

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

Fall 2024

Instructor: Laura Smith (she/her)

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Office: Carnegie 104b

Open office hours: Monday 1:00-2:30 p.m.

Tuesday 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Thursday 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Or at any other time you propose (in-person or virtual)

Drop-ins welcome too!

Meets: MWF 10:50-11:50 a.m.

Carnegie 107

Teaching Assistant: Zoe Frank (zfrank@macalester.edu)



I. COURSE CONTENT AND GOALS

Geography is the study of spatial organization of human activity, and of people's relationships with their environment. 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. We will discuss 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.

You will be introduced 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, food) 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



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. Here we will explore the “reinvention” of a traditional natural resource-based regional economy: the impact of iron ore mining on the cities and populations of Minnesota’s Iron Range, the historic and contemporary forestry and paper industries of the area, and Native American cultural history and contemporary economic development initiatives in the region.



III. READING MATERIALS

Textbook: Montello, Daniel R., et al. 2021. *Regional Geography of the United States and Canada*. 5th ed. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc. The text is available as either an e-book or in hard copy, and multiple copies are available to check out from Library Reserves.

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



IV. STRUCTURE AND EXPECTATIONS

Class format

Class meetings will consist of interactive lectures, in-class discussions, videos, 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 students listen and learn from one another, that focuses on understanding an issue and making connections (to other readings, to real-life observations, 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 community with each other. However, I fully recognize that there will be times when you are not able to or do not feel comfortable attending class, whether because of public health concerns or any other reason. If possible, please send an email before the class letting me know. If religious observances create conflicts, please reach out early in the semester so we can plan ahead.

We continue to face challenges in all aspects of life – including teaching and learning – and we will 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.

Technology guidelines

We will rely heavily on our Moodle page to manage the course. This is where you will find detailed weekly schedules, readings, assignments, videos, links to any virtual office hours, 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 plan to log into the site regularly and pay attention to any “Announcements and News” forum posts.

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.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) use

You may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. If you include material—including both *ideas* and *language*—generated by an AI program, it should be cited like any other reference material, both in this course and at Macalester College in general. Beware that material generated by these tools may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Assessment

You will complete six short writing assignments throughout the semester (two map interpretations, one policy recommendation, one field essay, and two regional image reflections), as well as an independent regional research project culminating in an oral presentation. Details of each assignment will be provided well in advance of the due date. If you are not able to attend the field study, you will be provided with an alternate to the field essay assignment.

There will also be three short quizzes given throughout the semester that will consist of matching (including map locations), multiple-choice, and short answer/short essay questions.

Your grade will be based on the following (555 points total):

Written assignments

Regional map activity (40 pts.)	= 7%
Site and situation activity (50 pts.)	= 9%
Field essay (50 pts.)	= 9%
Colorado River allocation activity (75 pts.)	= 14%
Regional image reflection (2 @ 20 pts. each)	= 7%

Regional research project

Oral presentation (150 pts.)	= 27%
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Quizzes

Quiz #1 (50 pts.)	= 9%
Quiz #2 (50 pts.)	= 9%
Quiz #3 (50 pts.)	= 9%

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 honesty

Academic honesty and integrity are expected at all times; violations of academic integrity are serious offenses. Students are required to independently complete and submit their own work and are responsible for knowing what constitutes plagiarism. If you have questions about Macalester's academic integrity policy, please refer to the *Student Handbook* (<https://www.macalester.edu/student-affairs/>) or Academic Programs at <http://www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/academicpolicies/academicintegrity/>.

All sources used in preparing your assignments and research 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 at <https://libguides.macalester.edu/citation>.

**V. RESOURCES AND SUPPORT****Open office hours**

Please come visit me during open office hours with any questions, issues, or concerns about the course or the Geography department more broadly. If you are not able to attend regularly scheduled office hours, please let me know and we can find an alternative time to meet (in-person or virtually).

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

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 the Center for Disability Resources and in discussion regarding what is reasonable for this course. Students with long- or short-term disabilities should schedule an appointment through the Disability Resources website at <https://www.macalester.edu/disability-resources/>.

Academic resources

The Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX) Center (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. Please take advantage of this helpful resource!

Library research help

Working with the literature in your field to integrate it into your research can be a complex process. Consulting with the research and instruction librarians for the discipline(s) in which you are studying will save you time and help you discover better, more scholarly sources (<https://www.macalester.edu/library/research-help/meet-with-a-librarian/>).

Health and well-being

Here at Macalester, you are encouraged to make your well-being a priority throughout this semester and your career here. 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 here: <https://www.macalester.edu/current-students/>.

Please follow Macalester's guidance for respiratory illnesses (<https://www.macalester.edu/covid-19/>). If you do not feel well or are exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19, please do not come to class.

Title IX

Macalester is committed to providing a safe and open learning and living environment for all students, staff, and faculty. Any community member experiencing sexual harassment, sexual violence, relationship violence, or stalking, is encouraged to seek help and support.

Please be aware that as a faculty member, it is my responsibility to report disclosure about sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, relationship violence, and stalking to the Title IX Office. The purpose of this report is to ensure that anyone experiencing harm receives the resources and support they need. I will keep this information *private* and it will not be shared beyond this required report.

You may also contact Macalester's Title IX Coordinator directly (phone: 651-696-6258; e-mail: titleixordinator@macalester.edu); she will provide you with supportive

measures, resources, and referrals. Additional information about how to file a report (including anonymously) is available on the [Title IX website](#).



VI. READING LIST

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- DePass, Dee. 2018. "Workers Again Feeling at Home on the Range." *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. July 15.
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- Lanegran, David and Laura Smith. 2009. "Duluth, Minnesota: Reinvention of an American Industrial Center." *Geographische Rundschau International Edition* 5(4): 42-47.
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- 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.
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