

**GEOG 3100**  
**US and Canada: Cities, Economies, & Sustainability**  
**Spring, 2017**  
**Tuesday/Thursday 11:00 am -12:20 pm**  
**BLB 073**

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**Catalog Description:** Analysis of the economic and urban environments that have developed in the United States and Canada. Examination of the cross-border relationships that tie the two countries, with a focus on the resource and population issues that relate to sustainable development.

**My Description:** This course is an introduction to a geographic perspective on the United States and Canada, with an emphasis on the major urban regions that drive the economies of both countries. Our examination of the two countries will pull together many diverse elements that make the regions of North America what they have been, what they are, and what they are becoming: history, culture, economy, society, and other human factors, placed in the context of a dynamic and changing natural environment including factors such as climate and topography.

The course opens with a discussion of the concept of “region”, challenging you to examine your own perceptions of what a “region” actually is, and how regions and their characteristics impact our life as individuals. From there, the remainder of the course divides into two distinct sections:

1. An overview of a series of foundational themes that tie North American regions together and defines the issues that impact urban and economic development on the continent
2. A survey of North America by region that explores the factors that form each region.

**Instructor:** Dr. Murray Rice

**Office:** ENV 310G

**Classroom:** BLB 073

**Telephone:** 565-3861

**Office Hours:** Tuesday, 2:00 to 4:00 pm

**E-Mail:** [rice@unt.edu](mailto:rice@unt.edu) (questions) or

[murray.d.rice@gmail.com](mailto:murray.d.rice@gmail.com) (assignment  
and project submissions)



**Class Web Site:**

<http://www.murrayrice.com/geog-3100.html>

**Course Philosophy:** I am here to organize the course and introduce you to the topics and readings we will examine. I don't have all the answers and I don't pretend to have all the answers, but I will share with you from what I know. I will do my best to make the course interesting, relevant, and challenging.

This being said, it's important that you understand that you have the most important role in making GEOG 3100 a success for you. You will determine how much you actually get out of this course. Doing the readings outlined, completing and contributing to all group assignments, and coming to class ready to think and participate in the discussions we will have, puts you in the best position to benefit from what this course offers. I encourage you to make full use of the learning opportunities that this class presents.

**Required Text:** Birdsall, Stephen S., Eugene J. Palka, Jon C. Malinowski, and Margo L. Price (2008) *Regional Landscapes of the United States and Canada*, Seventh Edition (Wiley: Hoboken, NJ).

**Grading:** It is not essential to pass any particular exam or project to pass the course, but relative success in each will affect your final grade.

<b>Discussion Questions:</b>	Individual responses (Weeks 4 and 8; 5% each)	10%
<b>Student-Directed Discussion:</b>	Individual Issue Paper & In-Class Discussion (Week 9)	5%
<b>Group Project:</b>	Proposal (due Week 5)	5%
	Project Status Update (Week 9)	5%
	Paper (Week 14)	10%
	Abstract (Week 14)	5%
	Presentation – see assessment document (Weeks 13, 14)	10%
<b>Group Analytical Exercise:</b>	GIS Urban Analysis Exercise (due Week 12)	10%
<b>Mid-Term Exams:</b>	Closed-book exam #1 (Week 5)	10%
	Closed-book exam #2 (Week 11)	15%
<b>Final Exam:</b>	Closed-book exam (May 9, 10:30am-12:30pm)	15%

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

**Late Policy:** Anything handed in late\* will be subject to a single, flat 10% penalty. Late work will not be accepted for credit after graded work has been returned to the class. Graded work is usually returned to the class a maximum of one week after the due date. I will grant exceptions to the above if you can provide documentation substantiating a valid emergency.

**Exam Dates:** Exam and presentation dates are final and will not be changed regardless of student circumstances (except for emergencies as outlined above). It is your responsibility to plan outside activities so they will not conflict with class dates.

**Group Analytical Exercise – Urban Analysis:** In weeks 9 and 10, you will complete a group analytical exercise involving urban data and the *Business Analyst Online* software package. To facilitate work on this exercise, we will meet in the CSAM I computer lab room (ENV 336) for a small number of classes in late October (see schedule in this syllabus). More details on scheduling, room location, and other exercise details will be provided in class.

**Group Project:** You will be asked to form groups of 3-4 people at the beginning of the course for the purpose of completing a group research project on a topic in North American regional geography. Since the class goes by very quickly, it is important that you begin work immediately on your project. To help you get started on this and give you an opportunity to get some feedback from me on your proposed project topic, a one-page project proposal is due in week 5. Each project must include a discussion on an issue related to both geography and the regions of North America. These projects can be one of two types:

**1. Focus on a particular region of North America.** This kind of project will provide an overview (more in-depth than in class) of the history, development, economy, society, and challenges facing a given region of your group's choice. Discussion of the region's prospects for the future is a key component of this kind of project.

**2. Focus on a specific issue related to the development of the regions of North America in general.** This kind of project will outline some topic of importance to the continent in general. You have considerable freedom to explore a variety of issues here, but it is important that the geographic perspective is central to whatever topic you choose. You might want to start your thinking by considering the spectrum of thematic topics included in our course schedule, such as industry, trade, culture, and environmental issues. However, be creative and flexible in your thinking.

Regardless of the direction you go as a group, please feel free to consult with me on possible topics throughout the first few classes of the course (I'd highly recommend you do this).

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\* Late = "after the beginning of class on the assigned due date".

**Group Project Proposal:** The 1-2 page proposal should address two different aspects of your project and research.

**1. Brief summary of the topic.** In a maximum of two paragraphs, describe your proposed topic and indicate why anyone should care about your topic. For your topic description, include a specific statement of purpose: what do you hope to achieve through this project? For “why anyone should care”, sell me on your topic: be persuasive and highlight what is interesting about what you want to write about.

**2. Research sources.** Outline at least five credible sources that you know you can use. Give full information on each source: if a book, give the name of the author, the title, and the publisher; if a website, give the web address and name of the authoring person or organization. Also give a brief summary of what the source provides for your topic.

**Group Project Status Update:** This is a 1-page document that summarizes your project progress as of week 9 (with details), and lays out a brief plan for project completion (*i.e.* a list of tasks remaining to be done, and when they will be completed).

**Group Discussion (Student-Directed):** Review the reading for week 9 (the agricultural core discussion in our Thursday class that week) and complete and hand in a one-page individual issue paper (typed, 12-point font, single-spaced) of what you see as the key issues for the region (one individual issue paper per student).

Please use the following reading as your primary resource to begin your thinking: Birdsall et al., Chapters 11 (208-228). You may also use other resources to write your issue paper, but be sure to account for the key points made here.

Also, you need to note the following rules to follow for your individual issue paper:

- At least half the page should be a summary of the major themes from your reading, plus any other key ideas/facts you have access to (e.g. from your own life experience, or from resources you can find over the internet or the UNT library).
- Also include and explain briefly in your page a list of two to three questions you have about the region you think would be most interesting and important for us to consider in class, and be prepared to discuss those topics.
- Lastly, when you come to class, be prepared to cite and discuss relevant examples and ideas that would help your classmates to better understand the region. In-class discussion will focus on the issues, questions, and resources you identify, so give this your best effort.

**Attendance:** I encourage full attendance since the in-class experience is a crucial component of learning in this course.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty in this course will be penalized according to University of North Texas rules and regulations, ranging from a mark of 0 on a test or assignment, a grade of “F” in the class, to possible suspension or expulsion from the university, depending on the precise nature and circumstances of the dishonesty. Learning what is dishonest and how to stay away from such conduct is good preparation for a successful career.

To help you avoid academically dishonest behavior, the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities at the University of North Texas has developed a definition of academic dishonesty and a set of strategies to protect yourself from being accused of academically dishonest behavior.

The following is a summary of definitions and strategies from CSRR:

### **Forms of Academic Dishonesty**

- **Cheating:** intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours.
- **Plagiarism:** the deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas, words or statements of another person as one’s own without acknowledgement.
- **Fabrication:** intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
- **Facilitating academic dishonesty:** intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the institutional code of academic integrity.

### **Proactive Strategies to Protect Yourself from Charges of Academic Dishonesty:**

1. Prepare thoroughly for examinations and assignments.
2. Take the initiative to prevent other students from copying your exam or assignments, e.g., shield your answer sheet during examinations, do not lend assignments to be turned in to other students.
3. Check your faculty member's course syllabus for a section dealing with academic dishonesty for that course. There may be special requirements. If you cannot find a written section in the syllabus, ask the faculty member what his/her expectations are.
4. Consult the Code of Student Conduct for a detailed definition of academic dishonesty.
5. Do not look in the direction of other students' papers during examinations.
6. Utilize a recognized handbook for instruction on citing source materials in papers.
7. Consult with individual faculty or academic departments when in doubt.
8. Utilize the services of the University Writing Center, located in room 105 of the Auditorium Building, for assistance in preparing papers.
9. Discourage dishonesty among other students.
10. Refuse to assist students who cheat.

## Course Schedule

The readings outlined below are an important part of the course. Please have each weekly reading assignment completed before class each week. Most readings come from your course text, but review the following carefully for outside readings and other tasks needing to be completed for each class. Additional readings are linked on the “Syllabus and Handouts” page of the course website; please review the readings provided there weekly.

- Weeks marked “**DQ**” have a discussion question set due on Tuesday that week.
- Weeks marked with “**LAB**” have at least one meeting in a UNT Geography CSAM computer lab room (not in our regular classroom).
- Weeks marked with “**EXAM**” have a mid-term exam.
- The week marked with “**UPDATE**” has your project update document due.

**I will do my best to announce upcoming readings and events in class, but ultimately you are responsible for doing all course tasks on time, even if I do not remind you. Please read and keep track of the following schedule so you know all important course dates and deadlines.**

### WEEK

### TOPIC

#### **PART 1 – INTRODUCTION: THE US AND CANADA, AND THE CONCEPT OF REGION**

1 (Jan 17, 19)

#### ***Regions and Themes***

*Readings:* Birdsall et al., Chapter 1 (2-16); “Maptitude Brochure” and “Dental Therapy” column (see course website, “Syllabus and Handouts” page, week 1)

- **Key City Focus:** Denton
- **Essential Question:** How is a geographic perspective relevant to people, businesses, and cities?
- Course overview and expectations
- Introduction to a geographic and regional perspective
- *Case Study Discussion:* What is a “region”?
- *Geographic Information Case Study:* Walgreens
- Brief discussion of Caliper’s *Maptitude* software package and our use of this software in this course

## PART 2 –BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A REGIONAL ANALYSIS

2 (Jan 24, 26)

### ***Physical Foundations: The Environment, Resources, and Sustainability***

*Readings:* Birdsall et al., Chapter 2 (18-41); Article: “The Case of the Vanishing Islands” (see course website, “Syllabus and Handouts” page)

- **Key City Focus:** Dallas-Fort Worth (see “Syllabus and Handouts” link, do your own web research about this metropolitan area)
- **Essential Question:** What are the key challenges currently facing us as inhabitants of the planet Earth?
- Elements of the physical environment
- Variations in physical characteristics across North America
- Issues related to resources and resource use
- *Major Case Study Discussion:* Sustainability in Chesapeake Bay
- *Geographic Information Case Study:* National Audubon Society

3 (Jan 31, Feb 2)

### ***Human Foundations: Settlement, Migration, and Culture***

*Readings:* Birdsall et al., Chapter 3 (44-55, 57-60)

- **Key City Focus:** Boston
- **Essential Question:** How does geography and geographic ideas inform our understanding of human processes of migration and settlement?
- Settlement, expansion, migration
- The spatial expression of culture across regions
- *Geographic Information Case Study:* California Office of Emergency Services

4 (Feb 7, 9)

### ***Urban Foundations: Cities and Metropolitan Regions***

**DQ**

*Readings:* Birdsall et al., Chapters 3 (55-57) and 4 (71-76)

- **Key City Focus:** Calgary
- **Essential Question:** How can the use of *continental* and *local* scales of geographic observation give us useful insights into how cities work in North America?
- The North American city: urban areas and systems of cities
- The urban environment and components of the urban landscape
- *Geographic Information Case Study:* Bay Area Rapid Transit (San Francisco Bay Area)

5 (Feb 14, 16)

***Economic Foundations: Business and Location***

**EXAM**

*Readings:* "Boeing Slows Production of 747" article (see course website, "Syllabus and Handouts" page)

**1. Group Project Proposal Due (Tuesday)**

**2. Mid-Term Exam #1 (Thursday)**

- **Economic Foundations Discussion: Tuesday**
  - **Key City Focus:** Seattle
  - **Essential Question:** What goes into making a good location for a business?
  - Discussion of the contribution of geography to business planning
  - The connection between geography and industrial evolution
- **Mid-Term Exam #1: Thursday**
  - This is a comprehensive exam on the content covered in weeks 1-5

**PART 3 – REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF CITIES, ECONOMIES, AND SUSTAINABILITY IN THE US AND CANADA**

6 (Feb 21, 23)

***Megalopolis***

*Readings:* Birdsall et al., Chapter 4 (64-70, 76-88); "Texaplex" brochure (see course website, "Syllabus and Handouts" page; review the Texaplex idea discussed here – what do you think of this Texas counterpart to "Megalopolis" – does the Megalopolis concept fit this Texas urban core area?)

- **Key City Focus:** New York
- **Essential Question:** What is a "Megalopolis", and why does it matter?
- The site and situation of Megalopolis
- Changing patterns in the Megalopolis

7 (Feb 28, Mar 2)

***The North American Manufacturing Core***

*Readings:* Birdsall et al., Chapters 5 (90-109) and 6 (112-128)

- **Key City Focus:** Toronto
- **Essential Question:** Does it matter that North America's manufacturing belt is divided into two by an international border?
- Meaning of "core" and core-periphery theory
- Characteristics, growth, and importance of the continental core
- The US/Canada relationship within the core

8 (Mar 7, 9)

***The Periphery: Bypassed East, Appalachia, Ozarks***

**DQ**

*Readings:* Birdsall et al., Chapters 7 (130-135, 141-144) and 8 (146-152, 160-163)

- **Key City Focus:** Halifax
  - **Essential Question:** Why is economic development challenging in a place that has not seen much economic development?
  - The challenges of remoteness
  - Discussion and case studies related to the businesses that emerge in the remote settings characterizing these regions
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**Week of Mar 14, 16: *Spring Break – No Classes (Enjoy!)***

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9 (Mar 21, 23)

***The Agricultural Core/Great Plains and Prairies***

**UPDATE**

*Readings:* Birdsall et al., Chapters 11 (208-228), 12 (230-232, 237-247) and 13 (252-271); “Family Farm” article (see course website, “Syllabus and Handouts” page)

**Student-directed discussion happening on Tuesday (one-page individual issue papers due at the beginning of class that day); project status update due on Thursday (one-page project progress summary and plan for completion)**

- **Tuesday Class Discussion: The Agricultural Core**
  - **Essential Question:** You tell me!
  - Class today will focus on the issues and topics you identify
  - Brief video case study to wrap up class
- **Thursday class discussion: Great Plains and Prairies**
  - **Key City Focus:** Williston, North Dakota
  - **Essential Question:** How do you manage urban and economic development in a place where the economy is marked by “booms” and “busts”?
  - **Case Study:** Gas Extraction in North Dakota
  - Discussion of resource use and management

10 (Mar 28, 30)

*The Changing South/The Southern Coastlands*

**LAB**

*Readings:* Birdsall et al., Chapters 9 (166-188) and 10 (190-193, 196-198, 200-202)

- **Tuesday:** the physical setting and evolving economy of the South (meeting in regular classroom)
  - **Key City Focus:** Tampa
  - **Essential Question:** What impact might having few cities and many towns have on the development of life in a region?
- **Thursday:** *Group Urban Analysis Exercise* – first work session focused on basic analysis of urban communities from a geographic perspective. This exercise uses Caliper’s *Maptitude* software, so we will meet in CSAM I Lab Room today – ENV 336.

11 (Apr 4, 6)

*Regional and Urban Analysis*

**LAB, EXAM**

*Readings:* None

**Mid-Term Exam #2 (Tuesday)**

- **Tuesday:** Mid-Term Exam #2, comprehensive exam on weeks 6-10 (meeting in regular classroom)
- **Thursday:** second work session on the *Maptitude* group urban analysis exercise we began in week 10 (CSAM I Lab Room – ENV 336)

12 (Apr 11, 13)

*The Pacific Coast and the Southwest / The Pacific Coast and Northlands*

*Readings:* Birdsall et al., Chapter 12 (322-323, 328-340), Chapter 14 (276-286), and 15 (294-298, 304-311, 315-317); “Six Californias Proposal” (see course website, “Syllabus and Handouts” page)

**Group Analytical Exercise (Urban Analysis) due at the beginning of class: Email your exercise to [murray.d.rice@gmail.com](mailto:murray.d.rice@gmail.com) (Tuesday)**

- **Key City Focus:** Phoenix
- **Essential Question:** What are the advantages and disadvantages of geographically big and small state sizes?
- **Case Study Discussion:** Dividing California
- The multicultural and multinational nature of a multi-faceted region
- Geographic contrasts relating to cities and resources

## **PART 4 – GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON GEOGRAPHIC LITERACY**

13 (Apr 18, 20)

### ***Group Presentations***

*Readings:* None

- First week of presentations
- Please hand in a paper copy of your presentation slides/notes on your presentation day

14 (Apr 25, 27)

### ***Group Presentations***

*Readings:* None

- 1. Group Project Papers Due: Paper copy, in class (Tuesday)**
- 2. Project Abstracts Due: E-Mail to [murray.d.rice@gmail.com](mailto:murray.d.rice@gmail.com) (Tuesday)**

- Second week of presentations
- Please hand in a paper copy of your presentation slides/notes on your presentation day

15 (May 2, 4)

### ***Geographic Literacy in America***

*Readings:* National Geographic literacy poll (see course website, “Syllabus and Handouts” page; please read the report through to page 12 before coming to class – feel free to read more as you have time)

- **Key City Focus:** Albuquerque, New Mexico
- **Essential Question:** How and why does geographic knowledge matter for the average person?
- Geographic knowledge, and attitudes towards geography
- Overall perspectives on cities, economies, and geography
- Discussion of the final exam

**The two hour final exam will be held in our regular classroom on Tuesday, May 9 (10:30 am – 12:30 pm)**

## Weekly Discussion Questions

**Please note:** you are responsible for handing in the discussion questions for weeks marked “DQ” (Weeks 4 and 8). For each of the other weeks, please read and reflect on the DQs for that module before coming to class.

### Week 1: Regions and Themes

1. What is geography? How much of geography is memorization of things like city names, rivers, mountains, etc.? What else do geographers do beyond this?
2. Why do geographers (and other people) create and define regions? What are some themes that regional definitions can be created around?
3. How are maps a communication tool? What do maps communicate well?

### Week 2: Physical Foundations – The Environment, Resources, and Sustainability

1. Are the regions reflected in figure 2.1 (Physiographic Regions) the same as the regions reflected in figure 1.2 (Regions of the United States and Canada)? Why or why not?
2. What are the major water supply issues currently experienced by both the United States and Canada? Identify where the problems are most severe. Explain this pattern.
3. What do you see as the key challenges (of any kinds) that are facing the D-FW Metroplex region? Which of these challenges relate in some way to the physical environment? How hard are these challenges to solve?

### Week 3: Human Foundations – Settlement, Migration, and Culture

1. Describe the changes that have happened to the major source areas for North America’s immigrants over the past two centuries. What might account for these changes?
2. How would you describe the expansion of settlement frontiers in North America? In your reading, see figure 3.1 and associated discussion.
3. How do universities have an impact on their host cities? What difference does it make to a city if it has a university?

## **Week 4: Urban Foundations – Cities and Metropolitan Regions**

## **DQ**

1. Where are the population cores for the United States and Canada located? Based on your readings and our classroom discussion so far in the course, what would be some major factors that would account for the location of these population concentrations?
2. When a geographer talks about the layout of a city, they are generally referring to the relative location of different elements within the city: where are the residential areas, where are the major business and employment centers, how is the city linked internally via transportation networks.
  - a. Is it possible for a city to have a “bad” layout? What might a “bad” layout look like?
  - b. What might contribute to a city having a “good” layout?

## **Week 5: Economic Foundations – Business, Location, and Development**

1. Thinking about the “Planetizen” online reading (“*Why do Certain Retail Stores Cluster Together?*”; see link on syllabus handouts page):
  - a. What are good examples of stores clustering together?
  - b. What insight does the “Ice Cream Vendor on a Beach” example provide into this clustered kind of business location behavior?

## **Week 6: Megalopolis**

1. What does the term “Megalopolis” mean? Is “Megalopolis” a different idea from just a big city? If so, how?
2. Define the terms “site” and “situation”. How are they different?
3. Do we have urban regions in Texas that have any of the “Megalopolis” characteristics you read about? Do we actually have another Megalopolis here? Why or why not?

## **Week 7: The North American Manufacturing Core**

1. Thinking about the “Lean Production System” online reading (see link on syllabus handouts page), how is the lean production system different from Henry Ford’s mass production system? Give your answer in no more than one paragraph (5-6 sentences).
2. What is the St. Lawrence Seaway, and why is it important?
3. What raw materials were important in the development of manufacturing in the Great Lakes region?

## **Week 8: The Periphery – Bypassed East, Appalachia, Ozarks**

**DQ**

1. What are the major factors that have limited the growth of manufacturing in New England? Name and briefly explain these factors.
2. What have been the major social, economic, and environmental impacts of coal mining in Appalachia?

## **Week 9: The Agricultural Core/Great Plains and Prairies**

1. Referring to the article and video resources on the syllabus and handouts page for this week, describe what has happened to the economy in North Dakota over the past decade. What are some positives for a region to go through such a period? What are the negatives?
2. What is the Ogallala aquifer, and how does it relate to the state of agriculture in the Great Plains region? If you were a farmer in the Great Plains region, how would you like to see the aquifer managed?

## **Week 10: The Changing South/The Southern Coastlands**

1. How did the early plantation economy impact how cities and businesses were distributed across the South?
2. The South historically had very few large cities until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What impact might having few cities and many towns have on the development of life in a region?

## **Week 11: Regional and Urban Analysis**

No discussion questions today.

## **Week 12: The Pacific Coast and the Southwest**

1. Discuss the major socioeconomic disparities between Anglos, Hispanics, and Indians in the southwest region.
2. What would be the advantages of California splitting into two or more states? What would be the disadvantages? What is the advantage of having a large state? What is the advantage of having a small state? Is there any state that is too large, or too small?

## **Weeks 13 and 14: Group Project Presentations**

*No discussion questions today, but please come to the presentations prepared to take notes. You are responsible for recording notes on and understanding the key points and overall conclusions made by each group.*

## **Week 15: Geographic Literacy**

1. How important is geographic literacy for an average citizen? Why? Give at least one good example of the benefit of being geographically literate.