

**GEOGRAPHY OF THE U.S.A. –GEOGRAPHY 301-502
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY, (FALL SEMESTER 2006)**

Class meets: 4:10 PM to 5:25 PM, , Monday, Wednesday, in BSBE 115
Instructor: Dr. George F. Carter, Jr.
Office: CSA 305B (Teague West/DPC Annex)
Office Hours: MW 3 PM to 4PM or by appointment
Office Phone: _____
E-mail: gcarterjr@neo.tamu.edu

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES:

Geography 301 is a course in North American geography that surveys some of the fundamental themes of physical and human geography of the United States and adjacent parts of Canada and Mexico, as well as the man nature interactions in North America. The main purpose of this course is to give you the general understanding of the geographical way of interpreting and explaining the North American regions, environments, and landscapes, as well as to make them recognizable to you on the map.

The successful outcome of this is (1) to facilitate your understanding of the natural, human, and environmental diversity of the United States in particular and the North American continent in general (2) increase your knowledge of the physical, cultural, ecological, and regional contexts in which the North American realm has historically evolved, and is evolving today (3) to give the knowledge of the major North American regions, (4) develop your proficiency in map skills and place names.

2. REQUIREMENTS:

There are no prerequisites for this course although some knowledge of professional geographic concepts and terms is presumed. I assume all university students are capable and willing to learn, and I will help you to be a better student if you ask. You must take responsibility for your learning by attending lectures, completing assignments, reading the textbook, and above all else evaluating your own learning and trying to improve. One feature of a geography course that differs from other university courses is the need to use maps and atlases: Be prepared for memorization of geographical features and their location on maps (such as places, regions and examples from course lectures).

3. READING MATERIALS & OTHER RESOURCES:

Your primary reading will come from a single textbook: Stephen Birdsall, Eugene Palka, Jon Malinowski, and Margo Price. *Regional Landscapes of the United States and Canada*, John Wiley & Sons, New York **6th Edition**. The other required learning tool is *The Atlas of World Geography* (or any other Atlas ordered by the Department). You will need to acquire at least

eight large gray scantrons and bring one usable scantron to class on exam day. You will also need to bring your TAMU picture ID to class on exam days and be prepared to show your ID when you turn in your completed exam.

4. ATTENDANCE:

Attendance is an absolute necessity for learning and succeeding in university level courses. I do take role. Attendance is also reported along with the student's course grade. The student's attendance information serves as a reference source to be consulted when considering whether or not student who is border line just below a higher letter grade may be considered for that higher letter grade. You should also remember that most evaluation material will be discussed or emphasized during class time. It is important to take notes on the lecture. Because this class covers all of the regions of North America, a single missed class lecture will often mean that you have missed the lecture over an entire chapter's worth of material, and I always add new important material in the lecture. Some of these materials may not even appear on the lecture's power point presentations, but may still appear in the form of exam questions. If you miss a normal lecture period, first get notes from your fellow students, and then come to see me in my office (preferably during normal posted office hours) if you still have questions. Someone else's notes are not a substitute for attending the lectures and taking your own notes. In the past I have found that some students were obtaining the lecture power points, (which were available on webct) and were assuming that they could study these and not come to the lecture. I have redone my lecture power points, and they now have far less text, and this text information needs to be added by the student taking notes in the lecture. These power points can be downloaded from webct and printed three to a page, and these down loaded power points can be brought to the lecture and they thus can serve as frameworks for the student's lecture note taking.

Read evaluation day absences in the section **Exams, Grading System, and Exam Attendance.**

5. EXAMS, GRADING SYSTEM, & EXAM ATTENDANCE:

THE final grade you earn in this course will be based on three equally weighted exams (Two exams and the final exam). Each exam is worth 100 points for a total of 300 possible points. The letter grades derived from the percentage are as follows. 90-100 = A; 80-89= B; 70-79+ C; 60-69= D; and 59 and below = F. **You must take all exams! Any exam missed and unaccounted for at the end of the semester will be assigned a grade of zero.** The test questions format may include, multiple choice, matching, true-false, fill in the blank maps and definitions. It is your responsibility to study maps

EXAM ATTENDANCE:

I strongly advise you against skipping any exam or being late, unless you present me a verifiable excuse. Makeup exams are possible in very limited circumstances. In any case they will result in inconvenience for both you and me. University policy dictates excused absences for our scheduled evaluation dates. For this reason extenuating circumstances are absolutely necessary. If an exam is not taken at its scheduled time by a student that student will have to bring verifiable

documentation (not just a note) from that student's sports leader, physician etc. Alternative exams are at my discretion and will be either in essay format, or oral exam format.

Some additional features and benefits of my grading system:

I would really appreciate your effort in learning Geography and your thirst for knowledge. For those students who show themselves to be active learners, I will consider the possibility of slightly curving the final score (within 1%). Please demonstrate your interest and initiative in learning Geography! Obviously this means that you attend class faithfully and take notes on the lecture. Do not hesitate to come and see me in my office in order to ask a question or discuss any topic that you feel is worth an answer or attention. If you have some particular topic that you are interested in, come and I will try to give my insights, and discuss the course materials with you, who knows I might even give you a short lecture right in my office!

There is another feature of my grading system. **I will consider the "slope" of your exams record.** For those who are moving "upslope," i.e. improving their score record, there will be a higher chance to get a higher grade if at the end of the semester they should fall just short of a higher letter grade. Do not be too stressed out if you get a low score on the first exam. Learn more diligently and improve your record! I am on your side. You have a chance to improve your final course grade. Everyone should be aiming for an A in this course, and I will help as many as I can to realize this goal. However, if you start high and then your subsequent exam scores are on the down slope this is not a good situation. Do not get relaxed and complaisant, instead try to keep working to improve your high score record.

You will find that I am really interested and enthusiastic about Geography, and I hope to make the course useful and interesting to my students. Again please come to see me in office and ask questions. If there is something unclear, I will be glad to help you as much as I can. Don't wait till the day before the exam! Come as soon as you run into some problem with the material being covered.

CLASS ROOM POLICIES:

I have a few reasonable expectations.

Conducive Learning Environment is Foremost: Late arrivals and early departures should be extreme situations; disruptive behavior of any sort is wrong. No food or drink are to be consumed during class. Cell phones are to be turned off during class. Obviously talking to ones neighbor during lecture is both rude towards me and toward one's fellow students who are trying to listen to, and take notes on the lecture

(Save those discussions not related to the class for before or after the lecture). You must minimize distractions, especially unnecessary noise because it interferes with others ability to hear me. Discretely let me know if the screen is out of focus, or my voice is too low, or if I am going too fast. I will try to project my voice, speak clearly, and not go so fast that you cannot follow and take necessary lecture notes.

Questions: Yes ask questions. The best questions start with "where" "why," or "who."

Please ask me after class or visit my office (it's the best because I can give you much more time) if you are unsure of something.

Cheating: Know the Aggie Honor Code and follow it. "An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal or tolerate those who do." Scholastic Dishonesty will be treated in accordance with Section 20 of the TAMU Student Rules. Please inform yourself on the student rules regarding cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information, conspiracy on that website

<http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/>

On exam day bring your ID card and only what is necessary. Instead of devising ways to cheat, devote more time to studying. Cheating will be dealt with in accordance with Section 20 of the TAMU Student Rules.

Communication/Office Hours: I will try my best to keep office hours and appointments. I strongly urge you to come see me in my office as soon as you come across any difficulty.

Missed Notes: Please do not ask me to give you notes that you missed while absent from class. Get notes from a friend or class mate.

ADA Statement: 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, the legislation requires that students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation of those disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact the department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in room 126 of the Koldus Building, or call 845-1637.

Copyright Disclaimer: All course material is copyrighted. These materials include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in class materials review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these materials are copyrighted you do not have the right to copy handouts, unless permission is expressly granted. Taping, reproducing or down loading of course material for other than personal use will be regarded as copyright infringement and will be referred to University legal officers for action.

As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own, ideas, words, writing etc which belong to another. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you have the permission of the other person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which academic research cannot be safely communicated.

If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the latest issue of the *Texas A&M University Rules*, [http:// student.rules.tamu.edu](http://student.rules.tamu.edu), under the section "Scholastic Dishonesty."

Geography 301-502 Geography of the U. S. (Fall Semester, 2006)
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF LECTURES & CLASS ACTIVITIES

(Student is expected to have read the chapters, shown below before the lecture on that chapter's materials, as a foundation for additional materials in lecture)

Monday	August 28	Intro. lecture.
Wednesday	August 30	Chapter One: Regions and Themes
Monday	September 4	Chapter Two: Geographic Patterns...Environment
Wednesday	September 6	Chapter Two: (continued)
Monday	September 11	Chapter Three: Foundations of Human Activity
Wednesday	September 13	Chapter Three: (continued)
Monday	September 18	Chapter Four: Megalopolis
Wednesday	September 20	Chapter Four: (continued)
Monday	September 25	Chapter Five: Northeast
Manufacturing Core (continued)	Wednesday	September 27 Chapter Five:
Monday	October 2	EXAM ONE
Wednesday	October 4	Chapter Six: Canada's National Core
Monday	October 9	Chapter Seven: Bypassed East
Wednesday	October 11	Chapter Eight: Appalachia and Ozarks
Monday	October 16	Chapter Nine: Changing South
Wednesday	October 18	Chapter Nine: (continued)
Monday	October 23	Chapter Ten: Southern Coastlands, Subtropical...
Wednesday	October 25	Chapter Eleven: Agricultural Core Region
Monday	October 30	EXAM TWO
Wednesday	November 1	Chapter Twelve: Great Plains & Prairies

