# INTRODUCTION TO GEOGRAPHY

**Course Description** This course introduces students to the fundamental concepts of geography. It covers physical geography, human geography, and the basics of cartography and Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

**Course Objectives** The course has six objectives. The first objective is to introduce students to the basic elements of maps, mapmaking, and spatial analysis. The second objective is to educate students about physical earth systems. The third objective is to enable students to explore interactions between humans and the natural environment. The fourth objective is to train students to investigate the spatial components of human populations and human behavior. The fifth objective is to instruct students in the concept of region with a particular emphasis on southwestern Minnesota. The sixth objective is to help students develop critical reading and analytical thinking skills. “To explain my problems, I will talk of geography”—Pablo Neruda

**Course Outcomes** (In accordance with Board of Teaching Requirements)

At the end of this course, students will understand the following:

1) the relative location, direction, size, and shape of locales, regions, and the world,

2) how to create, interpret, use, and synthesize information from various representations of the earth,

3) appropriate resources, data sources, and geographic tools to generate and manipulate charts, graphs, and maps and to interpret information from resources including atlases, databases, and grid systems,

4) how to determine distance, scale, area, density, and distinguish spatial distribution patterns,

5) the relationships among various regional and global patterns of geographic phenomena,

6) how physical earth system changes explain geographic phenomena,

7) physical and cultural patterns and their interaction,

8) how people create places that reflect culture, human needs, government policy, and current values and ideals as they design and build specialized buildings, neighborhoods, shopping centers, urban centers, industrial parks, and the like,

9) how historical events have been influenced by, and have influenced, physical and human geographic factors in local, regional, national, and global settings,

10) how language, art, music, belief systems, and other cultural elements can facilitate global understanding or cause misunderstanding,

11) conditions and motivations that contribute to conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among groups, societies, and nations,

12) causes, consequences, and possible solutions to persistent, contemporary, and emerging global issues.

**Grading:** Course grades will be determined on the basis of three in-class examinations (23⅓% of the course grade each), one map quiz (10% of the course grade), the field trip assignment (5% of the course grade), the GIS assignment (5% of the course grade), and attendance and participation (10% of the course grade). Speaking up, engagement, the online session, and effort on in-class exercises will determine the evaluation of one’s participation. Attending all class meetings but not participating actively will earn a student only a "C" in attendance and participation. Improvement over the course will be taken into account for those on the borderline between grades. Late assignments, if accepted, will incur penalties. *In the course’s A-F grading, 90, 80, 70, 60 are the letter breaks, and shades start on the sevens and twos.*

**Exams:** Exams will be one hour long. Each exam will contain several short identifications and one essay question. *No early third exams will be given.*

**Map Quiz:** In an age of great mobility and connectivity, knowing important features and places on our planet’s surface is absolutely necessary. This knowledge (geo-literacy) is an essential part of a university education. Each student in this course will have to demonstrate his/her geo-literacy on a map quiz.

**TOPICS**

**Unit #1**

WEEK #1 Introduction, Concepts, and Fundamentals

WEEK #2 Maps, Mapmaking, and Cartography

WEEK #3 Q5 and GIS Assignment

WEEK #4 Landforms

WEEK #5 The Physical World: Climate and Weather

**Unit #2**

WEEK #6 & WEEK #7 The Human Impact

WEEK #8 Demography and Population Geography

WEEK #9 Cultural Geography and Spatial Behavior

WEEK #10 Political Geography: Territories and Countries

**Unit #3**

WEEK #11 & WEEK #12 Economic Geography

WEEK #13 Natural Resources

WEEK #14 & WEEK #15 Urban Geography and Regions