World Political Geography

GEO 3471 – Spring 2013

Course Home

Instructor Contact:

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Course Overview:

From Earth orbit, the planet appears a singular entity in the mind's eye while from the lunar surface, a big blue marble, see above. Environmentalists and internationalists of various stripes speak of the human race existing on a fragile ecosystem in which cooperation should become the hallmark of our existence. The reality, however, is that of extreme diversity – peoples, religions, governments, cultures and life chances which differ dramatically across the globe. For example, migration of people across national borders remains a worldwide phenomenon as individuals and their families pursue improved life chances for themselves and their children. As a society of immigrants,

Americans are particularly aware of this historical fact and its present day reality. That movement often occurs at great human cost and risk. This course is an exploration into this diversity of the human condition across time and distance. The focus is upon the interaction between geographic factors and political processes resulting in differences in how life goes on in diverse societies. Politics being the art of the possible, geographic factors become one important set of variables which determines the limits of political possibility. For example, Israel surrounded by enemies and unfriendly neighbors is unable to ignore their neighbors.

Within this course, the basics involve discussing the evolution of the nation state – the building blocks of the present day international system and the context within which most people live and work on a daily basis. States have geographic dimensions while nations may be more indistinct geographically speaking since they reflect cultural parameters. This incongruity has definite effects upon world politics – witness the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union and conflicts in the Mid East over the Palestinians and Kurds in their quest for political recognition and autonomy. Kurdistan in northern Iraq is an expression of Kurdish nationalism, a concept fiercely resisted by Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey. The West Bank and Gaza remain as symbols of Palestinian aspirations which compete with Israeli desires.

Conceptually, after the delineation of the basic theoretical framework, the course will shift into a regional mode of analysis. Regions in this course are part of a conceptual map for helping to think about the world in systematic terms. Neighbors help determine what a particular nation state is capable of doing so regions become one avenue to understanding the larger world context. The world becomes even more complex each day as economic systems and communications networks grow increasingly intertwined. The patterns, however, are not random but at a fundamental level reflect the influence of geographic factors. Modern technology has dramatically reduced the effects of distance and geography but never eliminates them, as we will discuss.

The only extra credit given in the course is completed within the first weeks of the course; there will not be any other opportunity for extra credit later. You are not required to complete the extra credit assignment, that is your choice but understand this is your only opportunity. Other materials are presented through the use of content modules which you are responsible for accessing and completing the required readings and/or assignment.

Learner Objectives

- You will understand the concepts defining what geography is and its 5 major themes
- You will be able to discuss what makes a region and how within the regions states and peoples are interconnected
- You will understand development of nation states and the processes through which they add or loss territory along with the rise of multi-nation states
- You will be able to discuss how economic and social development is impacted by geography and how societies cope with their physical environment
- You will understand what regions exist presently and their composition and major changes that are occurring in each including environmental changes that do observe national boundaries.

Required Texts and Materials:

Joseph J. Hobbs – *Fundamentals of World Regional Geography (3rd Ed)*

The text provides basic information in the course especially regarding concepts used in regional geography. Exam materials will come from the text and modules along with readings linked in the modules. Readings from the textbook are identified in the modules normally at the beginning.

Course Grade Structure:

Examinations: Total of 3 examinations, each weighed 200 points, total weight of 60% of the course grade.

Module Assignments: Total of 3 module assignments, each weighed 100 points, total weight of 30% of the course grade.

Participation: Students are expected to participate in several discussion forums; total grade assigned is 100 points or 10% of the course grade. This grade is assigned upon completion of the last discussion.

Extra Credit: 50 points, completed as part of module 0 on line.

Communicating within the Course

In this class our official mode of communication is through the course email located inside Canvas and through the Announcements posted by the instructor. All communications between student and instructor and between student and student should be respectful and professional. It is the student's responsibility to check the "course mail" tool or “course announcements” discussion site frequently. You must also create a Knight's Email account at www.knightsemail.ucf.edu for separate official communication from the university. Under university policy, the instructor is prohibited from communicating official information about student performance in the course except through Knight’s email (the email system is free). Students can use Knights email to contact the instructor outside the course at roger.handberg@ucf.edu.

Assignments: The assignments referenced above must be posted on the course website with your response submitted through the web. The assignments will involve reading text materials, researching materials on the web and in the media (electronic or print), and then answering the question posed in the form of an essay. Please note the deadline listed on the schedule provided on the website and on the submission site. Grades for this assignment like all other course grades are posted to the course grade book to which students enrolled in the course have access.

Assignment topics are discussed in the modules. Each assignment must be a minimum of 1000 words, maximum of 2,000 and in MS Word format; otherwise, I am unable to open the document. This may lead to a delay in grading the materials while you resubmit the assignment. A second occurrence will result in a "zero" grade for the assignment. This restriction means no WordPerfect, MS Works or other word processing programs are acceptable. **Minimum of 5 references, text materials do not count as a reference. Format to be used APA without an abstract at the beginning of the essay. Wikipedia is not an acceptable reference; first use reduces your grade one letter; second, failure of the assignment.**

Exams:

The examinations can incorporate both essay and short answer formats. Students will be queried as to their understanding of the processes and concepts in world political geography. Assignments will test student understanding of different information and concepts discussed in the modules and in the readings.

Extra Credit:

Extra credit comes in two components in Module 0, one must complete the entire assignment to get full credit. The Introductory Assignment involves students completing a course-related biography and demonstrating certain techniques related to successfully completing the course. The Web Link Annotation as part of the Extra Credit involves students locating Internet links not already identified in the course. Their assignment becomes annotating (describing and evaluating) in general terms the particular site's content, usability and then make some assessment as to its validity, usefulness and reliability as a possible source of information. Simply put, is the link worth accessing or not? Much of the material on the Web is of dubious reliability, becoming a critical content evaluator and consumer of information is an important part of the course. This is the only extra credit assignment available during this course so please do not ask for additional extra credit opportunities.

Academic Purposes and Conduct:

Please consult The Golden Rule online at http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu for guidelines. Students should only present

material that they can demonstrate they have studied and learned from course documents and approved activities. Cheating, dishonesty, or plagiarism is grounds for grade reduction or failure in this course.

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's words or work as if they were your own. Do not cut-and-paste others' material into your discussions or essays. All of the writing assignments in this class require you to produce your own informed thinking about the assigned topics. When you integrate your research and secondary literature into your arguments, you must provide sufficient attributions and citations to protect the intellectual property of others. To learn more about plagiarism, see http://www.plagiarism.org. This course requires original work on writing assignments. If you wish to write about a topic that you have previously done in another course, you must contact me before hand to work out an acceptable project.

UCF faculty members have a responsibility for your education and the value of a UCF degree, and so seek to prevent unethical behavior and when necessary respond to infringements of academic integrity. Penalties can include a failing grade in an assignment or in the course, suspension or expulsion from the university, and/or a "Z Designation" on a student's official transcript indicating academic dishonesty. For more information about the Z Designation, see http://z.ucf.edu/.

For more information about UCF's Rules of Conduct, see http://www.osc.sdes.ucf.edu/. Be advised that instructors at UCF are required to report alleged cheating or plagiarism with the Office of Student Conduct.

Course grading: Grades in this course will employ only standard letter grades with no “minuses” or “pluses.”

Participation in Class Discussions: Several Class Discussions are posted for students to discuss questions related to the course. Constructive participation in such forums will also count as part of the student’s participation portion of the course. Constructive refers to comments adding to

the discussion not tirades regarding some issue that the individual is emotional concerning and wishes to vent on others in the class.

N.B. The instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus and course schedule due to changing circumstances and other problems that arise during the semester. Changes will be posted to the course website. The forums are linked to specific questions identified in the modules. Those announcements can include changes in the course requirements or other items of interest. The **Help** group is where you post questions regarding the technology and problems of access. See the Course Protocols for its use.

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Assignments

Module #	Module name	Date Open	Date Close	Assignment
Module 0	Getting Started	January 7	At 2300 hours 14 January	Complete assignments in Module 0 including introductory assignment (extra credit)
Module 1	Physical and Human Factors in regional Geography	January 7	At 2300 hours 21 January	Read Materials, Start Assignment 1
Module 2	Geo-strategic Approaches including Acquiring & Losing Territory	January 21	At 2300 hours 28 January	Read Materials and respond to Discussion Group: "Geo-Strategic Approaches"
Module 3	Economic Development and Migration	January 28	At 2300 hours 4 February	Complete Assignment 1
First Exam	First Exam	4 February	At 2300 hours 7 February	Complete exam on line
Module 4	Europe	7 February	At 2300 hours 18 February	Read materials and respond to Discussion Group: "Poor v. Rich"
Module 5	Russia & Near Abroad	18 February	At 2300 hours 25 February	Read materials, start Assignment 2
Module 6	South & SE Asia	25 February	At 2300 hours 2 March	Complete Assignment 2
Spring Break		4 March	9 March	
Module 7	Oceania & Antarctica	11 March	At 2300 hours 18 March	Read text materials, Work on Assignment 3
2nd Exam	2 Exam	18 March	At 2300 hours 21 March	Complete 2nd exam
Module 8	Sub-Saharan Africa	21 March	At 2300 hours 1 April	Respond to Discussion Group: "Colonialism Still?"
Module 9	Latin America	1 April	At 2300 hours 10 April	Read text materials & Complete

				Assignment 3
Module 10	United States & Canada	10 April	At 2300 hours 22 April	Respond to Discussion Group: “Canada’s Future”
Third Examination	Third exam	24 April	At 2300 hours 26 April	Complete exam on line