

GEOGRAPHY 3350-01 (CRN=81094); CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY
Fall Semester 2017 (3 credit hours)

- “The eye does not see what the mind does not know” – T. V. Rajan, quoting an unidentified college professor, *Natural History Magazine*, February 2003.
- “We must learn about other cultures in order to understand, in order to love, and in order to preserve our common world heritage.” –Yo Yo Ma
- “Strangers in a new culture see only what they know.” - Unknown

Professor: Dr. John B. Strait
Office: 332 F Lee Drain
Phone: 294-4077
E-Mail: jstrait@shsu.edu

Class Room: 321 Lee Drain Building (LDB)
Class Time: T/Th: 9:30 – 10:50 am
Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:00-3:30 pm;
Wednesday, 10 – 12:00 Noon;
or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will introduce and explore the study of culture from a geographical perspective. In other words, we will examine the inter-relationships of learned human behavior and cultural landscapes from a spatial point of view, while also focusing on the concept of “place.” We will emphasize the study of cultural geography, yet the course will also introduce basic concepts involved with using a geographical perspective to understand the world around us. Emphasis will also be placed on introducing and discussing “what exactly cultural geographers do.” Specific subject matter will be quite broad and could include the geographical study of religion, language, race/ethnicity, gender, migration, folk vs. popular culture, music, sport, agriculture and a host of other cultural phenomena.

Objectives: Upon completion of this course, the student should achieve the following:

- a) recognize and understand the basic concepts associated with using a geographical perspective and be able to define cultural geography
- b) understand the basic components of a cultural system and the ways in which these components interact over time and space
- c) critically analyze a variety of spatial patterns and processes that affect culture and cultural developments and understand various theories used to explain such developments
- d) investigate broad geographical differences via the use of demographic and economic data associated with various geographical regions within the U.S. and the World
- e) understand the geographic dynamics of “globalization” and the ways in which this phenomena relates to cultural change across the globe
- f) develop an interest in learning about culture and cultures and increase awareness of cultural diversity
- h) learn and apply some of the ideas brought to class towards an understanding of other political, economic, cultural and/or social phenomena and every-day events you encounter in your life

By increasing knowledge of geographical and cultural differences and similarities, this course will allow students to further understanding of the political, economic and cultural systems within which we live.

TEXTBOOK AND OTHER MATERIALS:

The primary book we will be reading will be;

1. Rubenstein, James, M. 2010. *The Cultural Landscape: An Introduction to Human Geography*, 11th edition, Pearson Publishing (an earlier or later edition of this textbook would suffice)
2. Other readings may be used and will be announced as the semester progresses. Such additional material and/or reading may be placed on blackboard, on reserve in the library or distributed in class.

Your Reading Responsibilities

Because of time limitations, it will not be possible to discuss all assigned reading material in class. This means that:

- 1) in most cases, you will not be directly tested on reading material unless we discuss it in class (although trust me when I say that this DOES NOT mean your wasting your time reading the book!); and
- 2) you are responsible for reading any assigned material on your own and learning it. Lectures will not necessarily follow the book in a complete organized fashion. Thus, students will also need to keep up with what we do in class – no day-to-day schedule will be provided! The greatest emphasis on tests will be placed on lecture material; and, I assure you that on an exam I will not ask about obscure information from the text. As a general rule, *most*, if not all material you will be tested on will be covered in class at least to some degree. However, you should learn key concepts and vocabulary in the assigned readings as this knowledge will undoubtedly help you understand material you will be tested upon. **READING THE TEXTBOOK WILL CERTAINLY BOOST YOUR CHANCES OF EARNING A GOOD GRADE!!!!**

Reading and study of the assigned material is an important preparation for this course. Certain assigned material will also be useful to you as a reference for key terms and ideas. **HOWEVER**, it is important to understand that **THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR ATTENDING CLASS**. Due to the nature of the course, some material that will be discussed in class will not be found in the books or readings assigned in class. Class lectures will draw from a variety of sources, and goes beyond information covered in any assigned readings.

Lecture Outlines: The course will be somewhat geared toward a traditional lecture format. Whenever possible, classroom lectures in Power Point format will be posted on the course website available on Blackboard (usually a night or two before). However, keep in mind that some lectures and course discussions cannot be posted on Blackboard. While these outlines can be very useful as study tools, I would discourage you from totally relying on them – they are simply outlines and will not include all important material. **MOREOVER, BLACKBOARD WILL MOST LIKELY BE UNAVAILABLE AT CERTAIN TIMES DURING THE SEMESTER.** An inability to access lecture outlines from Blackboard (either due to a system problem OR simply because they are not available) does **NOT** constitute a valid excuse for missing an exam – thus, it would be wise to avoid waiting until the night before an exam to print them out and/or study them!

ATTENDANCE AND CLASSROOM OBLIGATION:

Students are expected to attend class on time on a regular basis. In accordance with university policy, attendance will be taken regularly and used to aid in your semester-end evaluation. Thus, regular attendance will allow you to earn free points, while failure to attend class may result in lowering of grades. *Any student missing more than 20 % of the course will NOT pass and you will NOT be counted present if you arrive to class late and attendance has already been taken.* It is the student's responsibility to acquire information of material covered while absent (including handouts and readings distributed and/or assigned in class AND class announcements). Students are also responsible for any changes in assigned material or due dates announced in class. **MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE GIVEN WITHOUT A DOCUMENTED EXCUSE.**

Exams: The exams will be comprised of subjective (multiple choice, matching, true/false) questions and short-answer essays. In addition, exams may incorporate a take-home portion. Exam questions will be drawn from lecture, textbook readings, visual presentations, films, guest speakers and classroom discussion.

Make-up Exams: In the event that a student is absent from an exam, he or she will take a comprehensive final. Thus, in this event the weight of final exam will be equivalent to two exams. It is the student's responsibility to contact me within 24 hours after the test date for this option to be considered. **Make-ups will only be given if the student provides a documented excuse.**

EVALUATION: (due dates for some assignments will be announced over the course of the semester)

1. Exam 1 (DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED)	105 points (21 %)
2. Exam 2 (DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED)	120 points (24 %)
3. Final Exam (Thursday, December 7, 9:30 – 11:30 am).....	120 points (24 %)
4. Research Poster and/or paper/video project (TBA)	40 points (8 %)
5. Research Prospectus (1 page, due Tuesday, October 31)	5 points (1 %)
6. Scheduled Group Discussion/Debate (to be announced)	40 points (8%)
7. Responses to Group Discussions (5) (to be announced)	20 points (4%)
8. In-class quizzes/take-home assignments	25 points (5%)
9. Attendance and participation	25 points (5%)
Total	500 points (100%)

The grading scale will be based on a 10-point system; 90 -100% = A, 80 - 89 % = B, etc.

** NO EXTRA CREDIT IS GIVEN TO INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS **

Important Dates;

Monday, September 4; Labor Day Holiday; NO CLASS
Friday, September 8; 12th Class Day; Last day to drop without a Q and receive 100% refund
Friday, November 10; Last day to drop with a Q drop
Wednesday – Friday, November 22-24; Thanksgiving Break; NO CLASS
Friday, December 1; Last day of class
Thursday, December 7 – Pearl Harbor Day & Final Exam, 9:30 – 11:30 am

Research Poster (or paper/video project)

By the conclusion of the semester, each student will need to complete and construct a research poster. This can be constructed in Powerpoint, or any other software package and should be designed as if it were to be presented to a professional audience. The topic of the research should focus on some aspect of cultural geography that pertains to a specific country or specific region of a country. The purpose of this assignment is to give students the opportunity to more intently learn how course topics relate to specific places. *You should NOT plan on providing a thorough description or profile of a particular country or region.* Rather, you are to discuss and address some specific issue or topic related to a country. For example, if you are interested in Brazil – do not provide me with a poster that attempts to summarize Brazil. You could focus your research on folk religion in Brazil, the cultural role of football (i.e. soccer) to national identity, or the culturally specific role that gender plays in the country. Try to avoid focusing on a topic that we cover intently in lecture, the purpose of this assignment is for you to go beyond what we have done in class. We will discuss this assignment more intently as the semester progresses. By October 31 each student will need to turn in a research prospectus (no more than 1 page) that briefly outlines your topic. This prospectus should also include potential sources that you plan to utilize for your research.

The poster should be well-organized and succinct (it might be helpful to use sub-headings) and should NOT simply include photographs! Aside from the poster itself, you should also include a bibliography with references. Scholarly journals employ footnotes or parenthetical citations to reference their sources. Within your bibliography, you may utilize any standard form of referencing or citation as long as you are consistent.

Pay careful attention in your paper to grammar and editing. Your poster needs to be submitted on disk (or flash drive) and a printed out hardcopy (8 x 11 paper). **DO NOT E-MAIL THEM TO ME!!!!**

Students may also choose to make a video outlining their topic (as opposed to simply providing it in “poster” form). This could be a narrated video or a video of you making a presentation. Any student choosing this option will need to meet with me outside of class to discuss it in detail. Also, assume you will be working on this alone, with little or no guidance on my part (not that I would not be willing to help provide advice, I will – however, I have little experience making videos!)

Scheduled Group Discussion/Debate:

Throughout the semester we will engage in a number of class discussions/debates (probably 6). Students will be assigned to groups, with each group being responsible for leading a class discussion focused on some geographical issue or topic. The purpose of this assignment is to generate class discussion, thus allowing us to gain insight to important issues that relate to course material. Following these class discussions, fellow students not assigned to a respective group will be assigned to turn in a brief paper/essay that addresses or responds to some question(s) pertaining to the issue or topic. In addition, members of each group will turn in a self-evaluation, where summarize the relevance of their discussion and evaluate one-another (anonymously). We may have up to 6 of these group debates, but each student will turn in a total of 4 response papers/essays.

Discussion;

Many of the issues and topics presented in this course will be worthy of discussion and debate. Whether our own ideas ultimately change or remain the same, much of the material presented should spark considerable debate and discussion. You will note that class participation is part of your grade. This course will be somewhat oriented towards a discussion format, so constructive questions, comments, and insights are strongly encouraged (In fact, I hope to learn a great deal from you!).

Academic Honesty:

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action; ***NO QUESTIONS ASKED!*** The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. I suggest you read the Student Handbook regarding the official University policy regarding academic honesty. *Students should be aware that all written work is subject to being entered into databases that check for plagiarism, such as “Turnitin.”*

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY:

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail disability@shsu.edu). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. **NOTE:** No accommodation can be made until you register

with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/811006.pdf>

Religious Holy Days

If a student desires to be excused from class, assignment, or a test to participate in activities associated with a religious holy day, then the student must notify the instructor of each scheduled class that he/she will miss for religious reasons. In such cases, the student will be required to take the test or submit the assignment early—unless there are good reasons for not being able to do so and the instructor has agreed to those reasons.

Special Circumstances

If unusual circumstances arise during the semester, such as a medical problem, death in the family, etc., that adversely affects your attendance PLEASE **discuss this with me immediately and provide documentation**. Under these conditions, I will gladly do my best to accommodate your situation by excusing absences, allowing late work to be turned in within a reasonable time period, and so on. However, if you wait until after-the-fact, at the end of the semester, to let me know that you were experiencing these adverse circumstances, there is *nothing* I can do about it at that time. **I will not retroactively make accommodations and I will not give extra credit assignments to make up for grade deficiencies of any type.**

Visitors in the Classroom

Unannounced visitors to the classroom must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted in the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom. This policy is not intended to discourage occasional visiting of classes by responsible persons.

IMPORTANT: Final Remarks:

Hopefully we will all enjoy ourselves exploring cultural geography this semester. As mentioned above, I hope that everyone feels free and willing to ask questions, make comments, etc. However, the size of the class and the acoustics of the classroom will make it imperative that people refrain from engaging in casual conversations with one another. If you are talking to a neighbor it becomes very difficult for people around you to hear anything. Thus, I'm asking you ahead of time to **NOT** strike up conversations amongst yourselves. **NO LABTOPS OR ELECTRONIC DEVICES OF ANY KIND ARE TO BE USED IN THE CLASSROOM.** This behavior not only disrupts the learning experience, it is also disrespectful. If you have something to say about the course material, please share it with the rest of us. Otherwise, you should remain quiet. I reserve the right to remove anybody from the classroom that is being disruptive, which includes carrying on conversations.