

**Department:** Geography

**Course No:** 104

**Credits:** 3

**Title:** Introduction to Geography

**Contact:** Alexander Vias

**Content Area:** CA2-Social Sciences

**Catalog Copy:** GEOG 104. Introduction to Geography. (Formerly offered as GEOG 150.) Either semester. Three credits.

Principles, concepts and methods of modern geography are developed both in general form and specific case studies. Examples pertaining to both the human and physical environment will be discussed.

**Course Information:** a. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the principles, concepts, and methods of contemporary geography. The course exposes students to the main traditions of geographic research through the study of elementary physical geography, human-environment relations, and location analysis at a variety of scales in various regions of the world. Students completing the course readings, assignments, and examinations should be able to explain basic geographic concepts and demonstrate how geographic data can be collected and analyzed for decision-making.

b. Student evaluation in the course is based on class participation, completion of an assignment at the University Map and Geographic Information Center in Babbidge Library, three midterm examinations, and a comprehensive final examination. The examinations consist of a mix of multiple choice, matching, and short answer/short essay questions. Readings for the course are assigned from an introductory textbook which also contains an appendix of data.

c. The major themes and topics addressed include basic geographic concepts and research traditions, mapping and geographic information systems, landforms, climate, population and culture, and human impacts on environmental systems. (see Syllabus below for further detailed information on topics)

**Meets Goals of Gen Ed:** 1. Students are interested in environmental and population issues. GEOG 104 provides them with the vocabulary to discuss many of these current issues in an articulate manner.

2. GEOG 104 helps students acquire intellectual breadth and versatility. By its nature, Geography is an integrative discipline. The surface of the earth is a complex object affected by natural and social processes. The course encourages students who are focused in the social sciences to consider qualities of the natural environment that are important to understanding human behavior. It also encourages students in math and physical science or technology to think about the social and political contexts that influence science and technology. Students often comment on the breadth of material covered in the

course.

3. The ability to make meaningful comparisons is an important component of critical judgement. GEOG 104 provides many opportunities for comparing and contrasting human-environment relations in different settings and at different scales of analysis. The section of the course dealing with mapping is designed to make students better readers of maps, to understand potential sources of error in maps, and how map design can influence geographic perception.

4. The themes addressed in GEOG 104 ensure that students acquire moral sensitivity regarding interactions with the environment, human population growth, and exploitation of natural resources. Current patterns of human-environment interaction are described but also questioned in terms of the unequal distribution of exposure to risks and access to resources.

5. GEOG 104 deals with contemporary issues affecting society but places them in a geographical context by addressing where events are occurring. Students are encouraged to think about contemporary problems like sprawl, environmental pollution, or military conflict by identifying the places where these problems are occurring and the geographical characteristics of the places, including flows of goods, products, and information that tie these places to other regions of the world.

6. A central construct of Geography is the region, a place with one or more characteristics that distinguish it from surrounding area. Students completing the course have addressed regional differences in the distribution of human population, cultural characteristics, and environmental contexts. Students taking the course are particularly interested in how their lives might be different if they lived in another place and how their lives have been affected by attending the University of Connecticut.

7. GEOG 104 helps students acquire a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge. A key factor is the introduction of students to the resources of the Map and Geographic Information Center, a special collection at the University of Connecticut Babbidge Library. These students often return to the Map Library to find information to support their work in other courses.

**CA2 Criteria:** 1. GEOG 104 introduces students to concepts and theories in contemporary Geography. Lectures and examinations introduce and test for understanding of key terms that constitute the vocabulary of the discipline.

2. GEOG 104 introduces students to methods used in the social sciences. The course emphasizes methods concerned with collecting, analyzing, and displaying information on the geographical distribution of features of our living environment that are natural and/or human in origin. Students learn how to interpret maps and introduced to a range of models used in earth sciences, demography, and economic geography. Ethical problems in the use of maps to distort spatial patterns and GPS and GIS technology for surveillance purposes are addressed.

3. Geography is the study of the surface of the earth as the living environment of human populations. Human-environment interaction is one of the central research traditions in geography. GEOG 104 focuses on how the environment affects us and how we, in turn, modify our environments. Regional differences in human-environment interactions are highlighted in the course.

4. Through the required map assignment and class participation assignments, students are compare information and data on different regions of the world. The political and economic organization of space and how groups obtain jurisdiction over the use of resources is addressed in the course.

**Role of Grad Students:** Graduate assistants attend class, assist with audio/visual equipment, assist in proctoring examinations, photocopy materials for class, and assist with some grading. They schedule office hours to provide extra help to students who need it. Doctoral students are prepared to teach the course with full responsibility by taking Geography 415 Practicum in College Teaching in Geography with a faculty member who teaches the course. As part of this preparation, doctoral students deliver several lectures on their own and with the faculty member present. Graduate assistants are under the supervision of the faculty member teaching the course. Doctoral students teaching with full responsibility are supervised by the Department Head.

**Supplemental Information:** GEOG 104 is currently in the general education curriculum: Group 4: Social Scientific and Comparative Analysis.