

Syllabus

Geography 3620 – Geography of North America

Fall 2023

Instructor: Dr. Tim Collins, Professor, Department of Geography

Contact Information: tim.collins@geog.utah.edu (please use Canvas email (“Inbox”) for course-related contact)

Office Hours: Wednesdays from 9:00 to 10:30 AM (beginning in Week/Module 2 and ending in Week/Module 16, with no office hours the weeks of Fall Break and Thanksgiving) via this

Zoom link: <https://utah.zoom.us/j/91082921543>

-Or by appointment (use e-mail to set up an appointment)

Lecture: Online

Prerequisite: None

Course Fulfills: Diversity (DV) requirement, and addresses the following Essential Learning Outcomes: Inquiry and Analysis, Critical thinking, and Intercultural Knowledge and Competence

Department: Geography

Credit Hours: GEOG 3620 is a three credit hour course. At the University of Utah, it is assumed that there is at least 3 hours per week connected to every credit hour.

Course Catalog Description: This course examines North America from three points of view: its physical character, the human societies that constitute it, and its distinctive regions. Interwoven in the course is a focus on how discrimination and oppression have affected different groups of people in North America and how those experiences shape contemporary social inequalities. The course canvasses each region comprising North America with a primary focus on the United States, considering the physical setting, processes of political and economic development, and the emergence and dynamism of distinctive identities, values, cultural characteristics and social and environmental problems. The course encourages each student to appreciate diversity and challenges them to deepen their understanding of how privilege in North American society shapes their perceptions of, and interactions with, people who have different perspectives.

Expected Learning Outcomes: upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Distinguish regions of the United States based on their social, cultural, and economic features
- Explain the physical landscape and settlement patterns that have led to region-specific features
- Have an understanding of how their worldview and status of privilege in American society shape their perceptions of, and interactions with, people who hold different worldviews and statuses of privilege
- Appreciate the diversity that characterizes particular places based on people’s different worldviews and cultural practices

Required Text and Materials:

There is no textbook required for this course. Readings, videos, and other course materials will be assigned by the instructor and posted on Canvas. Students are expected to read/watch the respective materials by the beginning (Monday) of the week for which they are assigned.

Important dates:

Last day to add, drop (delete), elect CR/NC, or audit classes

Friday, 1 September

Last day to withdraw from classes

Friday, 20 October

Course Grading and Assessments

Assessment Percentage Points:		Grade Scale:	Points:	Explanation:
Quiz 1	9%	A 94-100%	4.0	Excellent performance, superior achievement
Quiz 2	9%	A- 90-94%	3.7	
Quiz 3	9%	B+ 87-90%	3.3	Good performance, substantial achievement
Quiz 4	9%	B 83-87%	3.0	
Place Name Quiz	9%	B- 80-83%	2.7	
Exercise 1	9%	C+ 77-80%	2.3	Standard performance and achievement
Exercise 2	9%	C 73-77%	2.0	
Implicit Association Tests	9%	C- 70-73%	1.7	
Reflection on Privilege	9%	D+ 67-70%	1.3	Substandard performance, marginal achievement
Discussion	15%	D 63-67%	1.0	
Participation	5%	D- 60-63%	0.7	
Total	101%	E <60%	0.0	Unsatisfactory performance and achievement

Assessments:

Course activities consist of lectures, assigned readings and videos, lecture quizzes, a place name quiz, exercises, implicit association tests, a reflection on privilege, discussions, and other class participation activities, all of which are accessible in Canvas. Course assessments are briefly described below. Detailed information on each assessment is provided in Canvas.

Lecture Quizzes:

There are four quizzes covering material presented in the course lectures. Quizzes are comprised of multiple-choice questions and administered through Canvas. Dates of the quizzes are posted on Canvas and are listed in the course schedule below. Quizzes close at the time and date specified on Canvas and cannot be made-up without the student providing documentation of circumstances that warrant a make-up opportunity (as per University policy).

Place Name Quiz:

The Place Name Quiz will consist of multiple-choice questions. Each question will ask about the location of a place by putting it into a context relative to other locations. For example: “Which of the following cities is closest to Canada?” (Possible answers: San Francisco, Detroit, Philadelphia, or Denver.) Another example would be: “If you fly from Houston to Chicago, which of the following rivers will your plane most likely pass over?” (Possible answers: Mississippi, Rio Grande, Ohio, or St. Lawrence.)

Exercises:

Three exercises will be conducted during the semester. These exercises provide an opportunity to more deeply explore diversity topics discussed in the course. Below are brief descriptions of each of the three exercises. Detailed directions for each exercise are provided in Canvas.

Exercise 1 – Demographic Data and Racial/Ethnic Inequality

This exercise focuses on demographic measures. Through lecture and research, students will become familiar with the sources of data and methods to compute the *infant mortality rate* (often is used as an indicator of health conditions within a population); *per capita annual income* (a common indicator of individual wealth within a population); and *crude birth rate* (commonly used to measure fertility within a population). Once these methods are thoroughly understood, students will tabulate data on how Hispanic/Latino people, African Americans, and American Indians/Native Americans in the US compare to the national average for each of those measures. Based on their tabulated data, students will then answer questions regarding what the data tell us about national-level inequality among those different racial/ethnic groups.

This exercise will require critical thinking by students to (1) clarify the precise way in which each demographic measure is calculated, (2) know the sources of data used to compute each measure, (3) understand the range of numeric values that typically occur for each measure, and (4) recognize the strengths and limitations of each indicator of health, wealth, or fertility.

Exercise 2 – Region Identification

This exercise presents images of physical and cultural landscapes of the United States and asks students to identify the geographic region associated with each image.

Implicit Association Tests:

Implicit Association Tests, part of [Project Implicit](#), are meant to disclose subconscious biases that we tend to have regarding various groups of people in society. Tests for this course will include “Race,” “Arab-Muslim,” “Native,” “Asian,” and “Skin-tone.” Students will reflect upon their scores for the tests in relation to their worldviews and write critically about actions they might take to reduce bias in their perceptions and decision-making.

Reflection on Privilege:

Students will complete an online privilege checklist to estimate their level of privilege in American society and answer a series of questions that require them to reflect.

Discussion:

Each student is required to participate in online discussion as part of an assigned group. Participation in a discussion activity involves each student first posting a written response to a discussion topic (usually a question or set of questions). Each student will then be required to reply to the entries of each of the other students in their group. Brief communications following the replies will often be appropriate. Discussion assignment details along with due dates will be posted in Canvas for the weeks in which group discussions are assigned (see the course schedule below).

Discussion postings should be concise and clearly written. Keep in mind that people are more apt to read and digest shorter, clearer, messages than longer ones written in a stream-of-consciousness manner. Here are some guidelines to facilitate your discussion activities:

1. Be respectful of other students' ideas, opinions, and beliefs. It is fine to disagree with someone, but please respect their right to think differently.
2. Avoid posting simple two or three word statements such as "I agree" or "Good point". If you think someone has made an especially strong point and you want to say so, then explain why by adding a few sentences describing your response or adding to the original point.
3. A discussion posting that demonstrates substance contributes to the understanding and application of ideas by doing one or more of the following:
 - a. **Reflection about meaning:** Describe thoughtfully what something means or new insights it provides, or raise a question as a seed for clarification or further discussion.
 - b. **Analysis:** Discusses relevant themes, concepts, main ideas, components, or relationships among ideas. Or, identifies hidden assumptions or fallacies in reasoning.
 - c. **Elaboration:** Builds on ideas of others or ideas found in the readings by adding details, examples, a different viewpoint, or other relevant information.
 - d. **Application:** Provides examples of how principles or concepts can be applied to actual classroom situations, or discuss the implications of theory for practice.
 - e. **Synthesis:** Integrates multiple views to provide a summary, a new perspective, or a creative refashioning of ideas.
 - f. **Evaluation:** Assesses the accuracy, reasonableness, or quality of ideas.

Remember that when communicating electronically, the feelings or impressions that we transmit via body language in face-to-face communications are lost. Consequently, interpreting emotions is more difficult. Only what you write carries the message. Excitement can be misinterpreted as anger or insult. It is important to keep this in mind as you communicate in your group discussions. Words in print may seem harmless, but they can emotionally affect us when working at a distance. Therefore, it is important that we are conscious of how we communicate while working at a distance. For example, avoid the use of ALL CAPITAL LETTERS in your electronic messages, as wording in caps comes across as shouting. The standard practice ("Netiquette") for participation in networked discussion requires that all communication focus on the topic at hand, not become personalized, and be substantive in nature. (Translation: you may disagree with others, but you must do so respectfully; you may express strong beliefs or emotions, but you must not lose focus on the discussion topic.) More information on Netiquette is available at www.albion.com/netiquette.

Participation:

Other class participation activities, which each student must complete, are embedded within the weekly modules. Students must complete these class participation activities as they progress through the materials (lectures, readings, etc.) posted for each weekly module.

Extra Credit:

There is **no** extra credit available for this course.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic / Assignment Due
Week 1 – Introduction (August 21 – August 25)	
	Syllabus & course introduction
	The geographic perspective: Five themes of geography
Aug 23 (W)	Participation: Complete <u>Introductions</u> and post to discussion board by 11:59 PM
Aug 24 (Th)	Participation: Read Meinig's <u>The Beholding Eye</u> and answer assigned questions by 11:59 PM
Week 2 – Physical and Cultural Landscapes (August 28 – September 1)	
	Physical regions: Setting the scene for human activity
	Settlement patterns: Cultures across the landscape
	Prepare for Place Name Quiz
Aug 28 (M)	Participation: Respond to " <u>Where would you want to live in North America and why?</u> " by 11:59 PM
Aug 29 (Tu)	Discussion: Complete <u>assigned reading</u> and post response to group <u>Discussions</u> board by 11:59 PM
Aug 31 (Th)	Discussion: Respond to other group members' <u>Discussions</u> posts by 11:59 PM
Week 3 – Political Economy of Place (September 4 – September 8)	
	Political economy: Production, distribution, and consumption
Sep 5 (Tu)	Complete <u>Place Name Quiz</u> by 11:59 PM
Sep 7 (Th)	Participation: Respond to " <u>What are the economic sectors of your prior employment?</u> " by 11:59 PM
Week 4 – The Atlantic Periphery (September 11 – September 15)	
	Elements characterizing the region
	Diversity related concepts and topics
Sep 11 (M)	Participation: Respond to " <u>What economic activities do you associate with the Atlantic Periphery?</u> " by 11:59 PM
Sep 12 (Tu)	Discussion: Complete <u>assigned reading</u> and post response to group <u>Discussions</u> board by 11:59 PM
Sep 14 (Th)	Discussion: Respond to other group members' <u>Discussions</u> posts by 11:59 PM
Week 5 – Megalopolis (September 18 – September 22)	
	Elements characterizing the region
	Gentrification
Sep 19 (Tu)	Discussion: Complete <u>assigned reading/videos</u> and post response to group <u>Discussions</u> board by 11:59 PM
Sep 20 (W)	Submit <u>Implicit Association Tests</u> assignment by 11:59 PM
Sep 21 (Th)	Discussion: Respond to other group members' <u>Discussions</u> posts by 11:59 PM
Week 6 – The Great Lakes and Corn Belt (September 25 – September 29)	
	Elements characterizing the region
	Opioid epidemic
Sep 25 (M)	Complete <u>Quiz 1</u> by 11:59 PM
Sep 26 (Tu)	Discussion: Complete <u>assigned reading/videos</u> and post response to group <u>Discussions</u> board by 11:59 PM
Sep 28 (Th)	Discussion: Respond to other group members' <u>Discussions</u> posts by 11:59 PM
Week 7 – The Inland South (October 2 – October 6)	
	Elements characterizing the region
	Civil rights and the legacy of "Jim Crow" laws
Oct 3 (Tu)	Discussion: Complete <u>assigned reading/videos</u> and post response to group <u>Discussions</u> board by 11:59 PM
Oct 5 (Th)	Discussion: Respond to other group members' <u>Discussions</u> posts by 11:59 PM
Week 8 – FALL BREAK / NO COURSE CONTENT (October 8 – October 15)	

Week 9 – The Coastal South (October 16 – October 20)

Elements characterizing the region

Oct 16 (M) *Participation: Respond to “What economic activities do you associate with the Coastal South?” by 11:59 PM*

Week 10 – The Great Plains (October 23 – October 27)

Elements characterizing the region

Pine Ridge Reservation: Multigenerational trauma and alcoholism

Oct 23 (M) *Complete Quiz 2 by 11:59 PM*

Oct 24 (Tu) *Discussion: Watch assigned videos and post response to group Discussions board by 11:59 PM*

Oct 26 (Th) *Discussion: Respond to other group members’ Discussions posts by 11:59 PM*

Week 11 – The Rocky Mountains (October 30 – November 3)

Elements characterizing the region

Women’s suffrage in Wyoming

Oct 30 (M) *Submit Exercise 1 by 11:59 PM*

Oct 31 (Tu) *Discussion: Complete assigned reading/videos and post response to group Discussions board by 11:59 PM*

Nov 2 (Th) *Discussion: Respond to other group members’ Discussions posts by 11:59 PM*

Week 12 – The Intermountain West (November 6 – November 10)

Elements characterizing the region

Internment of Japanese Americans: Racism and xenophobia in the American West

Nov 7 (Tu) *Discussion: Complete assigned reading/video and post response to group Discussions board by 11:59 PM*

Nov 9 (Th) *Discussion: Respond to other group members’ Discussions posts by 11:59 PM*

Week 13 – MexAmerica (November 13 – November 17)

Elements characterizing the region

Colonias: Unregulated development and extreme poverty along the US/Mexican border

Nov 13 (M) *Complete Quiz 3 by 11:59 PM*

Nov 14 (Tu) *Discussion: Complete assigned reading/videos and post response to group Discussions board by 11:59 PM*

Nov 16 (Th) *Discussion: Respond to other group members’ Discussions posts by 11:59 PM*

Week 14 – The Pacific Northwest / Thanksgiving (November 20 – November 24)

Elements characterizing the region

Nov 20 (M) *Participation: Respond to “What economic activities do you associate with the Pacific Northwest?” by 11:59 PM*

Week 15 – California (November 27 – December 1)

Elements characterizing the region

Migrant farm workers: An invisible population of the US

Nov 27 (M) *Submit Reflection on Privilege assignment by 11:59 PM*

Nov 28 (Tu) *Discussion: Watch assigned videos and post response to group Discussions board by 11:59 PM*

Nov 30 (Th) *Discussion: Respond to other group members’ Discussions posts by 11:59 PM*

Week 16 – Conclusion (December 4 – December 8)

Course conclusion

Practice for Region Identification Exercise

Dec 4 (M) *Complete Quiz 4 by 11:59 PM*

Dec 6 (W) *Participation: Respond to “What are you most optimistic and pessimistic about in terms of the future of the United States?” by 11:59 PM*

Dec 7 (Th) *Complete Exercise 2 by 11:59 PM*

Week 17 – NO FINAL EXAM / NO COURSE CONTENT (December 11 – December 15)

***Note that the above schedule is subject to change.**

Additional Information

Canvas Guidance: This course is delivered completely in an online format within the Canvas platform. To familiarize yourself with Canvas, please review information available via the following link: [Getting Started with Canvas as a Student](#).

Scheduling Conflicts: Please communicate with the instructor within the first two weeks of class regarding any known conflicts you may have with the course schedule.

Academic Integrity: The University of Utah is committed to nurturing academic excellence, truth, honesty, and personal integrity. The faculty expects all students to maintain high ethical standards. Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. As stated in the Student Code (<http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>); “Academic misconduct’ includes, but is not limited to, cheating, misrepresenting one’s work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information, as defined further below. It also includes facilitating academic misconduct by intentionally helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic misconduct.”

- “‘Cheating’ involves the unauthorized possession or use of information, materials, notes, study aids, or other devices in any academic exercise, or the unauthorized communication with another person during such an exercise.”
- “‘Misrepresenting one’s work’ includes, but is not limited to, representing material prepared by another as one’s own work, or submitting the same work in more than one course without prior permission of both faculty members. “‘Plagiarism’ means the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person’s work in, or as a basis for, one’s own work offered for academic consideration or credit or for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as one’s own, without attribution, any other individual’s words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression.”
- “‘Fabrication’ or ‘falsification’ includes reporting experiments or measurements or statistical analyses never performed; manipulating or altering data or other manifestations of research to achieve a desired result; falsifying or misrepresenting background information, credentials or other academically relevant information; or selective reporting, including the deliberate suppression of conflicting or unwanted data. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data and/or results.”

This course has a zero-tolerance policy for academic misconduct. For any coursework in which it is demonstrated that a student engaged in academic misconduct the resulting academic sanction will be a score of zero for the coursework. Additionally, the student will be required to meet with the academic advisor from the Department of Geography and/or their respective major department, the instance of academic misconduct will be entered into a university database, and the student may be subject to further academic sanctions. See the Student Code for additional information on academic sanctions.

Student and Faculty Responsibilities: In this course, the instructor emphasizes maintaining an environment where the utmost respect for diversity and all participants' perspectives is upheld. Therefore, students are expected to conduct themselves in a considerate manner.

The class will follow accepted University of Utah policies and procedures as discussed in the Student Code. Specifically: All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in course, according to the Student Code, spelled out in the Student Handbook. Students have specific rights as detailed in the Code. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content (<http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>).

According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is the faculty person's responsibility to enforce responsible behaviors, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee.

Students in Need of Accommodations and Support Services: In accordance with *The Americans with Disabilities Act*, the University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this course, you should give reasonable prior notice to the Center for Disability & Access (CDA), 801-581-5020. CDA will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability & Access.

Sexual Misconduct: Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status, or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Office of Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, & Title IX, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677.

Help with Writing and English as an Additional/Second Language: Please be aware of resources on campus that will support you with your writing development; these resources are relevant to all students, but may be especially important for learners of English as an additional/second language. These resources include the Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.utah.edu/>) and the English Language Institute (<https://eli.utah.edu/>). If you are a learner of English as an additional/second language, please let me know so we can discuss the possibilities for additional support in this course.

Commitment to Undergraduate Students: As the only institution in the state classified in the highest research category (R1), at the University of Utah you will have access to state-of-the-art research facilities and be able to be part of the knowledge creation process. You will have the

opportunity to do research of your own with faculty who are leading experts in their field, engaging in [programs](#) that match your research interests. Further, you will interact with and often take classes with graduate students that provide an advanced understanding of the knowledge in your field.

Safety & Wellness: The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677); this number will get you to a dispatch officer at the University Safety Department (<https://safety.utah.edu/>). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.

The University of Utah seeks to provide a safe and healthy experience for students, employees, and others who make use of campus facilities. In support of this goal, the University has established confidential resources and support services to assist students who may have been affected by harassment, abusive relationships, or sexual misconduct. A detailed listing of University Resources for campus safety can be found at <https://registrar.utah.edu/handbook/campussafety.php>.

Your well-being is key to your personal safety. If you are in crisis, call 801-587-3000 or 1-800-273-8255; help is close.

The university has additional excellent resources to promote emotional and physical wellness, including the Counseling Center (<https://counselingcenter.utah.edu>), the Wellness Center (<https://wellness.utah.edu>), and the Women's Resource Center (<https://womenscenter.utah.edu>). Counselors and advocates in these centers can help guide you to other resources to address a range of issues, including substance abuse and addiction.

Undocumented Student Support: Immigration is a complex phenomenon with broad impact—those who are directly affected by it, as well as those who are indirectly affected by their relationships with family members, friends, and loved ones. If your immigration status presents obstacles to engaging in specific activities or fulfilling specific course criteria, confidential arrangements may be requested from the Dream Center. Arrangements with the Dream Center will not jeopardize your student status, your financial aid, or any other part of your residence. The Dream Center offers a wide range of resources to support undocumented students (with and without DACA) as well as students from mixed-status families. To learn more, please contact the Dream Center at 801-581-3470 or visit dream.utah.edu.

Non-Contract Note: The syllabus is not a binding legal contract. It is meant to serve as an outline and guide for our course. Please note that I may modify it with reasonable notice to you. I may also modify the course schedule to accommodate the needs of our class. Note that modifications are most often made to rectify an error that would confuse and/or disadvantage students. Any changes will be posted on Canvas under Announcements.