

POL 290: WORLD REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

Fall 2014
MWF 8:30-9:20 am
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Course Reading – Required Texts

- Douglas L Johnson, et al (2010), *World Regional Geography*, 10th ed. (Prentice Hall)

Course Objectives

Geography is the study of the relationship between people and the physical world in which they live. “Where” a person lives often effects “how” a person lives. While important, this only gives us half of the picture. People have developed techniques of modifying the “where.” For example, maps are *artificial* ways of ordering the information of geography: they can change the way people see the “where” and, therefore, also change “how” people live. In this class, we want to better understand the relationship between people and their world, but we also want to emphasize the idea that human beings are *active* agents in the relationship.

From this broad, ambitious objective come several more manageable goals:

- (1) To learn some of the basics. We will gain a better understanding of how natural, political, economic, social, and cultural phenomena interrelate. We will compare these interactions in regions around the world and see how they create distinct cultural attributes, or more accurately, “ways of being in the world.”
- (2) To compare these “ways of being in the world.” Regional comparisons will allow the identification of many similarities and differences about how people live. Ideally, we want to identify what makes different groups of people distinct and in what ways they remain similar, despite different environmental circumstances.
- (3) To look more closely at the tools of the study of geography. The Uncertainty Principle says that the observer affects the thing that is observed. By grouping the world into regions, drawing maps, and other activities of geography, we change the nature of the thing we observe. Thus, while we learn how to “do” geographic analysis, we also want to look more deeply at the effect of its use.
- (4) To use this information to understand current events. If we do a good job with the first three things, the ideas we gain should allow us to have a new perspective regarding events in the world. Among the topics that we will focus on will be:
 - Globalization: the effects that new interdependencies in the world have and will have on local and regional distinctiveness
 - Economic inequality and development: the effects that environment has on creating and perpetuating global inequalities, and the means by which human beings work to end and/or perpetuate inequality
 - Role of the United States: the effects that a powerful scientific and economic nation has on the entire world. The goal is not to defend or condemn its role, but to understand its effects.
- (5) To make more informed value judgments. We (the professor and students in this class) are also active agents in the world and, as such, we are compelled to ask questions about what is “good,” “evil,” “just,” and “unjust.” The complexity of the issues involved is not an excuse for deferring judgment. We will use some class time to discuss what should be done collectively and individually.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to demonstrate and explain important characteristics of the major world regions and discuss and compare the major issues confronting those regions.
- Students will be able to locate examples of the world’s major physical, political, and cultural features on a map.
- Students will be able to apply course materials to better understand current events.

Course Grading

The following is the breakdown of how the final grade will be determined:

20%	Exam #1
20%	Exam #2
25%	Final Exam
10%	Map Quizzes
15%	Quizzes and Assignments
10%	Attendance and Participation

The final exam will cover material from the third part of the course and will also have a section that is cumulative.

Quizzes

Quizzes can cover material from the readings for the day, readings for the previous lecture, and content from the previous lecture. Quizzes will be announced the day the quiz will be given. They will be given at the start of the class session and turned in before the lecture for that day begins. Students can be best prepared for quizzes by (1) keeping up with the reading for each lecture, (2) reviewing lecture notes from the previous lecture before class, (3) attending class regularly, and (4) being on time to class (since quizzes are at the start of class).

Some of the quizzes will be map quizzes. These will be announced in advance and students will be given the terms and a sample map in order to be prepared for the quiz. Map terms and blank maps are available on Canvas.

Make-ups

NO MAKE-UP EXAMS OR QUIZZES WILL BE ALLOWED WITHOUT A UNIVERSITY-APPROVED EXCUSED ABSENCE OR DOCTOR'S WRITTEN PERMISSION. Any student receiving a university-approved excused absence should contact the professor BEFORE the absence to arrange a time to make-up the missed exam.

Attendance and Participation

Participation will be 5% of your total grade. There aren't a lot of people in class, so no one can hide in the crowd. Participation is not measured in quantity but in quality. The student who talks all the time, but doesn't add very much to the discussion, will fare no better than the student who says nothing. Good participation means being prepared for class, demonstrating it, *and* joining in on class discussions.

Attendance will be 5% of your total grade. Of the 41 total class sessions:

<i>If you miss</i>	<i>0-1 classes</i>	<i>= you get the full 5%</i>
	<i>2-3</i>	<i>= 4%</i>
	<i>4</i>	<i>= 3%</i>
	<i>5</i>	<i>= 2%</i>
	<i>6</i>	<i>= 1%</i>
	<i>7</i>	<i>= 0%</i>
	<i>8 or more</i>	<i>= you will be dropped</i>

In terms of tardiness: the first two times you are tardy, I just give you a dirty look and possibly (probably) make a sarcastic comment directed at you. On your third tardy, my passive aggressiveness wears off and every tardy after it will count as an absence. Class is only 50 minutes long, so there is no time for tardiness.

You never know when some new idea is going to strike you and change the way you think about the world. So, take advantage of every opportunity that you have and immerse yourself in learning – even when you'd rather be asleep in your bed.

Assignments

Every Monday, each student will turn in a 2-page reflection (typed and double-spaced) on the *collateral* reading for the previous week. Collateral reading means all of the readings that are not from the Johnson textbook. A list of these readings (usually between 2 and 6 articles or excerpts per week that are related to and building upon the topics of the week) will be made available on Canvas on Mondays, a week before they are due.

The reflection must be turned in during class on Monday. No late reflections will be accepted. You get one freebie over the semester, meaning you can skip turning in a reflection with no penalty – but use your freebie wisely.

The reflection should include your reactions to the things that you learned about in these readings. Ask yourself if there was anything you had a strong reaction to (such as “I was fascinated with...”, “This really ticked me off...”, etc.), if there were things you disagreed with, and/or if there were things that you’d be interested in finding more information about. One of the goals of these reflections is to be able to look back over the course of the semester and see if you can better identify what it is in the world that YOU really care about. So, think about the reflections as being a way to get a better idea of who you are and who you want to become.

Academic Accommodations

Students with learning disabilities who may need accommodations should discuss options with the professor during the first two weeks of class and provide approved documentation and verification of need. The Academic Support Center (located in the Bond Center) is available to students for a variety of tutorial needs.

The Academic Support Center is there for EVERY student and it is a service that can only do you some good. You may connect with the subject, but get lost when the prof speaks, or vice versa or, worse yet, neither the subject nor the professor may spark anything. Different people learn in a variety of ways. Find the method of learning that best fits your abilities. If you need some help finding a style that fits you, come chat with me.

Outline of Course – POL290 World Regional Geography

EXAM 1 MATERIAL

A. Key Concepts

1. Why Geography Matters
2. What Does “Development” Mean?
3. Global Sustainability
4. Why Place Matters to People
5. Theories of Development

B. Europe

1. Physical Geography
2. Many Europes
3. Nationalism and Sub-Nationalism
4. Nationalism and Supra-Nationalism

C. Russia and the Former Soviet Union

1. What Russia Has to Work With
2. Transitology
3. The “Stans”

D. The Pacific Islands

1. Oceania
2. Life at Sea Level

EXAM 2 MATERIAL

E. Asia

1. Meteorology 101
2. Japan
3. China: Physical Geography
4. China: Capitalist-Flavored Communism
5. Southeast Asia
6. India
7. India’s Neighbors

F. The Near East

1. Life in the Desert
2. The Mediterranean Coastline
3. Oil
4. Peace in the Middle East

G. Africa

1. Colonialism
2. Identity in Africa
3. West Africa
4. Why Genocide Keeps Happening
5. Southern Africa

FINAL EXAM MATERIAL

H. The Western Hemisphere

1. The “New” World
2. Central America
3. South America
4. The ABC Countries
5. North America
6. The Economies of the US
7. A “Melting Pot?”

I. So What?

WORLD REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY LECTURE SCHEDULE

Readings should be done *before* coming to class in order to facilitate discussion and clear up any difficulties. There are additional short readings for most days. **Check Canvas frequently to see what additional readings have been assigned.**

(*) – an asterisk before a date means that there will be a map quiz on that day!

PART I: KEY CONCEPTS

- 9/3 **Introduction**
- 9/5 **Why Geography Matters**
- Johnson, 1-17
- 9/8 **Why Does Place Matter to People?**
- Johnson, 17-39
- 9/10 **Global Sustainability: Will the World Need a “No Vacancy” Sign?**
- Johnson, 39-51
- *9/12 **What Does “Development” Mean and Why Do We Want It?**
- Johnson, 51-66
- 9/15 **Get-Rich-Quick Schemes?: Theories of Development**
- Johnson, 66-71

PART II: EUROPE

- 9/17 **Europe: More than Just a Tourist Attraction...**
- Johnson, 213-27
- 9/19 **Many Europes**
- Johnson, 227-50
- 9/22 **Nationalism and Sub-nationalism**
- Johnson, 250-64
- *9/24 **Nationalism and Supra-nationalism: The European Union**
- Johnson, 264-68

PART III: RUSSIA AND THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

- 9/26 **What Does Russia Have to Work With?**
- Johnson, 271-86, 301-04
- 9/29 **Transitology: The Tricky Switch from Communism to Capitalism**
- Johnson, 286-301
- *10/1 **The “Stans”: Russia’s “Near Abroad”**
- Johnson, 307-24, 329-31

PART IV: THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

- 10/3 **Oceania: Australia and Its Neighbors**
- Johnson, 589-610
- 10/6 **Life at Sea Level: Antarctica, Global Warming and the Rising Oceans**
- Garrett Hardin (1968), “The Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science*
 - Thomas Dietz, Elinor Ostrom, and Paul C Stern (2003), “The Struggle to Govern the Commons,” *Science*
- 10/8 **EXAM #1**

PART V: ASIA

- 10/10 **Meteorology 101: The Significance of Weather in Asia**
- Johnson, 467-71, 505-11, 561-63
- 10/13 **Japan**
- Johnson, 538-58
- 10/15 **China**
- Johnson, 511-18, 534-38
- 10/17 **Capitalist-Style Communism or Communist-Infused Capitalism?**
- Johnson, 519-34
- 10/20 **Southeast Asia: “Little Tigers” or Sweatshops (or Both)?**
- Johnson, 564-87
- 10/22 **India**
- Johnson, 471-96
- 10/24 **Fall Break (no class)**
- *10/27 **Af-Pak**
- Johnson, 497-503, 324-28

PART VI: THE NEAR EAST

- 10/29 **Life in the Desert: At Least It's a Dry Heat...**
• Johnson, 333-53
- 10/31 **The Mediterranean Coastline**
• Johnson, 353-74
- 11/3 **Oil: A Blessing...and a Curse**
• Johnson, 374-99
- *11/5 **Peace in the Middle East – Can It Be Done?**
• Watch PBS, *Frontline*, "Syria Behind the Lines" (Apr. 9, 2013):
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/syria-behind-the-lines/>

PART VII: AFRICA

- 11/7 **The "White Man's Burden": Colonialism in Africa**
• Johnson, 401-10
- 11/10 **Identity in Africa: Nation, Tribe, Family, Clan, Continent...**
• Johnson, 410-28
- 11/12 **West Africa**
• Johnson, 428-40
- *11/14 **Kicking the Colonialists to the Curb?: Southern Africa**
• Johnson, 447-65
- 11/17 **"Never Again...": Why Genocide Keeps Happening**
• Johnson, 440-47
- 11/19 **EXAM #2**

PART VIII: THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

- 11/21** **The “New” World: Hispanic America**
• Johnson, 143-65
- 11/24** **“Two All-Inclusive Tickets to Sandals Jamaica”: Central America**
• Johnson, 166-83
- 11/26** **Thanksgiving (no class)**
- 11/28** **Thanksgiving (no class)**
- 12/1** **Is Socialism Making a Comeback?: South America**
• Johnson, 184-98
- 12/3** **ABC: Argentina, Brazil, and Chile**
• Johnson, 198-211
- *12/5** **GBA and GSQ: North America**
• Johnson, 73-102
- 12/8** **The Economies of the United States**
• Johnson, 102-25
- 12/10** **A “Melting Pot?”**
• Johnson, 125-41
- 12/12** **So What?**

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, December 17, 7:30-10:00am