn about these elements, which are presented not only in their own right, but also in terms of the interactions occurring among them.

## Course goals

A geography course such as the “Geography of the United States” broadly proposes to help you, the student, to comprehend the world you see outside your window better. The major goal of this course, then, is to provide you with a broad-based regional approach to understanding more about the physical and human processes that shape the United States.

The five specifically geographic goals of this course are:

- to discuss the geography of the United States as a field of regional study;
- to examine the major geographical regions of the United States, with attention to their physical and human characteristics, and to show how these characteristics interplay with the economic, social, political and cultural aspects of human life;
- to illustrate and define regions as a means of interpreting the complexity of the United States;
- to demonstrate the concept of site and situation in relation to human settlement, especially cities with their characteristics, distribution and complexity; and
- to discuss factual knowledge of the United States, both generally and specifically.

The two general academic goals are:

- to write critically about issues that affect people and places in the United States through the completion of several written assignments; and
- to relate and synthesize information from several sources through comparative studies of the various unique and diverse regions of the United States.

## Course materials

### Required

The following required materials are available for purchase from the [University of Manitoba Bookstore](#). Please order your materials immediately, if you have not already done so. See your [Distance and Online Education Student Handbook](#) for instructions on how to order your materials.

### Textbook

Birdsall, Stephen S., Palka, Eugene J., Malinowski, Jon C., Price, Margo L. (2009). *Regional Landscapes of the United States and Canada*. 7th ed. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Several chapters in the textbook include material on both the United States and Canada. For this course, you are responsible for only the material concerned with the United States. Nonetheless, since most of you are undoubtedly more familiar with Canada, those chapters that cover both sides of the international boundary, plus the authors’ remarks on the Canadian counterpart of the corresponding region in the United States may prove to be a useful bridge toward a better understanding of our American neighbour.

In addition to the written descriptions and explanations given in the textbook, the maps, diagrams, tables, and photographs are also important. Too often we concentrate on the written work and ignore supplementary material. In this textbook, such material is integrated into the written descriptions and explanations and is, therefore, critical to the authors’ overall presentation. The old Chinese proverb that “a picture is worth a thousand words” is very true in this book, as it is in most geography books. Incidentally, do not overlook the case study in each chapter of your textbook, as well as the Glossary and the Map Appendices located at the back of your textbook.

### Writing aid

Northey, M., and D. B. Knight. (2012). *Making Sense: A Student’s Guide to Research and Writing/Geography & Environmental Science*. 5th ed. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

## Recommended resources

The following optional materials are available for purchase from the [University of Manitoba Bookstore](#). Please order your materials immediately, if you have not already done so. See your [Distance and Online Education Student Handbook](#) for instructions on how to order your materials.

### Atlas

Although the textbook will be your principal written resource, you should also have access to a good quality **atlas** containing a reasonable amount of detail on the United States. There are many commercially published atlases available; *Goode's World Atlas*; *The National Atlas of the United States of America* or *National Geography of North America* are good choices. For place locations, highway maps are useful.

### The Internet

Do not overlook this resource for specific information and maps on regions within the United States.

**Special cautionary note:** When you access the Internet for your written assignments, be selective about the credibility of the various websites. It is preferable to use **refereed journals** as sources since they provide more credibility and authenticity than do general write-ups or reports. You should strive to use the most current resource materials.

### Other readings

For this course, you will also need to rely on outside reading to get the extra information needed for a broader understanding of what is discussed in the text. Each unit in these course materials have a listing of additional references. Additional reading material can be obtained through the Distance and Online Education Library Service and through the Interlibrary Loan Service (Dafoe Library).

Also, pay attention to daily newspapers and current events magazines (e.g., *National Geographic* and *Times*), as well as daily newscasts via radio, television, and the Internet. Making use of current events in your answers to study questions and assignments can enhance your learning experience.

## Course overview

This study of the United States focuses on the thirteen regions, beginning in the northeastern heartland or **core**, and continuing through a study of the various hinterland regions or peripheries which comprise this nation.

These regions of the United States are discussed in the following five units of your course materials:

- Unit 1 The course of study begins with a discussion of the factors that help define regions and themes, as well as an overview of the nation's biophysical characteristics and its early history of settlement.
- Unit 2 This unit examines the northeastern regions, which include the Middle Atlantic regions and Megalopolis, Northern New England, and the Industrial and Agricultural Heartlands extending into the Midwest.
- Unit 3 This unit covers the regions of the South, Appalachia, and the Ozarks.
- Unit 4 The Midwest, the Great Plains, and the Empty Interior will be examined in this unit.
- Unit 5 This unit, which completes our study of the United States, focuses on the West, including the Western Interior, California, the North Pacific Coast, and Hawaii.

Please note that units 1 and 2 cover the most material, and that you have a month to complete your first assignment, whereas you are given only three weeks each for assignments 2 and 3, and so less course material will be covered for these assignments. Also, remember that you will only be responsible for the information in your textbook on the United States, not that on Canada.

As you work through these units and complete the readings and assignments, you will notice that the regional boundaries may be based on cultural, political, economic, or physical factors—or a combination of these. You will soon realize that although the regions are distinctly separate in many ways, they also overlap and are related to each other. You will come to understand and appreciate that these regions of the United States are really components of one large nation.

# Unit organization

In general, each unit of these course materials are organized according to the following structure:

- **Introduction:** a general synopsis of the unit's major topics
- **Learning objectives:** a statement of what you are expected to accomplish or be able to demonstrate upon completion of the unit
- **Reading assignment:** selections from the required text and suggested additional topics for independent reading follow-up
- **How to proceed**
- **Course notes**
- **Additional references and useful websites**
- **Learning activities**
- **Key terms**

## How to proceed through each unit

The following steps are suggested to assist you in your study of this "Geography of the United States" course:

1. **Read** the study objectives for the unit you will be working on;
2. **Read** the unit commentary. The discussion presented within each unit is designed to highlight important facts or concepts and to provide an overview of the study material;
3. Work through the **learning activities**

### Construction of mind maps

Mind maps are image-centered diagrams used to represent words and ideas around a central key word or idea, which in this course are the key ideas within each section of a unit. In addition, the visual quality of mind maps will help you to remember and review key points. In effect, each map will help you summarize and consolidate the information presented in a section or unit of material.

Some of the most useful mind maps are those that are added to over a period of time. Therefore, you might want to start with a map for the first section of a unit and then build on that map as you progress from one section to the next one in the unit. If this is going to be your approach, then leave plenty of space, or, you might want to choose a large piece of paper for each unit's mind map.

### How to mind map

If you have never seen a mind map, use the key words "mind maps" to search the Internet for pictorial examples. If you have some knowledge of how to construct mind maps then:

- use the information in each unit to help you develop your mind maps;
- start from the centre of a page and work outwards;
- make the centre a clear and strong visual image that depicts the main theme of the section or unit;
- branch out from the centre using subheadings from the section or unit;
- draw lines out from this centre;
- put key words on each line to connect written words with a visual presentation;
- use single words or simple phrases for these lines;
- if you have lower levels of subheadings, draw these and link them to the higher subheading lines;

- use colours to depict themes or associations and to make certain key points stand out;
- develop and use symbols to illustrate certain ideas; be creative;
- personalize your map with your own symbols and colours to help you develop relationships between ideas; and
- use arrows to show links between different ideas or concepts.

### Study and review questions

At the end of each section are several **study and review** questions and an outline map. These questions are designed to focus your attention as you read and review the commentary. They are there to serve as study aids. Responses to these questions are **not to be submitted** to the instructor, but are meant to stimulate your thinking on the particular topics, and are useful in preparing for the final examination.

You may wish to respond to the study and review questions fully in a paragraph format, or in outline format. You can find most of the answers by carefully reviewing the commentary and referring to the assigned readings. Also, take the opportunity to post your answers **online**. This will help you to consolidate your ideas, and to receive helpful feedback from other students. When students respond to each other's postings, the students in the class become a study group;

A variation of one or more of the study and review questions may appear on the final examination. Although you **do not submit these questions for marking**, you must complete the reading assignments to attain the study objectives;

4. **Preview** the assignment questions as they are presented in the course materials;
5. **Read** the text and **make study notes**. Remember, your textbook provides much more of the detail that is required for the completion of your assignment questions. You should carefully review the "Case Study" in each chapter of your textbook, and do not forget to learn specific terms and the definitions found in the Glossary at the end of your textbook. These are terms with which you need to become familiar;
6. **Review** the objectives presented with each unit; and
7. **Complete** the assignment questions by the due date and **submit** them for marking. For further information on submitting your assignment, go to the "How to Submit" located on the course site. You will need to answer the assignment questions individually and in your own words. Be sure to cite your sources properly; if in doubt, please consult reliable APA writing guidelines, such as the recommended style guide, Northey and Knight's *Making sense: A student's guide to research and writing*. Type, if possible, or write your answers clearly and concisely, using examples to illustrate your answer. The use of maps and tables is encouraged, as is reference to current events.

Contact the instructor by phone or email if you are having problems or wish further clarification on the assignments.

## Distribution of marks

Evaluation	Percentage
Assignment 1	20%
Assignment 2	20%
Assignment 3	20%
Final exam	40%
Total	100%

Refer to the sections on assignments and final examinations in the *Student Handbook*.

# Assignments

To meet requirements for this course, you will complete the following:

- Three map and written assignments, occurring at the end of units 2, 4, and 5. Assignments are located on the course website.

## Assignment due dates

Assignment	Sept.-Dec.	Jan.-April	May-Aug.
1	Sept. 30	Jan. 31	May 31
2	Oct. 21	Feb. 21	June 21
3	Nov. 15	Mar. 15	July 15

**Note:** If you are unable to submit an assignment on time, contact your instructor **well in advance of the due date**, for we cannot guarantee that the instructor will accept late assignments.

## Examination

The final exam will be conducted at the University of Manitoba, Fort Garry campus or at an alternate location off-campus. **All students must declare an exam location.** The Registrar's Office is responsible for scheduling the final exam. Once finalized, the exam date and time information will be posted on the University of Manitoba Exam site.

The final exam will test your understanding of key facts and concepts, and your ability to integrate them with the various sections of this course. The final examination will be scheduled by the University's Registrar's Office, as indicated in the *Distance and Online Education Student Handbook*. Specific information about the nature of the final examination will be provided by the instructor during the course.

The general format of the exam will be in three parts. **Part A** will be 30 multiple-choice questions, but may include some True-False questions or fill in the blanks questions.

**Part B** will be a map question. This question may ask you to identify the regions of any given location; it may ask you to fill in the blanks for locational identification, or it may ask you to match activity to a location.

**Part C** will likely be one short essay question; you will be given two questions of which you will have to answer **only one**.

### Sample multiple-choice questions

In each of the following questions, circle the letter which **best** answers each statement:

1. The Mesabi Range is associated with the mining of
  - a. coal.
  - b. uranium.
  - c. silver.
  - d. copper.
  - e. iron ore.
2. When was California's Metropolitan Water District formed?
  - a. 1910s
  - b. 1920s
  - c. 1930s
  - d. 1940s
  - e. 1970s

### Sample essay question

Confine the length of your answer between four to six pages, double-spaced. Marks will be given for content, correct grammar and sentence structure; and for proper essay format: i.e., introductory paragraph, main body, concluding paragraph.

1. What are the main industrial regions within the United States? Compare the principal locational assets (i.e., biophysical, economic, and social factors) within any two industrial regions studied in this course.

## Grading scale

Letter grade	Percentage range	Description
A+	90 - 100	Exceptional
A	80 - 89	Excellent
B+	75 - 79	Very good
B	70 - 74	Good
C+	65 - 69	Satisfactory
C	60 - 64	Adequate
D	50 - 59	Marginal
F	0 - 49	Failure

Please note: All final grades are subject to departmental review.

## General guidelines for assignment and exam preparation

Submit the original copy of your assignments. The instructor reserves the right not to mark or credit photocopied essays. Note that referenced maps, graphs, etc., which are included in your essay may be photocopies. Refer to the section on assignments in the *Student Handbook*. Make sure you keep a copy of your assignments in case the original is lost.

### Suggestions for writing essays

- Make certain you understand the question. Define its terms and parameters. Establish your thesis—what you intend to demonstrate—at the outset.
- Extensive amounts of background information are unnecessary; semi-related information will earn you no extra credit.
- The main point of the questions is discussion and analysis. Avoid unrelated listing of facts and information. They may be correct, but they add nothing to the analysis and do not demonstrate your understanding of the material.
- Assignments are not meant to be unsupported opinion papers. What you write must be substantiated by fact, or be a logical conclusion drawn from facts.
- Your essays, as required, must be at least six to seven pages in length. Each person has his or her own writing style, which means that some can say in seven pages what others say in nine, or others more than ten. For this course, please confine your essays to no more than ten pages.
- If you require an introductory guide to essay writing, including basic research methods, English usage, documentation systems, and bibliography, choose one from the extensive annotated list in Appendix B: Style Manuals, in the *Student Handbook*. Some of these are available from the University Book Store. You can consult various websites regarding acceptable format of essay writing.

You are also encouraged to consult two online resources for writing, which are available to University of Manitoba students:

- *Ref Works* – a referencing tool which allows students to take reference information from online data bases and incorporate it into the reference of their own papers according to their own formatting style: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/libraries>

## Essay evaluation guidelines

Your essay assignments will be evaluated according to the following criteria: standard essay format, content and analysis including both written and support material such as maps, graphs, tables, etc., organization, and clarity of expression (includes grammar, legibility, and accuracy of footnotes and bibliography). In other words, treat these assignments as small-scale term papers.

### Standard essay format

Prepare an outline of the major points and sub-points that will answer the essay question. The standard format of your essay must comprise an introduction, the main body, which will include the main points and sub-points; and then a conclusion.

### Content

Using your text as the first reference and then consulting other information sources, prepare your essay to give as complete an answer as is appropriate for the question.

### Organization

If what you write is a poorly organized compilation of ideas, jumping from one topic to another and then back again, your ideas will not be communicated very clearly. Your goal is to help the reader of anything you write to understand what you are saying.

### Grammar

Check spelling, sentence structure (subject and verb), punctuation, and paragraph organization.

### Supporting material

Maps are especially valuable sources in a geography course, and therefore should be included as supporting material. When you include maps, graphs, charts, etc., they must be incorporated into the body of your essay. Do not just insert them randomly or staple them at the end of your paper. Write about them; use them to illustrate a point you are making—in other words, put them to work for you. If you do not refer to them in the body of your essay, you will not receive credit for having used them. Number maps, graphs and charts consecutively, starting with figure 1. The source of the map or other graphic must be included.

### Footnotes or endnotes

Footnote or endnote the ideas, data and quotations obtained from your text and other sources. Consult a reliable style manual, such as Northey and Knight (2012), for proper and consistent documentation formatting,

### Bibliography

Use proper reference and bibliographical format, with complete publication information. When in doubt about this, please consult a reliable style manual for consistency in documentation

## Marking criteria

The criteria listed below will be used for grading your written assignments for assignments 1, 2, and 3, which must be written in essay-style format.

Your essay assignments must show:

- Presentation: fully and correctly referenced; correct spelling and grammar; good use of illustrative materials; outline and restatement of essay question (as opposed to incorrectly formatted references; poor spelling and grammar; inappropriate/no outline; no restatement of essay question) [6 marks]
- Knowledge: includes topic covered in depth; appropriate geographical content (as opposed to superficial responses; limited/no geographical content) [4 marks]
- Structure and argument: includes logical presentation; good synthesis and evaluation; clear, succinct writing style (as opposed to disorganized; no synthesis and evaluation; rambling and/or repetitious) [4 marks]



- Creativity: includes new ideas; innovative presentation; good use of illustrative materials (as opposed to no new ideas; incoherent presentation; poor/no use of illustrative materials) [1 mark]

These criteria serve as a "check list" to help you formulate your writing for your assignments in this course. Self-assessing your first draft according to these criteria can indicate where improvements should be made. Also, please proof-read your work before submitting it.

Meeting these criteria will constitute 15/20 marks, while your map work for each assignment is worth 5/20 marks.

## **A note on academic integrity**

Acquaint yourself with the University's policy on cheating, plagiarism, and examination impersonation as detailed in the General Academic Regulations and Policy section of the *University of Manitoba Undergraduate Calendar*. **Note:** These policies are also located in your *Distance and Online Education Student Handbook*.

An excellent practical source on the issue of maintaining academic honesty is the handbook *Cheating, Plagiarism and Fraud*, available from the Student Advocacy Office, Room 519 University Centre, University of Manitoba; or from their website at [http://www.umanitoba.ca/student/resource/student\\_advocacy/cheating\\_plagiarism\\_fraud.shtml](http://www.umanitoba.ca/student/resource/student_advocacy/cheating_plagiarism_fraud.shtml)

Please make sure you understand the nature and the serious consequences of compromising academic integrity.

## **A word of caution about the assignments and the final examination**

Some students find that they do very well on the assignments, but they do not do nearly as well on the final examination. While your grades on the assignments will give you some idea of how well you are mastering the material, they may not indicate how well you will do on the examination, because the examination is written under very different circumstances. Because the assignments are open book, they do not require the amount of memorization that a closed-book examination requires nor are they limited to a specific time period. Some students have told us that, based on the high marks they received on the assignments, they were overconfident and underestimated the time and effort needed to prepare for the final examination.

Please keep all this in mind as you prepare for the examination. Pay careful attention to the description of the type of questions that will be on your final examination. Also, do not underestimate the stress and focus involved in writing a time-limited examination.

## **Distance and Online Education (DE) Student Resources**

In your course website there are links for the following:

- Contacting Distance and Online Education Staff
- Distance and Online Student Handbook
- Distance and Online Education Website

# Acknowledgments

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With a strong interest in finding geographic explanation to issues relating to the environment and human activity, Ms Enns executed her graduate field research in Indonesia. She maintains the principle belief that, the impacts of environmental abuse by humans in many regions of the world reveal how inextricably linked the North and the South are becoming.

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