



GEOGRAPHY 3350.01: CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY (SPRING 2018, CRN = 22176)

- *"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, French-born American cellist
- *"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; 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 spatial inter-relationships of learned human behavior and cultural landscapes, while also focusing on the concepts of "place" and "space." Emphasis will be placed on learning how cultural geographers utilize a spatial perspective to understand the world around us, and discussing exactly "what cultural geographers do." Specific subject matter will be quite broad and could include the geographical study of religion, language, race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, migration, folk vs. popular culture, music, sport, agriculture, and/or a host of other cultural phenomena. 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 and interact.

Course Objectives:

- 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 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

Required Materials:

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. Frazier, Ian. 2000. *On the Rez*. Picador: New York. **YOU WILL DEFINITELY NEED TO PURCHASE THIS BOOK, AS WE WILL BE READING IT TOGETHER AND IT WILL BE USED AS THE BASIS FOR CRITICAL IN-CLASS DISCUSSION ASSIGNMENTS.**
3. 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.

EVALUATION: (due dates for some assignments will be announced during the semester)

1. Exam 1 (DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED) 105 points (20 %)
2. Exam 2 (DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED)115 points (23 %)
3. Final Exam (SCHEDULED FINAL EXAM DAY/TIME)120 points (24 %)
4. Research Poster and/or paper/video project (TBA)60 points (12%)
5. Research Prospectus (1 page, due Tuesday, March 8) 5 points (1 %)
6. Scheduled Group Discussion/Debate (to be announced)50 points (10 %)
7. Take-Home/In-class Assignments (TBA) 25 points (5%)
8. Participation and Attendance 25 points (5%)

Total500 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 **

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-ups will only be given if the student provides a documented excuse.** It is the student's responsibility to contact me within 24 hours after the test date for a make-up option to be considered.

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 purpose of this assignment is to

give students the opportunity to more intently learn how course topics by deriving their own topic. **YOU SHOULD NOT PLAN ON PROVIDING A GENERAL PROFILE OF A PARTICULAR COUNTRY OR REGION – IN SHORT, THIS IS NOT DESIGNED TO BE A COUNTRY REPORT.** However, you CAN discuss and address some specific issue or topic related to a specific place. 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 March 8 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.

Scheduled Group Discussion/Debate:

Throughout the semester we will engage in a number of class discussions/debates (probably 6?). Students will be assigned to small groups, with each group being responsible for leading a class discussion focused on some geographical issue or topic pertaining somehow to the book we will read (Frazier’s *On The Rez*). 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, groups of 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).

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!).

Other Important Dates:

Thursday, February 1; 12th Class Day; Last day to drop without a Q and receive 100% refund
Friday, April 6; Last day to drop with a Q drop
Monday, March 12 through Friday, March 16 – Spring Break Holiday; NO CLASS
Friday, March 30 – Good Friday; NO CLASS

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

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.**

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 respectfully quiet. I reserve the right to remove anybody from the classroom that is being disruptive, which includes carrying on conversations.

Please be sure to contact me with any questions, comments, and/or concerns.

Welcome to the course and I look forward to working with you!