

Department of Geography  
University of Mary Washington

## **GEOG 222: Geography of Western North America**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Dawn S. Bowen  
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**OFFICE:** Monroe Hall 303B  
**HOURS:** MWF 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.  
TR 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.

**Course Description:** This course is a survey of geographic patterns in the western United States and Canada that introduces students to the similarities and differences that exist from place to place. Emphasis is given to environmental conditions, cultural patterns, regional economies, the interplay between these phenomena, and how they have evolved through time. The course is designed to help you appreciate the nature of regions and the relationships between people and their environment, and understand the forces that have contributed to the existence of distinctive patterns on the land.

**The Classroom Experience:** Class periods consist of map work, lecture, and a slide presentation focusing on a particular area or geographic theme. At the start of each class, transfer the locations and patterns from the transparency to your own outline map. (I highly recommend that you purchase a set of colored pencils to help in preparing your maps.) The final portion of each class will be a presentation of slides that illustrate the places and themes introduced in the lecture. By the time you leave class, you will have a good idea of where certain places are located and what these places are “like,” in a physical, cultural, and/or economic sense.

**Text:** Tom L. McKnight, *Regional Geography of the United States and Canada*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (2004). This book would never make the *New York Times* Best Seller list, but it is full of relevant information and should be viewed as a valuable supplement to the lectures. Be sure to integrate its information with the lectures to gain a fuller understanding of the character of places. You will also find additional thematic maps and other course material on **Blackboard**.

### **Course Objectives:**

There are four broad goals for this course:

- 1) to develop your critical thinking skills through reading, discussion, and writing;
- 2) to enhance your knowledge of the world by comparing and contrasting patterns of culture in various parts of the globe;
- 3) to foster geographic thinking and analysis through examination of spatial patterns of human processes, human-environment interactions, and connections between places and regions; and
- 4) to stimulate greater interest in understanding the world geographically.

The first goal is a general one that will serve you well throughout the rest of your life as a global citizen. The last three goals reflect my desire to teach you to think about and understand the world like a geographer. Whether or not you take more courses in geography, learning to view the world from a variety of disciplinary perspectives is an essential component of the liberal arts philosophy.

**Attendance:** I expect you to come to class and I take attendance every day. I do this because 1) matching a face to a name can be challenging and I want to know yours; 2) lectures and discussions supplement (not replace) your readings by introducing new material; 3) test questions are drawn from both lectures and the text; 4) numerous studies confirm that students who attend class have a better understanding of the material and perform better on tests; and finally, 5) my lectures are interesting and fun. If you miss class, you will therefore be at a disadvantage. Your attendance will not count

explicitly toward your final grade; however, I take attendance into consideration when I assign final grades. Students on the border between a C+ and B-, for instance, may be assigned the higher grade in the case of excellent attendance.

**Professional Conduct:** I have two rules. 1) Come to class on time. I realize that there is often not much time between classes, but make the effort to be in your seat when class begins. Because of the layout of the classroom, it is often a severe disruption when someone enters the classroom late. I will make every effort to end the class on time. Please do not pack up your belongings before I dismiss the class. (If you know that you will arrive late or need to leave early, please let me know in advance.) If tardiness becomes a problem, I reserve the right to enforce a policy of no admittance after the door is closed. 2) **Turn Off** your cell phone before class begins. If your phone rings during class, please leave the room immediately. You may return to collect your belongings AFTER the class is dismissed.

**Exams:** Exams are scheduled for **February 13** and **March 28**. The third exam is scheduled during the final exam period. Exams include multiple choice and matching questions, as well as map locations. The goal of each exam is to determine if you know where certain places are located, their physical, economic, and cultural characteristics, why these particular characteristics exist, and how they have evolved. The exams account for 70% of your final grade.

**Environmental Issue Paper:** This semester, you are to investigate an environmental issue in the American West and prepare a report on your findings. A detailed assignment is attached. The paper is worth 30% of your final grade.

**Honor Code:** I expect that students adhere to the principles of the Honor Code. All written work must be pledged. I will not tolerate any form of dishonest behavior, whether it is in written or oral communication. If you cheat or plagiarize, your assignment will receive a grade of 0.

**Grading:** The following scale will be used to determine your final letter grade.

		A	93-100	A-	90-92	(Excellent)
B+	88-89	B	83-87	B-	80-82	(Commendable)
C+	78-79	C	73-77	C-	70-72	(Acceptable)
D+	68-69	D	60-67			(Marginal)
F	59 and below					(Failure)

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Part One: The Great Plains and Rocky Mountains (Chapters 13 and 14)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Map</u>
M 1/14	Introduction	
W 1/16	Great Plains #1: Winnipeg – Gateway to the Canadian West	WC
F 1/18	Great Plains #2: Rural Landscapes on the Canadian Prairies	WC
M 1/21	Great Plains #3: Impact of Hydrocarbon Development in Alberta	WC
W 1/23	Great Plains #4: West River Country	GP/RM
F 1/25	Great Plains #5: Energy Developments on the Northern Plains	GP/RM
M 1/28	Great Plains #6: Human-Environment Interaction on the High Plains	GP/RM
W 1/30	Great Plains #7: <i>Surviving the Dust Bowl</i> video presentation	
F 2/1	Great Plains #8: Pump Irrigation on the Great Plains	GP/RM
M 2/4	Rocky Mountains #1: Denver and the Rocky Mountain Basins	GP/RM
W 2/6	Rocky Mountains #2: The San Luis Valley	GP/RM
F 2/8	Rocky Mountains #3: The Rocky Mountain Parks	GP/RM
M 2/11	Rocky Mountains #4: Butte: The Legacy of a Mining Economy	GP/RM
<b>W 2/13</b>	<b>Exam #1</b>	

### Part Two: Western Canada's Boreal Forest and the Intermountain West Chapters 19 and 15 (in 19, read pages 459-467, 471-476).

F 2/15	Boreal Forest #1: Glimpses of the Yukon	WC
M 2/18	Boreal Forest #2: Yellowknife: Boomtown in the Bush	WC
W 2/20	Boreal Forest #3: Energy in Canada's North	WC
F 2/22	Boreal Forest #4: The Peace River Country	WC
M 2/25	Colorado Plateau #1: Landscape & Tourism	FW
W 2/27	Colorado Plateau #2: Native American Presence	FW
<b>F 2/29</b>	<b>No Class – SPRING BREAK begins early</b>	
<b>M 3/10</b>	<b>No Class – SPRING BREAK ends late</b>	
W 3/12	Basin & Range #1: SLC & the Mormon Landscape	FW
F 3/14	Basin & Range #1: A Journey Across Northern Nevada	FW
M 3/17	Basin & Range #2: The Evolution of Las Vegas as a Tourist Mecca	FW
W 3/19	Basin & Range #4: The Salton Trough	FW

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Map</u>
F 3/21	Basin & Range #5: Water and Population Growth in Metro Phoenix	FW
M 3/24	Columbia Plateau #1: The Palouse & Columbia Basin	FW
W 3/26	Columbia Plateau #2: The Snake River Valley	FW
<b>F 3/28</b>	<b>Exam #2</b>	

Part Three: The Far West (Chapters 16 and 18)

M 3/31	Introduction to the West Coast	FW
W 4/2	Central Valley #1: Sacramento Valley	FW
F 4/4	Central Valley #2: San Joaquin Valley	FW
M 4/7	Central Valley #3: <i>Valley at the Crossroads</i> video presentation	
W 4/9	California Coast #1: The San Francisco Bay Area	FW
F 4/11	California Coast #2: Big Sur and the Salinas Valley	FW
M 4/14	California Coast #3: Southern California	LA
W 4/16	North Pacific Coast #1: Portland's Urban Growth Boundary	FW
F 4/18	North Pacific Coast #2: Eel River to the Olympic Peninsula	FW
M 4/21	North Pacific Coast #3: Vancouver: An Evolving Ethnic Metropolis	AK/BC
W 4/23	North Pacific Coast #4: The British Columbia Coast	AK/BC
F 4/25	Arctic National Wildlife Refuge	AK/BC

**Final Exam:**  
**Monday, April 30 at Noon**

## Environmental Issue Report

1. Begin by visiting the *High Country News* website at hcn.org. *High Country News* is “a bi-weekly newspaper that reports on the West’s natural resources, public lands, and changing communities. Covering 11 western states, from the Great Plains to the Northwest, and from the Northern Rockies to the desert Southwest, *High Country News* is a respected source for environmental news, analysis and commentary on ... issues changing the face of the West” (*High Country News* 2002).
2. Go to the “Free Archives” on the left hand side of the page. Browse through the archives by category/subject. All stories except those in the last three months are freely accessible. You may choose any issue that involves human-environment interactions (that’s going to be virtually all) and its effect on a place or places in the American West, but you must have the topic approved by me no later than March 21! Failure to have your topic approved will result in a 5 point deduction from the report grade.
3. A recent issue (5/2/05) of the *High Country News* contains a story on Colorado’s plan to develop wind resources. There are usually links to additional sources of information at the end of the article. Check these out when available in order to gain a full appreciation of the issue and its complexity. You must also consult full text databases (Expanded Academic, InfoTrac, Factiva, and LexisNexis) available through the Simpson Library homepage and find FIVE additional sources of information to incorporate into your report. Two of these must be SCHOLARLY sources from academic journals or books. All of these must be fully referenced and incorporated in the report. (Under no circumstances is Wikipedia acceptable as a source.)
4. Your report must contain the following sections:
  - The first section (Introduction) must introduce the issue.
  - The second section (Place) should be a brief description of the place(s) affected: location, relevant physical geographic features (if applicable), population (human and plant/animal as applicable), and economic base (if applicable) written in a cohesive paragraph. You need to provide enough, relevant, information for the reader to understand how the issue affects this particular place.
  - The third section (Problem) should identify and define the specific environmental issue explain how and why this has occurred, being sure to identify the consequences. This is going to be the most significant section of the report.
  - The fourth section (Environmental Perspective) must explain the environmentalists’ view on why this problem has developed.
  - The fifth section (Current Status) must provide an update on the current situation and how the problem is or is not being addressed.
  - The sixth section (Assessment) must provide your own critical evaluation of this issue. This is your opportunity to give your opinion; please support it!
  - The seventh section (Conclusion) must tie together the ideas contained in your report.
  - Your report must include a map showing the site and situation of the area being examined. All locations detailed in your report must be shown on the map. The report should also contain data in the form of graphs and charts to support your argument.

5. Your report should be approximately six typed, double-spaced pages in length (1500-1800 words) using a 12 point Times font (my eyes are over 40!) with at least one-inch margins on all sides. This does not include any figures. Please number your pages.

6. Citations to any HCN story (or any other newspaper) should be cited in the text using author and date (Durbin 2003). Note that citations are part of the sentence. In the reference list, the citation is

Durbin, Kathie. 2003. Massive Logging Plan Shakes Northwest. *High Country News*, 22 December.

Additional sources such as information available from the Forest Service should be cited as (U.S.F.S. 2003) in the text and in the reference list as

U.S. Forest Service. 2002. Biscuit Fire Recovery Draft Environmental Impact Statement.  
<[http://www.biscuitfire.com/deis/Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.biscuitfire.com/deis/Executive_Summary.pdf)>

The Reference List must be alphabetized. Examples are available on Blackboard. (Do not use the “How to Cite” button. It’s not the format I want you to use.)

7. The grading criteria and the matrix that I will use as I grade your report are posted on Blackboard. Please look over these to ensure that you have properly developed each of the elements upon which the grade is based.

DUE DATE:  
Friday, April 11

VALUE:  
30% of final grade