

# Geography 242-01: Regional Geography of the U.S. and Canada

Fall 2021 FYC

*Meets:* MWF 10:50 – 11:50 a.m.  
Car 107

*Instructor:* Laura Smith  
*Office:* Carnegie 104b  
*Office phone:* 651-696-6505  
*E-mail:* [SMITHL@macalester.edu](mailto:SMITHL@macalester.edu)  
*Office hours:* Hours posted on Moodle  
or by appointment

*Preceptor:* Grace Jones ([gjones2@macalester.edu](mailto:gjones2@macalester.edu))



## I. COURSE CONTENT AND GOALS

What is it? Where is it? Why is it located there? So what? Geography is much more than a collection of facts about capital cities and mountain ranges; the essence of geography is to study why locations and features matter. Geography is the study of spatial organization of human activity, and of people's relationships with their environment – whether in an urban or a rural setting. How have human activities and social/cultural characteristics in a place been shaped by the landscape? And in turn, how has the landscape been shaped by human activities?

In Regional Geography of the U.S. and Canada, we will explore the ways in which diverse groups of people interact with the natural environment to produce the contemporary landscapes (human and physical) and regional differentiation (social and cultural) of the U.S. and Canada. The course emphasizes patterns of human settlement, economic activity, and land use, with special attention given to social and legal issues relevant to Native populations in the U.S. and the historic and current status and development of Native lands. This course fulfills the U.S. Identities and Differences (USID) general education requirement.

This course will introduce you to a variety of concepts and methods that geographers use to analyze spatial patterns and processes. The course is organized regionally, but this does not preclude broader thematic discussions. I hope that this will be an interactive course – and that we can draw on our classmates' "regions of expertise" to learn from each other. I encourage sharing of any type (e.g., articles, literature, music) that will help us "experience" and understand each region.

The **primary learning goals** for the course are that:

- Students gain knowledge of the ways in which diverse groups of people have interacted with the natural environment to produce the contemporary landscapes and regional differentiation of the U.S. and Canada
- Students are able to analyze and explain spatial patterns based on regional characteristics and dynamics (human and physical)
- Students gain knowledge of social and legal issues relevant to Native populations in the U.S. and the historic and current status and development of Native lands

As a First-Year Course, considerable emphasis will be placed on research and writing; this course also fulfills the **Argumentative Writing (WA)** general education requirement. You will develop skills that should serve you well in your academic career and beyond, such as:

- The use of library resources, including online indexes.
- The use of primary data sources, e.g., the U.S. Census.
- How to plan, organize, draft, and revise a college paper.
- How to construct a thesis statement and support your claims through appropriate analysis and argumentation.
- How to cite sources and avoid plagiarism.
- How to write for different audiences (e.g., a scholarly community vs. the general public).



## II. FIELD STUDY

Within the discipline of geography, fieldwork is central to developing our skills of observation and analysis and to improving our understanding of places and regions. Fieldwork also provides memorable and enjoyable experiences! For many geographers, fieldwork solidified our disciplinary choice.

This course includes a field study into the Boreal Forest region of northern Minnesota. Our study will focus on the topics of “reinvention” of a traditional natural resource-based regional economy, the impact of primary activities on the landscape and on the form of human settlements, and cultural history and contemporary Native American economic development issues in the region.



## III. READING MATERIALS

Textbook: Montello, Daniel R., et al. 2021. *Regional Geography of the United States and Canada*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc. The text is available as either an e-book or in hard copy.

All other required readings will be posted on our Moodle site.



## IV. STRUCTURE AND EXPECTATIONS

### **Class format**

This remains a challenging time for teaching and learning and we will all need to demonstrate grace and flexibility in order to be successful. I am committed to being flexible and open to changing our course approach and expectations as we go, and I hope that you will be willing to do the same for me.

Class meetings will consist of lectures, videos, in-class discussions, student presentations, and activities. You are expected to have completed all required reading before coming to class, and be prepared to discuss it. A productive discussion is one in which participants listen and learn from one another, that focuses on understanding an issue and making connections (to other readings, to real life events, etc.), and that advances our collective knowledge of a topic.

Your presence in class matters; attendance is important not only for your learning, but also for building connections with each other. However, I recognize that there will be times when it is not possible for you to attend class, especially given our current public health concerns. If you do not feel well or are exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19, please do not come to class! Resources will be provided to help you make up any absences.

### **Technology guidelines**

We will rely heavily on our Moodle page to manage the course. This is where you will find our daily schedule, readings, assignments, videos, and other information/announcements. You will submit assignments via Moodle dropboxes; this will allow me to provide feedback directly on the digital documents. I will also use the Moodle gradebook feature to post your scores. Please pay attention to any “News Forum” posts, and plan to log into the site regularly.

Email is the most efficient way to contact me. I will strive to answer all email messages as soon as possible (and at most within 24 hours during the week).

Within the classroom, you are welcome to use laptops for academic purposes. Please do not use technology in a way that is disruptive to an academic space.

### **Assessment**

You will complete five short writing assignments throughout the semester (two map write-ups, one policy letter, one field essay, and one regional image reflection), as well as a moderate-sized research paper and oral presentation. There will be considerable emphasis placed on steps in the research and writing process for your final paper, including multiple drafts, peer review, and revision. Details of each assignment will be provided well in advance of the due date. There will also be three short quizzes given throughout the semester that will primarily consist matching (of map locations) and multiple-choice/short answer prompts. Class participation includes preparation for and participation in discussions, and contributions to activities like Moodle forums.

Your grade will be determined by the following components (roughly 35% based on written assignments, 45% on activities related to the research project, and 20% on quizzes and class participation):

<i>Written assignments</i>		
Regional map activity (40 pts.)		= 6%
Site and situation activity (50 pts.)		= 7.5%
Field essay (50 pts.)		= 7.5%
Colorado River allocation activity (75 pts.)		= 11%
Regional image reflection (20 pts)		= 3%
<i>Research project</i>		
Project proposal (10 pts.)		= 1.5%
Argument draft (50 pts.)		= 7.5%
Project draft and peer review (75 pts.)		= 11%
Final paper (100 pts.)		= 15%
Oral presentation (75 pts.)		= 11%
<i>Quizzes</i>		
Quiz #1 (40 pts.)		= 6%
Quiz #2 (40 pts.)		= 6%
Quiz #3 (40 pts.)		= 6%
<i>Class participation</i> (10 pts.)		= 1.5%

Assignments must be turned in by the time indicated on the Moodle dropbox unless prior accommodations have been made; late assignments will be penalized 10% per day.

Grade cut-off percentages are as follows: A = 93-100%; A- = 90-92.9%; B+ = 87-89.9%; B = 83-86.9%; B- = 80-82.9%; C+ = 77-79.9%; C = 73-76.9%; C- = 70-72.9%; D+ = 67-69.9%; D = 63-66.9%; D- = 60-62.9%; NC = <60%.

### **Academic resources**

The Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX) Center ([www.macalester.edu/max/](http://www.macalester.edu/max/)), located on the first floor of Kagin Commons, provides numerous academic resources from time management and study strategy workshops to quantitative material and writing assistance. The MAX Center has peer tutors available for assisting students in all stages of their writing. Hours are 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (M-F) and 7:00 – 10:00 p.m. (S-Th). Becky Graham and Jake Mohan also provide writing assistance to students during the daytime hours. Please take advantage of this helpful resource!

### **Academic accommodations**

I recognize that course design may pose barriers to a student's ability to access or demonstrate mastery of course content. I honor academic accommodations as outlined via Disability Services, and in discussion regarding what is reasonable for this course. Students with long- or short-term disabilities should schedule an appointment through the Disability Services website at <https://www.macalester.edu/disabilityservices/> or by emailing [disabilityservices@macalester.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@macalester.edu).

**Academic honesty**

Academic honesty and integrity are expected at all times. You are responsible for knowing what constitutes plagiarism. If you have questions about Macalester's academic integrity policy, please refer to the *Student Handbook* (<http://www.macalester.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/>).

All sources used in preparing your assignments and project must be cited; this includes maps and data sources. APA is the preferred citation style of the Geography Department; see the library's citation guides and resources under the Research Guides menu at <https://libguides.macalester.edu/citation>.

**Health and Well-Being**

Here at Macalester, you are encouraged to make your well-being a priority throughout this semester and your career here. Staying well is even more complicated now with COVID-19, as well as ongoing systemic racism and other forms of oppression – this complex context requires flexibility, creativity, persistence, and support. Investing time into taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academic experience. Remember that beyond being a student, you are a human being carrying your own experiences, thoughts, emotions, and identities with you. It is important to acknowledge any stressors you may be facing, which can be mental, emotional, physical, financial, etc., and how they can have an academic impact. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, please reach out to one of the resources listed at <http://bit.ly/2zcyuqU>.

In our classroom, we will adhere to the [Mac Stays Safer 2.0 Community Commitment](#).

**V. READING LIST**

- Behnke, Steven. 2002. "Alaska's Contested Rural Landscapes and the Subsistence Claims of Alaska Natives." In Berry and Henderson, eds., *Geographical Identities of Ethnic America: Race, Space and Place*. Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press.
- Brodey, Sam. 2016. "The 11<sup>th</sup> Province? Considering the State of Minnesota's Special Relationship with Canada." *MinnPost*. July 12.
- Brooks, Jennifer. 2016. "On the Iron Range, Prolonged Downturn is Taking its Toll." *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. May 2.
- Castner, Brian. 2016. "A Disappearing Home in a Warming World." *The Atlantic*. October 12.
- DePass, Dee. 2018. "Workers Again Feeling at Home on the Range." *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. July 15.
- Good Sky, Dianna. 2020. *Warrior Spirit Rising: A Native American Spiritual Journey*.

- Hart, John Fraser. 1998. "The Use of Forests." In *The Rural Landscape*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Healy, Jack. 2016. "Built Up by Oil Boom, North Dakota Now Has an Emptier Feeling." *The New York Times*. February 7.
- Krauss, Clifford. 2004. "An Insolent Puppet Roils Canadian Politics." *The New York Times*. February 16.
- Lanegran, David and Laura Smith. 2009. "Duluth, Minnesota: Reinvention of an American Industrial Center." *Geographische Rundschau International Edition* 5(4): 42-47.
- Leschak, Peter. 2016. "The Iron Range Economy: The End Game, Lights Out?" *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. March 11.
- Lustgarten, Abraham. 2015. "Use It or Lose It Laws Worsen Western U.S. Water Woes." *ProPublica*. June 9. <https://projects.propublica.org/killing-the-colorado/story/wasting-water-out-west-use-it-or-lose-it>
- MacDonald, Glen A. 2012. "Los Angeles Water – Myths, Miracles, Mayhem and William Mulholland." *AAG Newsletter* 47(10): 11-13.
- Marohn, Kirsti. 2017. "Lack of Agreement between Mille Lacs Band, County Leaves Tribal Officers without Policing Power." *MPR News*. October 10.
- McKinney, Matthew. 2003. "Linking Growth and Land Use to Water Supply." *Land Lines*. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.
- Meyer, Melissa L. 1991. "'We Can Not Get a Living as We Used To': Dispossession and the White Earth Anishinaabeg, 1889-1920." *The American Historical Review* 96(2): 368-394.
- Miller, Robert J. 2013. "Tribal Gaming." In *Reservation "Capitalism": Economic Development in Indian Country*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Peacock, Thomas and Donald Day. 2000. "Nations Within a Nation: The Dakota and Ojibwe of Minnesota." In Graubard, ed., *Minnesota: Real and Imagined*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press.
- Ragan, Christopher. 2014. "The Staggering Price of Quebec Independence." *The Globe and Mail*. March 18.
- Reisner, Marc. 1993. "Afterword to Revised Edition." In *Cadillac Desert*. New York: Penguin.
- Shortridge, James R. 2004. "A Cry for Help: Kansasfreeland.com." *The Geographical Review* 94(4): 530-540.
- Smith, Kelly. 2017. "Mille Lacs Policing Dispute Hits a Wall." *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. October 7.
- Way, Ron. 2017. "For Love of the Range." *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. December 3.
- Wines, Michael. 2014. "Colorado River Drought Forces a Painful Reckoning for States." *The New York Times*. January 5.
- Zelinsky, Wilbur. 1989. "Real Regions." *American Demographics* 11(6): 43-44.