

GEOG 3100
US and Canada: Cities, Economies, & Sustainability
Summer, 2018 (Summer 1 Session)
Mo/Tu/We/Th 10:00-11:50am
ENV 345

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 specific factors that combine to form each region.

In summary, this course provides the background necessary to appreciate and understand the evolving system of regions and places that make up North America.

Instructor: Dr. Murray Rice
Office: ENV 310G
Telephone: (940) 565-3861
E-Mail: rice@unt.edu (questions and 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. In the below, each module = one class meeting (e.g. module 1 = class 1 of the course).

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|-----------------------------|--|-----|
| Group Project: | See project breakout below | 50% |
| Group Discussion: | Student-Directed In-Class Discussion (Module 11) | 10% |
| Class Participation: | Attendance, Discussion Participation | 10% |
| Midterm Exams: | Midterm Exam #1 (In-Class, written in Module 8) | 15% |
| | Midterm Exam #2 (Take-Home, due in Module 18) | 15% |

Project Breakout

Your project includes a *proposal*, an *abstract*, a *report*, and a *presentation*:

- **Proposal:** due Module 5 5%
- This is a summary of your group project idea – see page 4 of this document.
- **Abstract:** due Module 16 5%
- This is a 200 word summary of your project. See sample abstracts (online). Due via email to rice@unt.edu.
- **Report:** due Module 17 20%
- See report expectations document (online) for paper length, content.
- Also see report assessment sheet (online) for specific grading criteria.
- **Presentation:** in class, Modules 17, 18, and 19 20%
- 15 minute presentation, see presentation assessment sheet (online).
- Hand in a paper copy of your presentation slides/notes on your presentation day.

Note: the course schedule includes two midterm exams, but there is no final exam in this course.

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 and Presentation 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 Project: You will be asked to form groups of 2-4 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 course is short, 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 module 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 highly recommend you do this).

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

Group Project Proposal: The 1-to-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.
 - a. For your topic description, include a specific statement of purpose: what do you hope to achieve through this project?
 - b. 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 Discussion (Student-Directed): Using the same groups as for your term project, review the reading for module 11 (the agricultural core) and complete and hand in a one-page discussion (typed, single-spaced) of what you see as the key issues for the region (one discussion page per group). Please note the following rules to follow for your group discussion page:

- 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, bring along any pictures, examples, or other material you have 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 with your group.

Attendance: I encourage full attendance since the in-class experience is a crucial component of learning in this course. I may take attendance during some or all classes.

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 module reading assignment completed before class each day. 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 daily.

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.

MODULE TOPIC

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

1 (June 4)

Regions and Themes

Readings: Birdsall et al., Chapter 1 (2-17); “Dental Therapy” column, and all other module 1 resources linked on “Syllabus and Handouts” page of course website

- **Key City Focus:** Denton
- **Foundational Issue:** 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”?

PART 2 – BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A REGIONAL ANALYSIS

2 (June 5)

Physical Foundations: The Environment, Resources, and Sustainability

Readings: Birdsall et al., Chapter 2 (20-43); See module 2 resources on “Syllabus and Handouts” page

- **Key City Focus:** Dallas-Fort Worth (see “Syllabus and Handouts” link, do your own web research about this metropolitan area)
- **Foundational Issue:** 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
- Case Study Discussion: Sustainability in Chesapeake Bay

3 (June 6)

Human Foundations: Settlement, Migration, and Culture

Readings: Birdsall et al., Chapter 3 (46-57, 59-61); See module 3 resources on “Syllabus and Handouts” page

- **Key City Focus:** Boston
- **Foundational Issue:** 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

4 (June 7)

Urban Foundations: Cities and Metropolitan Regions

Readings: Birdsall et al., Chapters 3 (57-59) and 4 (72-78); See module 4 resources on “Syllabus and Handouts” page

- **Key City Focus:** Calgary
- **Foundational Issue:** 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

5 (June 11)

Economic Foundations: Business, Location, and Development

Readings: All module 5 resources listed on “Syllabus and Handouts” page
Group Project Proposal Due

- **Key City Focus:** Seattle
- **Foundational Issue:** 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

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

6 (June 12)

Megalopolis

Readings: Birdsall et al., Chapter 4 (66-72, 78-89); “Texaplex” brochure and all other module 6 resources on “Syllabus and Handouts” page

- **Key City Focus:** New York
- **Foundational Issue:** What is a “Megalopolis”, and why does it matter?
- The site and situation of Megalopolis
- Changing patterns in the Megalopolis

7 (June 13)

The North American Manufacturing Core

Readings: Birdsall et al., Chapters 5 (92-111) and 6 (114-130); See all week 7 resources on “Syllabus and Handouts” page

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

8 (June 14)

Midterm Exam #1

- Midterm exam #1 is a comprehensive exam on modules 1-7
- Please stay in class after the conclusion of the 45 minute midterm exam: we will view a video case study on the Appalachian region as an introduction to module 9 in our remaining class time

9 (June 18)

An Introduction to the Periphery: The Bypassed East, Appalachia, and the Ozarks

Readings: Birdsall et al., Chapters 7 (132-137, 143-146) and 8 (148-154, 162-165); See all week 8 resources on “Syllabus and Handouts” page

- **Key City Focus:** Halifax
- **Foundational Issue:** 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

10 (June 19)

The Changing South/The Southern Coastlands

Readings: Birdsall et al., Chapters 9 (168-190) and 10 (192-208) ; See all module 10 resources on “Syllabus and Handouts” page

- **Key City Focus:** Tampa
- **Foundational Issue:** What impact might having few cities and many towns have on the development of life in a region?
- The physical setting and evolving economy of the South

11 (June 20)

The Agricultural Core (The Midwest)

Readings: Birdsall et al., Chapters 11 (210-229), 12 (233-234, 239-249) and 13 (256-277); See all module 11 resources on “Syllabus and Handouts” page

Student-directed discussion today (one-page group discussion summaries due at the beginning of class)

- Definition of the region, its geography, and its key issues
- **Foundational Issue:** You tell me!

12 (June 21)

The Great Plains and Prairies/The Empty Interior

Readings: Birdsall et al., Chapters 11 (210-229), 12 (233-234, 239-249) and 13 (256-277); See all module 12 resources on “Syllabus and Handouts” page

- **Key City Focus:** Williston, North Dakota
- **Foundational Issue:** How do you manage urban and economic development in a place where the economy is marked by “booms” and “busts”?
- The challenges of a vast region
- Resource use and management
- Case Study Discussion: Gas Extraction in North Dakota

13 (June 25)

California and the Southwest

Readings: Birdsall et al., Chapter 14 (282-292), Chapter 15 (300-306, 310-313, 322-325), and Chapter 16 (328-333); See all module 13 resources on “Syllabus and Handouts” page

- **Key City Focus:** Phoenix
- **Foundational Issue:** What are the advantages and disadvantages of geographically big and small state sizes?
- The multicultural and multinational nature of a multi-faceted region
- Case Study Discussion: Dividing California

14 (June 26)

The Pacific Northwest/The Northlands

Readings: Birdsall et al., Chapter 14 (282-292), Chapter 15 (300-306, 310-313, 322-325), and Chapter 16 (328-333); See all module 14 resources on “Syllabus and Handouts” page

- **Key City Focus:** Vancouver
- **Foundational Issue:** How has change in the economy impacted land use priorities in our cities?
- Geographic contrasts relating to cities and resources

PART 4 – GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON GEOGRAPHIC LITERACY

15 (June 27)

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
- **Foundational Issue:** How and why does geographic knowledge matter for the average person?
- Geographic knowledge, and attitudes towards geography
- Overall perspectives on cities, economies, and geography
- **Distribution and discussion of midterm exam #2 (take-home exam, for individual completion only, essay response due via email to rice@unt.edu by no later than 12:00 noon on July 3)**

16 (June 28)

Work and Study Day

Readings: None

Project Abstracts Due: Email to rice@unt.edu by no later than 12:00 pm (noon) today

- This is a work day for all groups to give time to finalize your project reports and presentations, and to also allow time for everyone to work on their midterm exam #2 take-home essay
- There is no formal class meeting today, but I encourage everyone to use the available time for project work and exam preparation

17 (July 2)

Group Presentations*

Readings: None

Group Project Reports Due (paper copy, beginning of class today)

- First day of group project presentations
- If you are scheduled to present today, please hand in a paper copy of your presentation slides/notes to me at the beginning of class today

Please submit a paper copy of your presentation slides/notes at the beginning of class if you are scheduled to present today

18 (July 3)

Group Presentations and Midterm Exam #2 Due*

Readings: None

- Second day of group project presentations (as needed)
- **Midterm Exam #2 Take-home Essay Due: Email to rice@unt.edu by no later than 12:00 pm (noon) today**

Please submit a paper copy of your presentation slides/notes at the beginning of class if you are scheduled to present today

19 (July 5)

Group Presentations*

Readings: None

- Third day of group project presentations (as needed)
- If you are scheduled to present today, please hand in a paper copy of your presentation slides/notes to me at the beginning of class today

Please submit a paper copy of your presentation slides/notes at the beginning of class if you are scheduled to present today

* The schedule for this final week of the course (July 2-5) is subject to confirmation after groups are set in module 5: the meeting schedule for this week may change slightly from what is listed here, depending on how many project groups we form. I will confirm the schedule for these final classes with everyone at the beginning of module 6.

Module Discussion Questions

In advance of each class day, please read and reflect on the discussion questions given below (at least one discussion question is listed for each module).

Module 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?

Module 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?

Module 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?

Module 4: Urban Foundations – Cities and Metropolitan Regions

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?

Module 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?

Module 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?

Module 7: The North American Manufacturing Core

1. What is the St. Lawrence Seaway, and why is it important?
2. What raw materials were important in the development of manufacturing in the Great Lakes region?
3. How is the “Lean Production System” different from Henry Ford’s mass production system? (see link on syllabus and handouts page)

Module 9: The Periphery – Bypassed East, Appalachia, Ozarks

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?

Module 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 20th century. What impact might having few cities and many towns have on the development of life in a region?

Module 11: The Agricultural Core

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?

Module 12: Great Plains and Prairies

1. Why was the region initially perceived as the “Great American Desert”?
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 13: 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?

Week 14: Pacific Northwest/The Northlands

1. What are the negative environmental impacts of employing clearcutting as a timber harvesting technique? What are the advantages?
2. What is the basis of the Northlands as a distinctive geographic region?

Module 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.