

**PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**in partnership with the Gap Year Association (GYA)**

**GEOG 230: Environment and Society - Geography of Global Issues**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**CREDITS: 4 quarter-credits – Continuous Enrollment Course**

Students who plan to use this course to fulfill specific requirements should discuss transfer options and obtain written approval from a counselor or study abroad advisor at their own college/university PRIOR to enrolling in this course.

**PREREQUISITES:**

There are NO prerequisites for this course.

**METHOD OF INSTRUCTION:**

This course is a field-based self-study. The course instructor will correspond with the student and provide written feedback on course assignments via email and other remote communication.

**INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD:**

PSU has approved the following Instructors of Record, one of whom will be assigned to you (typically two+ weeks prior to the beginning of your program):

- Britt Basel, MS - [brittbasel@ecothropic.com](mailto:brittbasel@ecothropic.com)
  - Dianna Hahn, MA - [dianna@gapyearassociation.org](mailto:dianna@gapyearassociation.org)
  - Alexander Papouchis, MS - [alexpapouchis@gmail.com](mailto:alexpapouchis@gmail.com)
  - Cam Sylvester, MA – [ccamsylvester@gmail.com](mailto:ccamsylvester@gmail.com)
- Office: 503-206-7336  
[www.gapyearassociation.org](http://www.gapyearassociation.org)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is designed to provide hands-on learning opportunities for undergraduate students who undertake study-away opportunities. The course introduces global perspectives fundamental concepts of geography, focusing on the interconnectedness of global environmental systems and exploring how humans use, adapt, and impact their environments. Students will work to understand the growth and distribution of human populations, the complexities of varying systems of land use, geopolitics and colonialism, and the geographic impact of selected issues such as land use and urban development.

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS:**

- **Environment of Respect:** Disagreement and diversity of opinions are encouraged. You will be challenged to think critically about the impact of cultural differences, which may emerge in concepts of gender, race, the roles environment has in business and market development, socioeconomic status, physical and cognitive ability, sexuality, and other forms of diversity. You are encouraged to ask difficult questions and engage in discussion and critical reflection. Please be respectful of others, listen, and try to understand differences.
- **Experiential Learning:** In this course, learning is an experiential process in which you will have the opportunity to reflect on your experiences throughout the term. The richness of the course will depend on the questions, insights, and active participation that you bring.
- **Personal Responsibility:** You are expected to engage fully in the coursework and take action if you need help. Please communicate any concerns about assignments, deadlines, or course activities to your Instructor of Record.
- **Academic Integrity:** Please adhere to university policies. Take special note of policies regarding plagiarism and course withdrawal. Each student is expected to prepare their own assignments, and any assignments submitted should be the sole work of the student. Academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information, will not be tolerated. PSU's Code of Student Conduct may be found at <https://www.pdx.edu/dean-student-life/psu-code-student-conduct-and-responsibility>

## STUDENT OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- Identify some of the core ways in which human communities are interconnected around the globe.
- Examine their host culture's social structures.
- Analyze ways in which the host culture's social systems have modified the natural environment.
- Understand some of the reasons why cultural population centers evolve.
- Understand more deeply the impacts of political and colonial influences on the evolution of local human structured and activities.
- Compare and contrast a host culture's geographic evolution with that of their home location (e.g., in terms of population, land use, resource management, transportation, etc.).

## CONTACT HOURS, EXCURSIONS, AND METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

A total of 40 contact hours will be facilitated. These hours will come in the forms of:

- Homestays
- Volunteering on various social-service projects
- Volunteering on various environmental projects
- Visits to local markets and places of historical context and value
- Lectures by local experts on topics such as geography, colonialization, history, politics, social norms and behavior, etc.
- Optional: Students will use the Internet to access resources and evaluate information sources according to the external criteria, such as the author's credentials, the timeliness of the information, the genre of the source, etc.

## ASSIGNMENTS

**REQUIRED HOURS:** You must complete 40 contact hours as described above. The Gap Year Association will provide verification of hours.

**DAILY JOURNAL:** The journal requirement is an important component of your grade for this course. It will count for 30% of your final grade. Elements that make a strong journal include self-reflection and evidence of critical thinking.

*\*If you are enrolled in multiple courses, you are only required to **maintain one journal** for all courses\**

Journals should be **handwritten and legible**, as handwritten reflections tend to be deeper and more insightful than those maintained digitally. Additionally, many programs have limitations to device usage in different locations; as such, a typed version may not be an option.

Journals will be graded as follows:

- **Self-reflection (20%):** Ask yourself critical questions about the experience you are having. How is this different from what you expected? What personal challenges are you experiencing? How are you learning and growing from this experience?
- **Reflection about your location and host culture (20%):** What is similar to and/or different from your home culture/environment? What is unique about this place/location? How is your day-to-day experience and learning in the host culture challenging or validating your worldviews?
- **Sharing reflections on group dynamics (20%):** What lessons can you take away from the experience you are having with your cohort? How are you developing or changing within the group?
- **Reflection on specific course themes (20%):** Review the student outcomes from the courses you are registered for. In your journal entries, speak directly about your inquiry and learning related to those course themes.

- **Quality & Consistency (20%):** Journaling every day or every few days with focus on the above elements will lead to higher quality journals and a better overall journal grade.

**REQUIRED READING:** You must read at least **ONE** book from the Recommended Reading list and demonstrate knowledge learned and/or perspectives expressed (with [MLA](#) or [APA](#) citations) in your FINAL REPORT.

A **FINAL REPORT** of insights gained from your study-away experience is required in order to complete the course. **Our expectation is that the paper you submit will reflect college-level writing.** Your report should be 8-10 pages in length. Reports must be typed (double spaced) with a cover page that includes your name, the academic quarter (e.g. fall 2021), the name of the program you attended, and the course number.

**Submit a comprehensive analytical paper detailing the factors that have contributed to your host culture's evolution, and ways in which humans have modified the natural environment over time. In what ways has the local culture been impacted by population growth and economic development? How do specific issues in your host community compare to the same issues in your home community/culture? Students may focus on any number of key issues that emphasize their point, including, but not limited to: land use and resource management, urban development, transportation, political and/or colonial influences, etc.**

**Grading breakdown will be as follows:**

- Description of host-culture – 10%
- Clear explanations and understanding of how humans have influenced the environment they inhabit – 20%
- Clear articulation of which factors have influenced the cultural landscape and why – 20%
- Comparison of host-culture and home culture – 20%
- Clarity and Organization of Ideas – 10%
- Grammar and Punctuation – 10%
- Ability to Demonstrate Knowledge from the Required Readings – 10%

#### **DUE DATES, SUBMITTING JOURNAL AND FINAL REPORT:**

Calendar/Schedule:

All course requirements must be submitted by:

- Fall Semester: January 20th
- Spring Semester: June 20th

#### **SUBMITTING JOURNALS & FINAL REPORTS:**

- **Journals:** Once complete, please take images (or scans) of your handwritten journal that are legible and submit as **ONE COMPLETE** document via email/share drive to your instructor. Instructors reserve the right to refuse your journal submission if it is not legible. Some tips for quality submission when photographing or scanning your journal:
  - Ensure adequate light
  - Use equal camera height/distance if taking photos of journal
  - Turn OFF the flash
  - Pay attention to shadows and reflections
  - Ensure the entire page is captured and sections are not cut off (even margins)!
- **Final REPORT:** Please email or share your final report with your Instructor of Record

#### **DEADLINES & SUBMISSIONS:**

All course requirements must be submitted by:

- Fall Semester: January 20th
- Spring Semester: June 20th

## SUBMITTING JOURNALS & FINAL REPORTS:

- **Journals:** Once complete, please capture legible images/scans of your handwritten journal and submit as **ONE COMPLETE** document via email/shared drive to your instructor. Instructors reserve the right to refuse your journal submission if it is not legible. Some tips for quality submission when photographing or scanning your journal:
  - Ensure adequate light
  - Use equal camera height/distance if taking photos of journal
  - Turn OFF the flash
  - Pay attention to shadows and reflections
  - Ensure the entire page is captured and sections are not cut off (even margins)!
- **Final report:** Please email or share your final report with your Instructor of Record

## COURSE EVALUATION:

- **Daily Journal** (30% of total course grade): Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to, clearly presented ideas and observations, creative thought, and relevant concepts.
- **Final Paper** (70% of total course grade): Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to, appropriate grammar and verb use, format, content relevance, organization, analysis, originality, and summarization skills.
- **Required Readings:** This is a requirement for successful completion of this class and 10% of your paper grade depends on your referencing examples and lessons learned. Citations are required.
- **Required Hours:** The Gap Year Association will provide verification of these hours.
- **Grading:** This course is graded with letter grades A - F. See more details about PSU's grading system [here](#).

## READING LIST

**Students must read and cite at least ONE book in the final assignment. The following books have been approved for this course. Any other books not on this list must first be approved by your Instructor of Record.**

*World Hunger: Twelve Myths*, by Frances Moore Lappe, Joseph Collins, Peter Rosset and, Luis Esparza  
This is an examination of the policies and politics that have kept hungry people from feeding themselves around the world.

*Food Rules*, by Michael Pollan

64 simple rules that answer: What should I eat? Pollan draws from a variety of traditions, suggesting how different cultures through the ages have arrived at the same enduring wisdom about food.

*A Path Appears: Transforming Lives; Creating Opportunity*, by Nicholas D. Kristof, Sheryl WuDunn. Stories about people who are making the world a better place and a guide to the ways that we can do the same.

*The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*, by Paul Collier  
Paul Collier reveals that fifty failed states, home to the poorest one billion people on Earth, pose the central challenge of the developing world in the twenty-first century.

*Banker to the Poor: Micro-Lending and the Battle against World Poverty*, by Muhammad Yunus  
Banker to the Poor is Muhammad Yunus's memoir of how he changed his life to help the world's poor by creating the micro lending economy and founding the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh.

*How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*, by David Bornstein  
Profiles of social entrepreneurs and how one person can make an astonishing difference in the world.

*The White Man's Burden*, by William Easterly

Easterly explores why international efforts to provide aid and economic development have not been successful.

*The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*, by Jeffery Sachs

Using international statistics to show what really are the economic realities of the world, Sachs helps us understand what needs to be done to end poverty in our lifetimes

*The Beast*, by Oscar Martinez, Daniela Maria Ugaz, John Washington, and Francisco Goldman

*The Beast* was researched and experienced by a Central American journalist who documented the perilous journeys of migrants as they attempt to enter the United States.

*Cuba: Religion, Social Capital and Development*, by Adrian H. Hearn

This ethnography by Hearn explores how the Cuban state and religious groups collaborate on community development projects within the island nation.

*Capitalism, God and a Good Cigar: Cuba Enters the Twenty-first Century*, by Lydia Chavez

A collection of 14 essays, this anthology describes what the changes implemented in Cuba since the 1990's really look like for everyday Cubans. It also provides the reader with a greater understanding of Cuba's ongoing transformation.

*Beyond Good Intentions: A Journey into the Realities of International Aid*, by Tori Hogan

The autobiography of a young American aid worker in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda, searching for the truth about what does and does not work in international aid.

*Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way For Africa*, by Dambisa Moyo

Debunking the current model of international aid, Dambisa Moyo offers a new idea for financing the development of the world's poorest countries.

*An Uncertain Glory: India and its Contradiction*, by Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen

Two of India's leading economists argue that the country's main problems lie in the lack of attention paid to the essential needs of the people, especially of the poor, and often of women.

*Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*, by Katherine Boo

The true story of families striving toward a better life in Annawadi, a makeshift settlement in the shadow of luxury hotels near the Mumbai airport.

*Savages*, by Joe Kane

*Savages* is a firsthand account of a small band of Amazonian warriors and their battle to preserve their way of life.

*Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, by Yuval Noah Harari

*Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, by Eduardo Galeano

Rather than chronology, geography, or political successions, Eduardo Galeano has organized the various facets of Latin American history according to the patterns of five centuries of exploitation.

*Gaviotas: A Village to Reinvent the World*, by Alan Weisman

A look at a real life "utopia" created in the 1960 in Colombia and how it is now one of the oldest example of sustainable living community.

*Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, by Eduardo Galeano

Rather than chronology, geography, or political successions, Eduardo Galeano has organized the various facets of Latin American history according to the patterns of five centuries of exploitation.

*Kava in the Blood: A Personal & Political Memoir from the Heart of Fiji*, by Peter Thomson

The true story of hurricanes, haunted houses, kava consumption and coups.

*The Baobab and the Mango Tree: Africa, the Asian Tigers and the Developing World*, by Scott Thompson and Nicholas Thompson

A look at how some developing nations managed to develop much faster than their global neighbors.