INSTRUCTOR:

Roger M. Downs
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OFFICE HOURS

Monday 8:30–9:00 a.m. and 10:00–10:30 a.m
Wednesday 8:30–9:00 a.m

MEETING TIMES

Monday and Wednesday, 9:05-9:55 a.m., 124 Walker
Section 1: Friday 9:05-9:5 a.m., 2 Deike
Section 2: Friday 10:10-11:00 a.m., 2 Deike

CONTEXT FOR THE COURSE

Geography 301 is intended for Geography majors in their Junior year. You have taken several geography courses and will take additional courses during your Senior year. Each course focuses on either a content area (e.g., Physical or Human Geography) or a methodology (e.g., Cartography or GIS). All of these courses meet the objectives of the Undergraduate Program in Geography which are to produce graduates:

1. who know & understand fundamental concepts & skills in the major domains of geography (physical, human, human-environment interactions, & geographic information science) in an interdisciplinary context.

2. who can integrate the domains of geography & can apply their knowledge to issues concerning people, places, & environments.

3. who understand & can apply descriptive & analytical knowledge about map reading, statistics, geospatial technologies to the ever-changing interplay of people & their physical and human environments at local to global scales.

4. with strong written, verbal, & graphic communication skills.

All four objectives require integration of concepts and skill across the breadth of geography. In addition, the University requires students to have a capstone experience integrating knowledge & skills in preparation for graduation.
FOCUS OF THE COURSE

Geography 301 meets Departmental objectives and University requirements by integrating your experiences (in class, through Study Abroad and internships, doing research, and serving as student TAs/TIs) in a way that bridges from life at Penn State to the post-graduation world of work, civic responsibilities, & life in general. The course prepares you for the transition from college to post-college life in two ways by:

1. Reflecting on connections among geographic knowledge and skills:
   
   What do you know and what are you able to do because you are a geography graduate?
   
   What do people expect you to know and be able to do because you are a geography graduate?

2. Developing an understanding of the relationships between the discipline of geography and the world of careers, civic responsibility, and life beyond Penn State:
   
   How and in what contexts can you use your geographic knowledge and skills?
   
   What will you have to do to ensure that your geographic knowledge and skills remain relevant and up-to-date?

The course simultaneously looks back on your experiences at Penn State and looks forward to what you may encounter in your life after graduation.

GOALS FOR THE COURSE

1. To review, enhance, and integrate the knowledge and basic skills that are relevant to your career (awareness of who you are as a geographer).

2. To set Geography into the context of society (awareness of where your geographic knowledge and skills fit into the multiple worlds of work, civic responsibility, and life).

WORKING PRINCIPLES

The course is built on three principles:

1. **Collaboration**: the majority of people must operate collaboratively with peers in work and life situations.

   *Therefore* the course is a mixture of group and individual assignments (60% of your grade from collaborative and 40% from individual work).
2. **Presentations**: in many work and life situations, people must give presentations. 

*Therefore* you will practice developing and giving presentations in this course.

3. **Reports**: reports are essential to work and life situations. While you have had considerable experience writing papers in school and college, reports require different skills because they must meet specific structure and format requirements; employ a terse, not discursive, style; require definitive findings that lead to recommendations; are produced under tight deadlines; and are designed to meet the expectations of clearly-defined audiences.

*Therefore* you will be asked to write: a briefing paper (10% of the course grade), two interpretations (10%), a reflective essay (20%), and write (35%) and present (15%) a major research report.

These assignments reflect things that you can expect to do in your work and lives.

The keys to success include: collaborating with peers; producing numerous short reports and position papers (that meet specific guidelines as to style, content, and format); working under time pressure to hard and fast deadlines; engaging in critical analyses; giving oral presentations; and writing for different purposes and audiences.

### MAJOR THEMES

The course is built around six themes that meet Departmental objectives and University requirements and that capture the transition from college to post-college life.

1. **The Context of Geography**

This part of the course puts geography into multiple contexts:

   Context 1: Different Geographies for Different Folks  
   Context 2: Where Do You Find Geography and Geographers?  
   Context 3: The Role of Geography in Public Policy Debates  
   Becoming a geographer 1: How and why does it happen?  
   Becoming a geographer 2: What do you need to know and what should we teach?

2. **Geography Skills**

Being a geographer draws on many skills. We identified some crucial skills that apply to all areas of geography and all options in the major:

   Geography Skills 1: Thinking about Data and Analysis
Geography Skills 2: Making the Case That Geography Matters
Geography Skills 3: The Importance of Geographical Context
Geography Skills 4: Understanding Scale
Geography Skills 5: Drivers of Change
Geography Skills 6: The Role of Spatial Thinking

3. Professional Skills

There are fundamental professional skills that apply to more than geography:

   Professional Skills 1: Developing Convincing Proposals
   Professional Skills 2: Writing Effective Reports
   Professional Skills 3: How To Construct and Deliver Presentations

4. The Ethical Context

In using your knowledge and skills in professional and public contexts, there are standards of behavior expected of you by others and that you should expect of yourself:

   The Ethical Context 1: Ethical Issues in Geography
   The Ethical Context 2: The AAG Ethical Guidelines
   The Ethical Context 3: What Would You Do If...?

5. Life in the world of a...

To make the transition from college to the world of work ‘come alive’, we have asked graduate students and graduates of the program to reflect on their experiences. In sections, graduate students and graduates of the program will discuss two topics:

(1) the role of geographic knowledge and skills in getting a position and carrying out assigned duties:

   ...what matters, how, to whom, and why?
   ...what advantages (and disadvantages) did they have as a function of their geography background?
   ...to what extent did colleagues, especially supervisors, understand, appreciate, respect, and make use of their geographic knowledge and skills? In what contexts did this happen? What were they expected to be able to do?
   ...when they worked collaboratively, what were the challenges? What were the solutions to those challenges?

(2) what they wish they had known or done or been able to do, especially with respect to geographic knowledge and skills:
...what were the biggest surprises and problems?
...did they keep up-to-date in terms of geographic knowledge and skills? If so, how?
...how do their career experiences relate to seeking additional geography training?

Discussions will range over careers in which geography plays a significant role: Federal research, the military, teaching, graduate school, business, work for a non-profit or non-governmental organization.

6. Workshops

In the sections, we have 4 workshops designed to help you with assignments:

- Research Report Presentation
- The Design of Reports
- Final Report Writing
- Reflective Essay

**WORK REQUIREMENTS**

Grades are based on multiple assessments of your performance. Explanations of each assignment, together with grading rubrics, can be found on the ANGEL Lessons tab:

**Briefing Paper for a Senator**

You will work with colleagues to prepare a Briefing Paper:

- Assume that you are a staffer working for a Pennsylvania Senator
- You will work to a short deadline (48 hour turn-around)
- You must consider the policy impacts of an issue that is relevant to Pennsylvania
- You must produce a short briefing document (format specified in the instructions)

The assignment will be distributed on a Monday and is due the following Wednesday.

**Interpretations**

You will choose 2 from a set of 7 designated lectures for which you will write a 3-page interpretation, with each interpretation being assigned up to 5 points.

**Research Report and Presentation**

You will work with colleagues, give a presentation, and write a research report:

1. **The Presentation**
2. **The Written Report**
Reflective Essay .........................................................................................................................20%

On the first day of the Final Exam period, you will submit a reflective essay

Section Performance .................................................................................................................10%

You will receive a participation grade assigned by the TA.

Grading Philosophy

This is a challenging course that comes at a demanding time in your program at Penn State. For many of you, working in groups is either an unusual experience or something that may have proven to be problematic in the past. Given the strict interpretation of professional standards involving formatting requirements and deadlines, this course is also demanding. For these reasons, therefore, understanding the basis for the assignment of grades is crucial.

Assignments total to 100 points, split 60:40 between group and individual work. As a first step, I will not distinguish among your performances in the two categories. Your grade will be calculated on the sum of all work assignments, independent of the type of assignment. This means that you are collectively responsible for managing the group work process. Each member of the group receives the same grade.

As a second step, because this is a required course in your Geography major, you must earn a grade of C or higher.

As a third step, things such as health problems, career interviews, and other life events may affect your performance. Unless I am aware of them when they occur, I cannot factor them appropriately and fairly into the grading process. Therefore, if you believe that some event or situation has affected your performance, please let me know via an e-mail at the time of the event or situation. If necessary we can talk about the situation and I can make individually appropriate but collectively fair adjustments in assigning a grade. It is your responsibility to let me know if significant events are an issue.

I will set the following scores for letter grades:

- C- = ≥55
- B- = ≥70
- A- = ≥85
- C = ≥60
- B = ≥75
- A = ≥90
- C+ = ≥65
- B+ = ≥80

Please recognize two things.
First, these scores bear no relation to expectations and levels of performance in other courses at Penn State or elsewhere. There are no requirements that a particular point score must be converted into a particular letter grade.

Second, there are rubrics for all work assignments, specifying how points are assigned to specific characteristics of the work. In the end, grading is a subjective process and I will make judgments to the extent that I feel you have met expectations in terms of each of the specific characteristics. Characteristics are not independent of each other and thus scores will necessarily reflect connections between characteristics. We will talk about expectations during the semester and so you should know how to meet the expectations for each characteristic in the grading process.

A final comment: You are not competing with each other in this course. There is no set percentage of students who must receive an A versus an A- etc. If you, working individually and with your colleagues, perform at the level set for a particular letter grade, then you will earn that grade.

I assume that you will read this memo and therefore understand and accept the basis on which your grade will be assigned. If you have questions, please raise them before the end of the second week of the semester. After that, we will operate on the basis of this grading philosophy.

**Reading**

There is no course text assigned. For some classes and recitation section meetings, readings will be assigned and available electronically through ANGEL.

**Course Management**

Each week you will receive a “This Week in Geography 301” sent via ANGEL.

After the fourth and eighth weeks, there will be opportunities for written evaluations to allow you to provide feedback. This is in addition to the regular SRTE form at the end of the semester. Mid-semester evaluations will allow me to make adjustments in response to your suggestions and criticisms. Given the focus on the transition to work contexts, you are expected to operate in a professional manner in meeting deadlines, following formatting requirements, and submitting work that meets acceptable standards for writing and proofreading.

**Attendance Policies**

Geography 301 abides by the Penn State Class Attendance policies given at [http://senate.psu.edu/policies/42-00.html#42-27](http://senate.psu.edu/policies/42-00.html#42-27), [http://www.psu.edu/oue/aappm/E-](http://www.psu.edu/oue/aappm/E-)
Students who miss class for legitimate reasons will be given a reasonable opportunity to make up missed work, including exams and quizzes. Students are not required to secure the signature of medical personnel in the case of illness or injury and should use their best judgment on whether they are well enough to attend class or not; the University Health Center will not provide medical verification for minor illnesses or injuries. Other legitimate reasons for missing class include religious observance, family emergencies, and regularly scheduled university-approved curricular or extracurricular activities. Students who encounter serious family, health, or personal situations that result in extended absences should contact the Office of Student and Family Services for help: http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/familyservices/. Whenever possible, students participating in University-approved activities should submit to the instructor a Class Absence Form, available at www.psu.edu/oue/aappm/classabs.pdf, at least one week prior to the activity.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN GEOGRAPHY 301**

The guiding document is the EMS Academic Integrity Statement:

http://www.ems.psu.edu/current_undergrad_students/academics/integrity_policy

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity in the College. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students’ dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts.

Academic integrity includes a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the EMS community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.

Students in Geography 301 are expected to work in two ways. First, there is individual work (Interpretations and Reflective Essays). In this case, you are expected to write your papers in your own words using proper citations as appropriate. You may not plagiarize text from papers or websites written by others. Students who present other people’s work as their own will receive at least a 0 on the assignment and may well receive an F or XF in the course. Second, there is group work in which you are required to collaborate with colleagues and the result (the Senatorial Briefing Paper, the Presentation, and the Final Report) is a collaboration with shared responsibilities.
The intent of this course is to look at the transition from the world of undergraduate school to the worlds of life and work. Some of the expectations change in terms of specifics in such a transition but the general expectations remain in place. Two sets of general expectations—standards of professional behavior and ethics—are a focus of the course. We will cover ethics in three classes in the mid part of the semester.

As part of the explicit set of agreements that frame any course at Penn State, instructors are expected to provide a clear statement of ethical guidelines and the procedures for dealing with apparent violations of those guidelines. In Geography 301, I will operate on the basis of the EMS Integrity Statement (above). If you are not familiar with this statement, please take the time to read it.

I hope that we can discuss such issues in the abstract without them being part of the administration and practice of the course itself. If you have any questions about this policy, I would be delighted to answer them.

**UNIVERSITY POLICIES THAT APPLY TO GEOGRAPHY 301**

The Office of Disability Services ([http://equity.psu.edu/ods/](http://equity.psu.edu/ods/)) requests and maintains disability-related documents; certifies eligibility for services; determines academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, and/or services; and develops plans for the provision of academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, and/or services as mandated under Title II of the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. A list of these services is provided at [http://equity.psu.edu/ods/student-information](http://equity.psu.edu/ods/student-information).

There are procedures for dealing with Campus emergencies, including weather delays. These are announced on Penn State News ([http://news.psu.edu/](http://news.psu.edu/)) and communicated to cellphones, email, the Penn State Facebook page, and Twitter via PSUTXT (to sign up, please see [http://psutxt.psu.edu](http://psutxt.psu.edu)).