World Regional Geography

POLI 104 / GEOG 101 • Fall 2013
Thursday 4:00 – 6:45
Lightsey Center, 344

Instructor:  Jesse Baker, PhD
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Office:  Riley Building, 1st Floor (284 King St)
Office Hrs:  Thursday 1:00 – 2:00

COURSE DESCRIPTION
The United States is just under 5% of the world’s population, yet consumes nearly 30% of the world’s natural resources. Resources are extracted, refined, processed, manufactured, packaged, distributed, consumed, and disposed of in distinct regions across the globe. These processes cause a variety of either positive or negative impacts, in numerous areas, for everything we, as US citizens, consume.

The US also runs an annual trade deficit now well over $500 Billion (ex: 2011: $560B, 2012: $540B – record year 2006: $753B!) meaning that the majority of what is consumed in the US originates from outside of the US – almost entirely from countries that lack the social and environmental regulations that US citizens have demanded and achieved. The moral of the story here is that US citizens consume a whole lot of stuff, and this consumption has an enormous impact on the world you live in…far more than you may realize. For a variety of reasons, this is not a sustainable consumer model.

The study of geography offers an integrated way of understanding the world’s most pressing socioeconomic and environmental problems…problems that impact us all (including you). War and civil conflict, water pollution, transnational crime, human rights abuse, ecosystem degradation, terrorism, loss of biodiversity, the threat of mass spreading of infectious disease (pandemics), and climate change are all examples of the large scale problems we face.

It is easy to become depressed thinking about the vastness of the problems we face, yet we need to remember that these problems (for the most part) are not new, and for the first time in history, we have access to the tools (mostly information technologies, alternative energies, and increased socio-cultural understanding) that can bring about massive problem solving change. Nevertheless, solving these problems fundamentally requires a heightened understanding of how the different components of the planet – i.e. the different regions of the world – interact and impact each other.
Geography is about much more than knowing where places are. The purpose of this course is to help you develop geographical skills that will enable you to better understand contemporary politics, economies, and cultures – and appreciate the place where you live as well as places around the world. This course is about understanding the fundamental politics of our interconnections.

Classes will be a mix of lectures and audio/films. Evaluation will be based on your critical engagement of what is presented in class and the research conducted by you. Being “critical” means more than just critiquing a particular stance or idea; it is the ability to articulate the assumptions of a particular argument or point of view, or be able to articulate between different points of view.

**STUDENT LEARNING GOALS**

- Students can apply social science concepts, models or theories to explain human behavior, social interactions or social institutions [CoFC learning outcome; will be assessed in the commodity chain project (30%) and all exams].
- Explain what geographers do, the geographical approach to understanding global politics and economics (political economy): processes such as “development” and “globalization.”
- Identify and describe the world’s major geographic regions and their distinct physical, economic, and cultural characteristics.
- Apply geographical concepts and the spatial perspective (geographer’s approach) to study global interconnectedness and interdependencies among places, as well as the resulting politics and economics in these places.
- Interpret and extend current news events through a geographical lens, to become a more informed world citizen.
- Gain skills in critical thinking, critical reading and research.

**COURSE RELEVANCE**

Of interest to students pursuing careers in government, business, teaching, journalism, environmental professions, social activism, and non-profit development.

**READINGS**

Class readings are preparatory; meaning that you are expected to have read the relevant book chapters before lectures and class discussion.

**Required text** (available at the CoFC Bookstore):
CURRENT AFFAIRS
You should familiarize yourself with the following websites and periodicals (they may become useful for class lectures, discussion, assignments, and exams):
• Visit the BBC News web site daily (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/). The BBC has a superior international focus and analytical quality compared to CNN etc.
• Read The Economist weekly, either in the periodical section of the library, or visit (http://www.economist.com/). Students can also order a subscription at a reduced rate.
• Sustainability will be a recurring theme in this class, as such you should be familiar with Grist (http://grist.org/)

CLASS POLICIES
ATTENDANCE is mandatory. You are expected to be on time, participate in class discussions, and do the assigned readings. Notices from the Absent Memo Office do not constitute an excused absence, unless it is a required college-sponsored activity. Present to me directly your evidence of your absence if you wish to be excused. Unexcused absences may result in a failing grade. Of course, you must notify me as soon as possible of your absence. Only illnesses that require hospitalization will constitute appropriate medical excuses for absences.

TECHNOLOGY such as cell phones, computers, tablets, or any other such device must be used ONLY for class purposes – i.e. note taking or the immediate research of a relevant topic. If I find that this is being abused, I will confiscate your device until the end of class.

ASSIGNMENTS are due by the end of the day they are scheduled to be due (i.e., 11:59 pm), unless otherwise noted. You will lose a full letter grade for every class meeting that an assignment is late. Missed exams are not excused, nor given the opportunity to be made up, unless the instructor is notified during the first week of the semester that an exam will be missed due to officially-sponsored activities, or if you are unexpectedly hospitalized, as stated above.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY is valued above all else in your performance; it is assumed that all students will act with the highest level of academic integrity and will not engage in behavior such as plagiarism, academic dishonesty, misrepresentation, or cheating. Please refer to the college’s policy on academic honesty. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will result in an XF in the class. The entire purpose of this class is to acquire useful skills; to cheat is to lose the opportunity to improve these skills.

Plagiarism refers to the presentation of someone else's ideas, work, or words as your own, without attribution. If you use someone else's exact words, even when from an unattributed source from the internet, then you must use quotation marks in addition to a citation; simply naming the source is not enough. If you paraphrase
someone else’s ideas in your own words, then you still have to cite the source, but you do not have to use quotations. When in doubt, cite the source. If you have questions about whether you have provided adequate citation for an assignment, consult with me before the assignment is due.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php

**SUPPORT SERVICES**

Please take advantage of the College’s Center for Student Learning; they have walk-in labs for writing—a skill you will need to improve (and be tested on!) during this semester. The Center for Student Learning is located in the Addlestone Library (953-5635).

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply at the Center for Disability Services/SNAP located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me at least one week before accommodation is needed.

**Grading**

General guidelines for grades:
A: Achievement is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirement
B: Achievement is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
C: Achievement meets the course requirements in every respect.
D: Achievement is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
I (Incomplete): Assigned due to extraordinary circumstances, e.g., hospitalization, which prevent the completion of work on time. Requires a written agreement between student and instructor.

This course will use +/- grades, allocated as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98% &amp; up</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92 – 97%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 91%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88 – 89%</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>82 – 87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 81%</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>78 – 79%</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>70 – 71%</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>68 – 69%</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>62 – 67%</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60 – 61%</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>59% &amp; below</td>
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HINTS FOR EXCELLENCE:

• Do the reading, and take notes on it (and on lecture) in some form. Make sure you see the purpose of the reading and its relationship to class.

• Make a conscious effort to incorporate the lexicon of the class into your own intellectual framework and be thinking of examples from your own experience and independent reading. Try those out on your friends and family sometimes. Also, like the “Geography at CofC” Facebook page, whose postings will help you better understand geographic analysis (and lead you to job prospects!). This will help you do better on tests.

• Ask questions! If the time does not seem right, write them in your notes and then ask later when I pause for questions – do not be shy! Feel free to email me, or come to my office hours if you cannot bring yourself to ask in class.

• Stay on pace. Do not let several chapters or readings pile up.

GRADING BREAKDOWN

60% - 3 exams • 20 points each
30% - commodity chain project
10% - attendance and participation (includes in class assignments)
   5% - extra credit (TBA)

SCHEDULE

August 22
Introduction

August 29
Ch 1: World Regions Overview

September 5
Ch 2: Europe

September 12
Ch 3: The Russia Federation • Central Asia • Transcaucasus Region

September 19
Ch 4: Middle East • North Africa

September 26
**Exam 1** (Chapters 1-4)

October 3
Ch 5: Sub-Sahara Africa
October 10
Ch 6: US and Canada

October 17
Ch 7: Latin America and the Caribbean

October 24
Ch 8: East Asia

October 31
**Exam 2 (Chapters 5-8)**

November 7
Ch 9: South Asia pgs

November 14
Ch 10: Southeast Asia

November 21
Ch 11: Australia • New Zealand • South Pacific
Commodity Chain Assignment Due

November 28
Thanksgiving – No Class
Readings on Sustainability and Globalization

December 5
**Exam 3 (Chapters 9-11, plus assigned readings)**

**NOTE: our final exam is scheduled for the same time class regularly meets**