Course: GEOG 3331.001
Instructor: Frank McMillan
Time: MTWR, 10:00-11:50 a.m. (CI 112)
Summer 1, 2012
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Geography of North America

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Geography 3331 is a systematic overview of the geographic personality of North America. The major environmental and cultural characteristics of the United States and Canada will be addressed with particular emphasis on how humans have both transformed and adapted to the continent’s varied landscapes over time.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
- Be able to locate and describe North America’s major physiographic regions as they are presently constituted and analyze how they evolved over time.
- Be able to identify and locate North America’s major physical features, cities, states and provinces on maps of varying scales.
- Be able to locate and describe historic and current distributions of North America’s major biomes, climates, soils, natural resources and fuels, population clusters, economies, and settlement patterns of its various ethno-linguistic groups.
- Be able to describe the major environmental and socio-economic characteristics of today’s North America as impacted by technology, energy demands, consumer preferences and politics.
- Be able to give examples of how diverse indigenous and immigrant populations adapted to and transformed North America’s natural landscapes over time.

MAJOR COURSE REQUIREMENTS: In this class, you will have three quizzes worth 100 points each and a comprehensive final examination worth 100 points. Your final grade will be calculated by the percentage of the maximum 400 points you attain when all your grades are totaled. For example: 360 points plus are an A, 320-359 points are a B, 280-319 points are a C, 240-279 are a D and less than 240 points is a failing grade. No extra credit. Any make-up quizzes are given on the last class day. Only one make-up quiz per student is allowed. A valid excuse (i.e. medical, familial or other emergency) and instructor approval are required before a make-up is scheduled. All regularly scheduled quizzes are multiple choice. At the discretion of the instructor, make-up quizzes may be short answer, “fill in the blank” and/or essay.

REQUIRED or RECOMMENDED READINGS.

**Recommended or Supplemental Reading:** Print materials and URL’s may be provided by the instructor.

**TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS:**

Students are expected to regularly check their TAMUCC email. In addition, online resources are available through the university web site: www.tamucc.edu.

**CLASSROOM POLICIES:**

**Academic advising:** The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an academic advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The academic advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

**Academic Integrity/Plagiarism:** University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on a test may result in a failing grade for the test in question.

**Dropping a Class:** I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. June 22 is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

**Classroom/professional behavior:** Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.
**Grade Appeals:** As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

**Disabilities Accommodation:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**SYLLABUS**

(Please note: The following course outline/schedule is to be considered tentative and subject to change as course progress and circumstances dictate.)

Monday, June 4: Welcome to Geography 3331. Students will be acquainted with course expectations and procedures.

Tuesday, June 5: The academic field of Geography is introduced. Students will be familiarized with the basic concepts used in spatial analysis.

Wednesday, June 6: Chapter One, *Regions and Themes*. The concept of the geographic “region” is introduced. A general overview addresses contemporary North American society. Themes include urbanization, industrialization, high mobility, resource abundance and depletion, high income and high rates of consumption, political complexity, cultural origins and environmental impacts.

Thursday, June 7: Chapter Two, *Geographic Patterns of the Physical Environment*. An in-depth examination of the physical environment of North America reviews its diverse physiographic regions and topography.
Monday, June 11: Chapter Two, *Geographic Patterns of the Physical Environment* (continued). Chapter Three, *Foundations of Human Activity*. This lecture comments on North America’s climate, vegetation, soils, fuels and metallic minerals and then introduces its human geography, examining its indigenous, European, and non-European settlement patterns and histories. Contemporary population distributions, mobility, and urbanization patterns are analyzed, followed by a gloss on North America’s diverse regional cultures, religions and ethnicities.

Tuesday, June 12: Chapter Four, *Megalopolis*. Megalopolis is the most urbanized region within North America and is dominated by a chain of large, densely populated metropolitan areas that have coalesced over time to produce even larger conurbations on the eastern seaboard. We will examine the location of Megalopolis, its urban environment, changing settlement patterns, and complex infrastructures and problems.

Wednesday, June 13: Chapter Five, *The North American Manufacturing Core*. This lecture considers the powerful manufacturing core of North America and examines its mineral resources and advantageous geographic location, the economic character of the region’s cities, and the dynamics and history of its diverse manufacturing base.

Thursday, June 14: **Quiz #1** (covers Chapters 1-5); Chapter Six, *Canada’s National Core*. Canada’s environmentally-limited, but prosperous, historical core is examined, with emphasis on its topographic and climatic restraints, cultural landscapes, bicultural inheritance and urban and industrial dominance.

Monday, June 18: Chapter Seven, *The Bypassed East*. In this lecture, we look at the land north of Cape Cod’s distinctive hook, where the territory between the ocean and the St. Lawrence River becomes more convoluted and broken the farther it reaches out into the North Atlantic. Consideration is given to the hindrances of the region’s challenging physical environment, population and industry in its rugged landscape, and economic hopes for the future.

Tuesday, June 19: Chapter Eight, *Appalachia and The Ozarks*. This class examines this often misunderstood region’s hilly and irregular topography, unique settlement history and regional economic development, with special emphasis focused on its historical reliance on the environmentally and economically mixed blessing of coal mining.

Wednesday, June 20: Chapter Nine, *The Changing South*. No region in North America has changed more in the last fifty years than the American South. Although there is now great diversity in this region, it still remains distinctive culturally and economically within North America. We will consider its heritage of agrarian settlement patterns, the impact of slavery, its storied peoples and religious patterns, its history of outmigration and growing contemporary in-migration, and its recent transition into the “New South” with its modern economic and urban reorganization.
Thursday, June 21: Quiz #2 (covers Chapters 6-9); Chapter Ten, *The Southern Coastlands*. The southern margin of the continent with its subtropical environment, climatic amenities and hazards, unique agriculture and age patterns, and urban and industrial development will be examined in depth. Particular emphasis will be placed on its division into areas that benefit from tourism and recreation and areas based on industrial production and trade.

Monday, June 25: Chapter Eleven, *The Agricultural Core*. The agrarian core of the heartland is considered. We will focus on its rich landscape with its mix of environmental characteristics – rainfall, length of growing season, relief, and soils – that allow farming to excel. Particular emphasis will be placed on its cultural settlement patterns, agricultural mechanization and farm size, and the dramatic changes in the ownership of its family farms.

Tuesday, June 26: Chapter Twelve, *The Great Plains and Prairies*. Quite possibly the most challenging physical environment in all of North America, the Great Plains has some of the least variation in vegetation and topography and the most severe weather, including periodic drought, tornadoes, thunderstorms, hail and blizzards. Special topics include grasslands literature, the early settlement of the plains, its agricultural inheritance of farming and grazing, water control and irrigation issues, and its current population change and regional economic reorientation.

Wednesday, June 27: Chapter Thirteen, *The Empty Interior*. The physical geography of the Empty Interior is dominated by arid plateaus and rugged mountain ranges. We will discuss the natural landscape of this spectacularly scenic land and the human imprints on its arid environment. Sections on its history of public land ownership, complex water management issues and irrigation patterns, and tourism and mining industries are included.

Thursday, June 28: Quiz #3 (covers Chapters 10-13); Chapter Fourteen, *The Southwest Border Area*. The Southwest is characterized by three coexisting cultures: Spanish American, Native American and European American. This tri-cultural heritage is the background for a discussion of the region’s ethnic diversity, cross-border economy, and recent population growth.

Monday, July 2: Chapter Fifteen, *California*. California is part image and part reality. The most populous state in the American union, with agricultural productivity greater than any other state, it is also an environmentally-blessed region now transformed by the automobile into an urban metropolis that is a magnet to immigrants from all over the world, while at the same time it’s also the setting for environmental hazards such as drought, earthquakes, mudslides, floods and wildfires. We will examine this dynamic state’s topography, climate, vegetation, settlement history and productive agricultural/manufacturing economy.

Tuesday, July 3: Chapter Sixteen, *The North Pacific Coast*. Sometimes referred to as Ecotopia, the physical geography of the North Pacific Coast is defined by rugged terrain and a wet climate with moderate seasonal temperatures. Except for Vancouver, Seattle and Portland, there are relatively few large metropolitan areas in the region. Starting with its indigenous inhabitants,
we will study its historical patterns of human occupations, its lush natural environment and topography, and a regional economy characterized by farming, fishing and forest products.

Wednesday, July 4: **Fourth of July holiday**

Thursday, July 5: Chapter Seventeen, *The Northlands*; Chapter Eighteen, *Hawaii*. Cold temperatures, long winters, thin soils, poor drainage and low precipitation are key features of the Northland environment. We will examine its harsh environment, sequence of human occupation and its economy largely based on the extraction of natural resources and commodities. Class concludes with a look at Hawaiian archipelago and its string of islands that form a broad arc in the mid-Pacific. Discussion focuses on the islands’ location and physical setting, geology, indigenous Polynesian populations, early European impact, and the subsequent arrival of Asian and mainland migrants. Agriculture and tourism’s place in the modern Hawaiian economy are addressed.

Friday, July 6: **Comprehensive Final Exam**.