

GEO 220 Geography of North America



An abandoned shop by the railroad tracks in Demopolis, Alabama
Photograph by Steve McCurry

DETAILS

Spring 2018
Tuesdays & Thursdays 14:00 - 15:15
Building D Room 105

Sig Langegger PhD
Office: Building C 1-8 (open door policy - longer meetings by appointment)
slangegger@aiu.ac.jp | slangegger.com

DESCRIPTION

A geographical perspective provides insight into the mechanics of the movement of people and ideas between wildly disparate places. Often these processes are wantonly violent, other times they are conciliatory. The calculated ethnic cleansing of First Nations from the American Frontier epitomizes the former; the often joyous collaborative creation of American music by laborers from Western and Central Europe and Africa serves as an example of the latter. North America continues to be shaped culturally and economically shaped by complex patterns of mobility, regimes of structural and symbolic violence and by the integration of the Other into a widening national consciousness. The United States and Canada are nations of immigrants. To waves of European and Asian migrants, who made arduous journeys, the New World epitomized “the good life.” However, not all who migrated chose to make the journey. Upwards of 12.5 million African people were shipped to North America, South America, and the Caribbean and forced into slave labor. Today African influence on North American cultural landscapes is indelible. This influence is especially evident in music. For example, Jazz is the product of a complex and contested combination of African and European musical traditions in North American cities, specifically Havana, New Orleans, Chicago, Kansas City and New York City. And the Blues emerged from the collective hardship suffered by Black Americans in the rural Deep South.

This course is pivots on two pedagogical tools: the lecture and the seminar. Using perspectives offered by cultural and economic geography, lectures help students construct a theoretical vocabulary. Weekly seminars emerge directly from the required texts and give students the opportunity to use this vocabulary while analyzing the diffusion of cultural and economic practices throughout various North American spaces.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course students will:

1. Have learned fundamental geographical concepts and theories.
2. Have improved their reading comprehension skills.
3. Be comfortable using geographical terminology in written and verbal discourse.
4. Be able to think, write, and argue critically about cultural, economic, and historical geographies of North America.
5. Have learned to recognize relationships between the Atlantic slave trade, the western expansion of the United States and the cultural complexes comprising the many nations in North America.
6. Have learned to recognize the longstanding socio-spatial impacts of colonization and chattel slavery.
7. Have gained insight into how North American cultural complexes are themselves products of the complex and often violent meshing of Native American, African, and European ways of life.

READING

Required Books

Colin Woodard (2012) *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Cultures in North America*
 Annie Proulx (1996) *Accordion Crimes: A Novel*

Suggested Books

Isabel Wilkerson (2010) *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*

Additional Readings

Readings selected from my library are posted on AIMS under the appropriate week.

MULTIMEDIA

Suggest Viewing

Les Blank (1967) *The Blues According to Lightnin' Hopkins*

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcVbNaiBZCU>

Les Blank (1978) *Always for Pleasure*

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTwVGA-axiw>

ASSESSMENT

Seminar	55
Midterm Exam	20
Final Exam	25
Total Points Possible	100

Seminar Discussion Questions

Unlike those constituting the second half of the semester, seminars during the first half of the semester will be run along the lines of a true seminar. This format requires that both the instructor and each of the students, initiate, contribute to, and catalyze an class-period long discussion. In order to facilitate robust discussions to which every one contributes, I will distribute, via AIMS, discussion questions. The answers to these questions as well as a series of questions that each student has about the reading will be due at the beginning of each of these type of seminar sessions. Like the seminar papers, discussion questions will be graded.

Seminar Papers

The presentation of seminar papers will form the basis of seminar discussions during the second part of the semester. I expect to read well organized papers that include the following: an introduction, a body comprising a logical argument, and a conclusion. Scholarship of others, if included, must be adequately cited. The citation style is at the authors' discretion. Papers must be double spaced. Seminar papers should be between 1000 and 1500 words (four to six pages).

Seminar papers must accomplish four tasks. First, they must be well written. That is, they must lack distracting grammatical, syntactical, semantical, and spelling errors. And they must be written in such a way that engages the reader. Second, authors must then select **one** compelling aspect/event/outcome/etc. from the reading and briefly summarize it. Third, each paper's argument must be based in a geographic theory. Finally, the paper must synthesize the compelling aspect/event/outcome/etc. of the reading within this theoretical argument. This fourth component is essentially an processes of assembly and critique, whereby authors insert examples drawn from the reading into the theoretical construct they chose to work with and then argue why the theory facilitates a fuller understanding of the summarized compelling aspect/event/outcome/etc..

Participation

Because this course is based in large measure on discussion, the consistent attendance and engaged participation of each student is essential to its success. I will maintain a log detailing each student's engagement in seminars and during lectures. Collaboratively and critically engaging with ideas may lead to disagreement. Colleagues can disagree *and* maintain respect for each other and one another's views. I insist that students strive to learn from the differences that manifest while debating the merit of theoretical and empirical evidence by maintaining an atmosphere of civility during discussion.

Midterm Exam

The midterm will cover material presented in lectures and in the reading assignments. It will cover *terms, concepts, and theories* as well as *regional specifics* presented during the first part of the semester. It will comprise multiple-choice, short answer, true/false and essay questions. Aside from an exceptional situation as outlined in the Student Handbook, There will be no chance to make up the midterm exam.

Final Exam

The final will cover material presented in lectures and in the reading assignments during the entire semester. It will cover *terms, concepts and theories* covered during the entire semester and *regional specifics* presented during the second part of the semester. It will comprise multiple-choice, short answer, true/false and essay questions. Aside from an exceptional situation as outlined in the Student Handbook, There will be no chance to make up the final exam.

Format Requirements

All written assignments must include the following in the upper left corner of the first page: Student's name, student ID number, assignment name, and due date. All assignments must be formatted in the following manner: double spaced, font size of 11 or 12 point, standard margins, and an indented first line for each paragraph.

Submission Requirements

Unless otherwise instructed, students are expected to submit written assignments on the AIMS platform. I will only accept Word (.doc or .docx) or PDF (.pdf) formats. All files submitted must be saved in the following manner: Student Name_Assignment Name.docx. I expect assignments to be submitted on time. Assignments due in class must be turned in at the beginning of class. I reserve the right to deduct points for late submissions and I reserve the right to determine the percentage to be deducted.

Makeup Work

Aside from *exceptional situations*, there will be no chance to make up missed exams or quizzes or turn assignments in past their due day/time. Proof of an exceptional situation must be submitted to me in writing and signed by the appropriate authority within 24 hours of the due date. I reserve the right to define an exceptional situation and furthermore to make all final decisions relating to amending, redoing, or making up late or incomplete work.

GENERAL POLICIES

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty consists of plagiarism, cheating, fabrication and falsification, multiple submission of the same work, misuse of academic materials, and complicity in the academic dishonesty of others. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated; the consequences of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to failing an assignment, failing the class, and possibly dismissal from the university. Students are responsible for being observant of and attentive to Akita International University's policies about academic honesty.

Attendance

Learning is an ongoing process; one that builds upon previously acquired insights and skills. Consistent and engaged attendance is vital for success in this course. I reserve the right to deal with exceptional or extended absences on a case-by-case basis.

Special Needs

If you require accommodations, please alert me of your needs on the first day of class so that I can work with the administration to meet them.

Civility & Classroom Decorum

Silence all cell phones, beepers, etc. during class. Speaking on cell phones, texting, or using electronic equipment in any way that is not directly related to class is strictly prohibited.

SCHEDULE

Week 1	Foundations
April 10	Lecture - What is Geography?
April 12	Lecture - Cultural Geography

Week 2	Foundations
April 17	Lecture - African Geographies
April 19	Lecture - European Geographies
Week 3	Foundations
April 24	Lecture - New Spain
April 26	Lecture - First Nations
Week 4	Golden Week
May 1	NO CLASS
May 3	NO CLASS
Week 5	The Black Atlantic
May 8	Lecture - Sugar, Salt & Slaves
May 10	Seminar
Reading	American Nations
Week 6	The Black Atlantic
May 15	Lecture - Urban Slavery, Rural Slavery, & the Genesis of Cuban Music
May 17	Seminar
Reading	American Nations
Week 7	Tidewater
May 22	Lecture - Geographies of Violence, Logics of Capitalism
May 24	Seminar
Reading	American Nations
Week 8	The Deep South
May 29	Lecture - Geographies of Cotton
May 31	MIDTERM EXAM
Week 9	The Deep South
June 5	Lecture - Blues Geographies: The Mississippi Delta, Jim Crow & Juke Joints
June 7	Seminar
Reading	Accordion Crimes
Week 10	New France
June 12	Lecture - Nouvelle France: Acadia & New Orleans
June 14	Seminar
Reading	Accordion Crimes
Week 11	New France
June 19	Lecture - New Orleans under French, Spanish & American Rule
June 21	Seminar
Reading	Accordion Crimes
Week 12	The Far West
June 26	Lecture - Indian Wars & The Dawes Act
June 28	Seminar
Reading	Accordion Crimes
Week 13	The Far West
July 3	Lecture - Vaqueros & Meat Packing
July 5	Seminar
Reading	Accordion Crimes

Week 14

The Far West

July 10

Lecture - Movable Borders & Migrant Labor

July 12

Seminar

Reading

Accordion Crimes

Week 15

New France

July 17

Lecture - Jazz Geographies: Brothels & Jazz Clubs

July 19

Seminar

Reading

Accordion Crimes

Finals Week

July 24

FINAL EXAM (Room D105 14:00-15:15)