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GEOG 140: Introduction to Human Geography—A Peer Review of Teaching Project Inquiry Portfolio

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Creating a Foundation for Active Student Engagement in Large Lecture Classes: Emersion

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Geography 140: Human Geography
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Portfolio Objective/Abstract:

Large lecture classes of 100 students or more present unique challenges to both teaching and learning. The common method of “delivery” by instructors is lecture, often augmented by a set of Power Point slides; and, while the research literature shows that this is the more traditional way of teaching, increasingly it is becoming apparent that this method of instruction often does not reach students in the way we hope and often assume (Harvard Magazine 2015). Most of the students populating these classes are born of the Digital Age and have different expectations for learning, requiring new approaches in the classroom (Tapscott 2009, Bauerlein 2008, Wilson and Gerber 2008, Jonas-Dwyer and Pospisil 2004). Faculty are exhorted to incorporate more critical thinking in their classes no matter the size (Wilsman 2014, Exeter et al. 2010), while more courses are being converted to large lecture venues that are usually not conducive to student interaction, or even to regular attendance. The large, impersonal auditoriums seem to be a confounding factor to the very quality of learning we seek to encourage; that is, anonymous auditoriums are not conducive to interactive engagement in our classrooms even as instructors are encouraged construct more student-centered classes. In previous portfolio projects I focused on various ways I could improve student grades while incorporating active learning and critical thinking. These were performance-driven and tested students’ objective knowledge. For the current portfolio, my intention is to investigate ways to encourage my students to be more active learners… that is, to be more actively engaged with the material and with each other. Put in other terms, I am focusing on making my class more experiential – to immerse students in the world they are studying as much as possible. But is it possible to get students, many of whom have never traveled outside the state, or outside the US, to experience the world while sitting in a large and anonymous lecture hall? The results of the current study suggest that it is indeed possible to help students develop a sense of wonder, curiosity, and intrigue with course material in a class size of over 100 students in an entry-level general education course, and improve their interaction with each other and the world. This portfolio will explain the steps I used to achieve this outcome.

Introduction and Course Description

My first Advanced Peer Review of Teaching project uncovered uncomfortable gaps between student efforts on assignments and their test scores, and I began wondering if the flattened scores were connected to levels of student engagement. Research indicated that active student
engagement could be very helpful in providing more interest and application of the concepts we were studying (Scheyvens et al. 2008, Healey and Roberts 2004), opening up student thinking to new ideas, and being the missing element I was intuiting. I also wanted to improve my efforts at engaging students in critical thinking, and helping them apply learned concepts in more meaningful and realistic ways. Finally, I was interested in improving student interactivity with each other. My course has more of a blended learning structure where students have weekly online assignments through Blackboard using Maple TA, a program that allows for computerized testing and quizzing. Providing such exercises as terms quizzes as well as objective questions from selected articles for students to complete during the week certainly keeps students engaged with the material, but was this really how I envisioned student engagement? I also wanted to find a way to allow students to be more active in the classroom as well. Clickers have often been suggested as a way to develop more interaction in large lecture classes (Caldwell 2002), and in past semesters, I not only tried clickers, but more recently I used a Student Response System called Top Hat Monocle that has more capabilities than a typical clicker. Instead of using a remote-style device students have to pay for and remember to bring to class, Top Hat uses the WiFi of the classroom allowing student access to the network by whatever digital device they already bring to class. Students had to pay for this services as well, but unfortunately, there were technical issues with Top Hat. Sometimes students had difficulty connecting with the WiFi in the classroom from the beginning of the session, or the WiFi would cut out during a session so some students were not able to proceed even after they had started successfully. This was frustrating, coupled with the fact that all such technical solutions had to be routed through the Top Hat help center that reportedly did not always get back to students in a timely fashion, if at all. A student response system also did not meet my criteria for student interactivity either with the material or with each other in the classroom (see discussion of Top Hat below).

Due to my increased load of four classes this semester and no TA, I did not administer pre- or post-surveys although I did ask students on the first day of class to write a paragraph describing what they believed Human Geography was and what they thought they would be studying for the semester. All of the information I am including in this portfolio came from normal class assignments. The student demographic data presented below, however, was taken from my 2014 Advanced Peer Review of Teaching Portfolio, and I am making the assumption that, qualitatively

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and quantitatively, there are no major differences in student demographics from semester-to-semester. So, who are these students?

Course Description

Geography 140 typically has an enrollment of about 150 students in one class and 50-75 in the smaller one, and they are both taught in large lecture auditoriums. Because of unplanned additional grading that was required of me (see discussion of Google Plus below) as well as cumulative class sizes over four classes, I did not ask the students to fill out a survey this semester from which I could gather current demographic and other data; but class demographics are fairly similar from semester to semester and so I have inserted some the demographic data I collected in Spring 2014 to provide a profile of the mix of students in the class. I have been teaching this course for over 10 years, and mine are two of the four Human Geography classes offered, taught by three instructors. All instructors use different textbooks and have organized their classes to suit their own teaching styles.

Combined with my other two classes, I teach over 300 students per semester. In Geography 140, students are almost exclusively non-Geography majors (Fig. 1) and the course currently does not have a lab section. The major represented by the largest number of students (31 percent) come from Accounting, Finance, and Business. Education comes second with 23 percent, Marketing, Public Relations, Journalism, and Broadcasting are represented by 13 percent, and Geography, Global Studies, and Environmental Studies combined constitute only three percent of the student population in the course. The majority of students (Fig. 2) are typically freshmen (54 percent) and
sophomores (27 percent) with the rest composed of juniors and seniors (11 percent and eight percent, respectively). For many of these students, Human Geography is their first course in university-level geography; 87 percent have had no previous college geography courses, nine percent have had some college geography, and 37.7 percent reported they had geography in high school. The course has no prerequisites and is not part of a course sequence; there is little linking this course conceptually to other undergraduate courses; however it is a required course for majors and is a prerequisite for Agronomy 305. In terms of institutional and departmental goals for the course, it is registered as an ACE (Achievement Centered Education) course and meets the ACE 9 requirements for general education. The ACE 9 goals are to: “Exhibit global awareness or knowledge of human diversity through analysis of human populations, cultures, and landscapes, with particular attention to human-environment relations and global interconnections.”

According to the departmental description of the discipline, “geography, a science concerned with the spatial dimensions of human societies and earth's environment, is increasingly critical to understanding the complexities of global change. Geographers contribute unique insights about past, present and future issues involving natural resources, culture, economics and politics. Geography is especially appealing to those having interests in travel, learning about other peoples and cultures, and understanding the environment from a systems perspective. Geography majors develop a special understanding of the spatial dimensions of social, cultural, environmental and ecological issues. Students also learn how to use state-of-the-art technologies such as computer cartography, geographic information systems (GIS) and remote sensing. Internships are often available for students, especially for those having good technical skills.
Undergraduates earn both credit and work experience and in many cases internships have developed into careers”.

Evolution of My Course

When I first began college as an undergraduate, I was majoring in elementary education and needed a social science course. I found a course in World Regional Geography taught in the summer, and I thought I could take it with something fun such as Art for Elementary Teachers. Geography sounded so boring, but if I could take it with an art class, where pre-service teachers learned to finger paint, make collages, and construct papier mâché masks, that would make it bearable. There were lots of films shown in the geography class, and a number of students found it an excellent time to get caught up on their sleep, or to sneak out of the room and go about the rest of their day. But I sat there using, what I later came to understand, was my geographical imagination, and tried to put myself in the films asking what it must be like to live there, did the air smell differently there, what would I feel and what would it be like to walk down the street there, to go about my daily life there. The guided study we did as a requirement of the class went methodically region by region around the world and we had to know about the physical, cultural, historical, social, political, urban, and economic conditions of countries on every continent on the globe. By the time I had finished the course, I felt like I had taken a trip around the world. Geography touched on everything, and geographers were responsible for developing a comprehensive, multi-dimensional view of the world. Everything started making more sense to me and I never felt more alive in my life. I thought if this was geography, then I had to have it. It was life-changing for me, and completely reset how I saw the world and how I saw myself in it. I switched from primary to secondary education, majoring in geography and the rest, as the saying goes, is history.

As we move through our careers, over time we can forget the initial wonder and inspiration that led us to our home disciplines and we focus more on the responsibility of covering the material, teaching from the textbook… at least, I did. I not only have been dedicated to making sure students have well-rounded exposure to most of the major dimensions of Human Geography as covered by some very excellent textbooks, I am also aware of the quality of teaching and the standards behind it that governs the Advanced Placement Human Geography Programs taught in high schools across the United States and elsewhere. I take my responsibilities very seriously and want to be sure that students are certainly disabused of the notion that geography is all about coloring maps and learning capitals and countries… or that, since this is an ACE (Achievement-Centered Education) course, students assume it is not going to require much effort. What compounds the mixture here is that Geography 140 is a general education course. Students are used to not being connected to the subject, being anonymous, not being asked to be responsible for the material in the
class, and to being generally disengaged and unchallenged intellectually. Introduction to Human Geography is a course that surveys ways human beings make their place on the surface of the earth, how they move, interact with each other, build cities, develop economies, develop and maintain culture, and build landscapes. It includes topics on population and migration patterns, world languages, religions, concepts of race, ethnicity, and nationalism, the geography of political space, concepts of economic development, agricultural development, manufacturing and transnationalism, urbanization, and the structure of cities. We consider theories, models, misconceptions, paradigms, and stereotypes. All of these concepts and topics are organized around five themes: region, mobility, globalization, human-environment interaction, and landscapes. It is a sweeping course that is designed not to minimize the complexities of the world, but to help students face them, to look at these complexities and learn to unpack their various factors. It is a demanding course (Appendix 1), but as a result, it is hoped that the world around them becomes more coherent and that students begin making more sense of the news. My goal is to help students feel more a part of the world, and actually feel the world around them. As trite as it sounds, Introduction to Human Geography is designed to help students become more informed and active world citizens.

In past semesters, my Power Points were typically comprehensive and I would pull my lecture from the material I was presenting on screen, engaging with students in a conversational style. Students, unfortunately, would dutifully copy down as much of the Power Point material as they could before I switched slides, but would hear very little of what I had to say. Students began asking for me to publish my Power Points on Blackboard, which I did after the lecture was over, thinking that would still encourage students to pay attention and take notes, and it would discourage some students from otherwise skipping lecture altogether. Student scores on exams from the lecture material was markedly not high and, again, I felt it was because students were not engaged, were not thinking about what they were writing down. My solution to disengagement in the past has been to ply my students with online weekly terms quizzes. My rationale was that, if students had to engage with the terms quiz for a grade before we started the chapter, they would be primed for what was to come, making lectures more understandable, making it easier for them to take notes, and making recall for exams easier. We also would not need to spend precious class time defining terms. Over time, however, I began asking myself if this is what I really wanted students to get out of my course … terms. Because the terms were included in the exams, students generally did fairly well with them. However, when it came to the more conceptual material that they were to have pulled from lecture and their reading, the scores were disappointing.

I obviously still needed a better way to engage students with the material. Something was still missing. Maybe I needed to make the material more relevant to student lives and provide examples through which they
I could see geography in the real world. After all, that’s what brought me into the discipline in the first place. I developed the *Human Geography Reader* to address exactly this issue, and I have been using it for about a year. These articles showcase real-life situations in a way I hoped would capture student interest as well as reinforce some of the main conceptual themes of the course I felt students were missing. First of all, I selected articles that were intended to personalize the geographic concepts and principles students were learning and bring the world into their experiences in, what I hoped would be, meaningful ways (Fig. 3). I developed objective questions as study guides for each article assigned from the reader that became weekly quizzes students were to complete online for points along with or in lieu of terms quizzes. Students typically did very well on the terms quizzes and they did well on the study guide questions *during the weeks of each particular chapter*. However, the unit exams that would usually cover three chapters at a time, along with questions on the lecture material I covered from the Power Points I published on Blackboard. Unfortunately, a disappointingly large number of students could not perform well on these exams; scores were unremarkable to dismal, with some outliers of higher scores. I believe students were so focused on getting all of the answers “right” on the quizzes during the week that it 1) did not carry over to more long-term memory for the exams and 2) it did not seem like we were achieving the meaningfulness with the content I intended; these quizzes were stored in short-term memory with no experiential connections to make them more meaningful. In addition, as is often the case with large lecture classes, attendance would also start to dwindle as the semester went on, and I found that fewer students were taking notes. Some were even engaged in other activities during class – doing homework for another course, texting, and checking email.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population: migration</td>
<td>Displaced Livelihoods (the experiences of refugees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World religions</td>
<td>Women, Islam, and the New Iraq (women working within Sharia law to improve their status and accord them more rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography of Political Space</td>
<td>Cell Phones and Senegalese Émigrés; how local village social structures were changed when cell phones were introduced and how technology collapsed space as well as time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Regional specialty coffee-growing in Indonesia and ways its embeddedness in geographic place preserved its name-brand purity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>The shift from rice growing to manufacturing in rural Malaysia and how that changed the character of the rural villages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban geography</td>
<td>Firm linkages and the development of transnational cities through the growth of subsidiaries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Fig. 3*
In a previous Peer Review of Teaching project, I changed a couple of approaches to encourage more student engagement with the material and improve interaction in the class. First, I changed the tool for measuring student comprehension of the assigned articles by using a student response system called Top Hat instead of having students answer questions online. The process was similar to clickers except students used their own digital devices connected to the WiFi in the classroom. This, I thought, would promote more student engagement and interaction in the classroom as they answered the study questions live and got to see other student responses. Students seemed to like this break from lecture and they were able to verify whether their answers were correct, which relieved some anxiety when it came to studying for exams. As we went through some of the questions, their responses did provoke some discussion when there were some discrepancies in the answers. I would give students 60 seconds to respond to a question they ideally had already researched; many students answered right away while it took other students the entire 60 seconds and even then there were some students who didn’t make the cut-off. For those students who answered quickly, they were experiencing upwards of 50 seconds of dead time per question when they would sit quietly, text (since their phones were out) or email (since their computers were out), and I felt that instead of promoting student engagement with the material and each other, the in-class student response activities created more fracturing in the class. This would have been the same had I used clickers instead of Top Hat. In addition, for sake of time, we were not able to cover all of the article questions in class, so students did not get a complete review of the correct answers before the exam.

I also made an effort to lecture for only 15 minutes at a time, providing some break for in-class activity that could engage students in a variety of ways such as think-pair-share (Angelo and Cross 1993). Although I was aware it was important to change the pace, I would often get caught up in the material I was presenting and the time would just go too fast. I would be disappointed with myself that I spent another 50 minute or 75 minute class lecturing the entire time. I knew I was definitely covering the material, but what were my students experiencing (Weimer 2002)? There is so much research reporting that our attention spans drift after 15 to 20 minutes, and that teachers find it more effective to mix up their presentations with activities that are designed to reinforce student learning and interaction (Angelo and Cross 1997, Gallo 2015). I needed a better way to catch myself, plan breaks more deliberately, and reasonably estimate how much material I should really attempt to cover and in what ways students could actively engage with the material I presented. All of these changes, however, still addressed basic content knowledge and measurable outcomes (test scores and final grades). There was still nothing deeper. With such large class sizes without a TA, I was apprehensive of assigning activities other than those that could be scored objectively and quickly. But clearly, this was to the detriment of my students.
Objectives of the Course Portfolio

My objectives for this 2015 Inquiry Portfolio included a renewed focused on increasing student engagement with the material and with each other (Harrington and Vincenti 2004). I wanted to find better ways for students to construct and synthesize information and better ways to help them make connections between the course materials and their own lives at a deeper level. This is why I developed the book of readings, the *Human Geography Reader*, in the first place. I also wanted to provide more activity in class by finding opportunities for students to interact with content material and each other in more meaningful ways than by using student response systems or impersonal online quizzes.

Why is it useful or important for me, as an educator, to investigate this problem? First of all, the size and number of large classes are growing. As budgets get cut or priorities are shifted, large classes seem to be a model of the future at least for undergraduate, general education courses; in fact, the size of my classes will be increasing in the AY 2015-2016. It is important for me to find more effective ways of teaching large classes that provide meaningful learning experiences for my students. Secondly, students are often more focused on rote learning rather than understanding and integrating concepts in a more critical way. Based on both my initial 2013 Benchmark Portfolio, and 2014 Inquiry Portfolio, students appear to be having most trouble with comprehensive questions on the exam indicating they are not picking up important concepts either from the textbooks or from lecture. So, how might investigating this issue contribute to my students’ learning, my own professional development, and/or to the scholarship of teaching large classes? I want to find a way that students will walk away from my course with a more solid foundation of knowledge and of having integrated more material into their personal paradigms. This course is one that could change students’ lives and perspectives and I feel I am missing this deeper connection with students. I need to answer the question of how to develop more meaningful learning experiences in large classes of 100 students or more; I do not want students to be shortchanged in their most fundamental learning experiences by being in a large class. Geography has the potential to help students connect to the world in myriad of meaningful ways, bringing global concerns into their everyday lives, and increasing their capacity to become citizens of the world; in short, students need what this course offers.

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Research question

So, how can I make the experience of students in a large, introductory, general education course more personal, inviting students to engage with the material in deeper and more personal ways as it relates to the real world … to their world?

Teaching Methods and Materials

Study Groups. First of all, I wanted to address the large class size and the sense of anonymity such classes engender. I assigned the students randomly to study groups of not more than 4-5 students. This was designed to help make the large class seem smaller (Cooper and Robinson 2000, Cooper et al. 2000, Smith 2000, Smith and MacGregor 2000) and to enable me to do more interactive and creative things with the class that could be evaluated by group rather than by individual. It was also designed to mix up the class demographics a little bit. Some students enrolled in the class because friends enrolled and they sat together in groups or simply sat with others that they knew in a sea of unfamiliar faces; some international students also tended to group together and not interact with American students; and some students, being overwhelmed by the size of the class, tended to retreat inside themselves. Assigning students to groups where they would get to know each other and sit together for the entire semester, seemed to address a number of these pitfalls of large classes. There were in-class discussions where individuals were to turn to others in their groups or work group to group and then report back to class. Students were encouraged to contact group members when they were absent to find out what was covered in class that day and, in addition, these groups visually appeared to have increased attendance throughout the semester although I had no consistent method of taking attendance either this semester or previous semesters. The groups also helped me in that for some assignments I would be evaluating the work of 46+ groups rather than over 200 individuals.

The Study Group idea worked reasonably well and students seemed to like it. A number of students commented that the study groups did make the large class seem smaller and more personal. However, there also are areas for improvement. In-class activities by group were limited to discussions of various “bookend” exercises such as think-pair-share or going over difficult concepts from lecture. In the future, I will plan on more direct assignments in class using study groups where students are to create and hand in a short group project; this could also be considered a precursor to a flipped-course design. Sometimes, in-class activities would break down somewhat when only one or two members of a group would show up so it is important to stay alert to the status of groups throughout the semester and merge dwindling groups together to keep up the group dynamic. Study groups create more time-management issues for me in that the only way to know how
a group is doing is to have the group do something and get their feedback. It is important to check in with the
groups often. On one hand, this gives me greater accessibility to each student, but on the other hand, it
requires that I design more activities that ultimately I have to grade or score. I also encouraged groups to sit
in two rows of two students in the auditorium so that the two below could turn and face the two above. This
made conversation within the groups a bit easier.

ConceptMaps. Another way I developed an activity to promote student engagement with the material was to
ask students to create a concept map of the topic to be covered. For each chapter I would present students
with a question that would start them making an intellectual inventory of what they already knew about a
subject we were about to explore. Examples include: In what ways do cultures use space; why is language so
important to a culture; what is political space; what is the relationship between geography and agriculture;
what are some issues surrounding population growth and change. At the end of the chapter, students were to
reflect on and revise their ConceptMaps with additional material they learned from lecture, films, and
readings; the question being, how would they choose to incorporate their new information with the old? They
could also see in which ways their knowledge had grown. Students could receive 1-2 points when they
handed these in and one extra credit point if they use specific language or terms they learned during the week
or be able to place information from their readings into the ConceptMap. Successes: These exercises were
successful in that they showed student ability to integrate new knowledge with old, indicated the depth of
student thinking on a topic, and more practically, ConceptMaps provided sort of rough attendance record.
This exercise worked pretty well, and from an informal class survey asking students what we should keep as
far as class processes were concerned, what we should revise, and what we should drop, students appreciated
the ConceptMaps. Discussing the efficacy of ConceptMaps gave me an opportunity to talk to students about
how the brain maps new information, and how they need to differentiate learning behaviors from reading
behaviors. Areas for improvement: In the next iteration of this exercise, I will require, not just suggest, that
students use a different writing instrument or different color for initial versus revised submissions on
ConceptMap so it is easier to see the additions. I would like to be able to return the scored ConceptMaps, but
the mechanics of returning papers in classes so large, is daunting. One option might be to make this a Study
Group activity rather than an individual activity, or have a set of folders numbered by group. Every
assignment will have a student’s group number on it and when graded, will go into the respective folder. On
days when papers are returned, one person designated from each group will pick up the folder, remove the
papers and return the folder to me. Then he or she will take the papers back to the group and distribute them.
I will also make a discussion of quality and professionalism part of this exercise. Many of the ConceptMaps
were very carelessly done or even crumpled and in some cases, almost illegible. I can also use the
ConceptMap exercises to help students see the importance of taking pride in their work.
**Lectures.** As a result of my last Portfolio, I also changed my approach to lecture. I do not like lecturing from notes; I prefer to be able to look at my students and to engage them as if in conversation about the topic at hand. However, although I do not like to lecture from notes, it is not about me; it’s about what is best for my students (Weimer 2002). So, I streamlined my Power Points to a series of questions or leading statements so students could follow along and write down what answered the question or finished the thought during lecture. They *had* to listen, and they *had* to make connections between what was being presented on screen and what was being presented in lecture. The questions and half statements were somewhat compelling, provoking at least a modicum of student interest or at least serving as a guide of what is important to write down. I had no problem publishing the Power Points ahead of the lecture, because the slides were asking questions and the lecture provided answers. This led to more active listening and more attentiveness throughout the class period. I believe this works better, but students are still not able to take what they wrote about in class and apply it to exam questions over the same topics very well.

My lecture notes were paired with specific slides, and I made notes to myself indicating when I would stop and what the class would do next. Along with these detailed lecture notes, I also created lesson plans for each class period, dividing class time into five minute increments (see Appendix 2). In the column on the left-hand side were the notes of what I would do in no more than 15-20 minute increments, and in the right-hand column were the activities students would engage in. It became very easy to see when the class period would become unbalanced. These daily planners helped me become even more organized in my preparation for the class, and I began thinking much more from the receiver point-of-view. I could even start asking myself how I would most appreciate experiencing this material. I would still sometimes run over, underestimating how long it would really take me to make the point I needed to make or get the class to a point where they were prepared for the activity. This remains a work in progress, but I feel I am making some very solid progress here.

**Human Geography Reader:** In addition to the Study Guide questions designed to, as the name implies, guide students through the readings and pick out some of the most important points, I asked a series of discussion-type questions that required students to evaluate, analyze, or synthesize, moving up the levels of Bloom’s taxonomy. Students still had the formal Study Guide questions for the articles that addressed the knowledge level of Bloom’s taxonomy, but I put these on Maple TA as anonymous practice exercises instead of quizzes for points. Students knew these questions would be on the exams, so I felt that was sufficient motivation for encouraging them to research the answers to the questions and practice them. The new exercise presented a higher level of cognitive reflection about the articles in the form of more comprehensive questions (Appendix 3). In some cases, I developed more specific questions such as asking students to
analyze the impact of industrialization on rural villages in Malaysia as factories started migrating there; in what ways was the specialty coffee “Toraja,” that was grown in Indonesia for the Japanese market, embedded in geographic space; or I asked students to contrast Christaller’s Central Place Theory with the process of transnational cities networking through subsidiaries in sometimes far-flung places. Other times, I asked students more experiential questions such as asking them to describe what they thought it would feel like to be a refugee after they read the article, *Displaced Livelihoods*.

**Google Plus.** On the advice of an educational technology specialist, I chose to use Google Plus as my medium for on-line student interaction instead of using Blackboard discussion groups. It was an excellent venue for students to develop and post creative projects, and I assigned two. Students were given a topic, such as “Sacred Landscapes” and they were to develop a video, a montage of pictures, or a Power Point Presentation that would last no longer than 60 seconds depicting how they defined what sacred means and show images of what they consider to be sacred landscapes with explanations. In the past, I had students simply post exterior pictures of different houses of worship in the area, showing the diversity of religions in the community, but I thought this exercise asking the student to define what sacred means to them could be much more interesting and engaging. **Successes:** Google Plus allowed students to be more creative and expressive. After posting their own project, they were also to comment on the projects of other students. In this way, Google Plus was not only well-suited for students to post self-created videos, but it was well-designed to increase student engagement with their classmates.

I also used Google Plus as the forum for students to post their evaluations of the articles they read for class or the films they saw. Again, after they would post their evaluations or analyses, they were to comment on the posts of other students. Overall, students seemed to like Google Plus as a medium for interaction; some even going so far as to say they were going to tell their friends and families about it. They also liked to read what others had written and enjoyed getting responses to their posts. Google Plus was a very good medium for responses that were only about a paragraph long, or for creative projects, but it was not the best medium for longer student evaluations or full documents. In other words, Google Plus is not a good medium for longer film analyses or longer papers. **Areas for improvement:** Google Plus posts could be very difficult to find unless students are instructed to be very accurate in assigning the appropriate hashtags to their work. In fact, it was important to develop a master hashtag list for students to follow. All Google Plus assignments must carry specific instructions about using hashtags as requirements for student grades, and implementing Google Plus in the classroom required training and a learning curve. Unfortunately, some students still did not use them accurately, and it was difficult for me to find their work or even for them to retrieve their work for grading. In addition, the search feature in Google Plus was incomplete. If I searched by student name,
ideally, I should get everything that had that student’s name affixed with a hashtag whether it was an original post or a comment on someone else’s post. In reality, the name search skipped posts for many students. At the end of the semester, after I had searched for and graded all of the posts I could find, I had to ask students to be sure they received grades for all of their posts; if not, they were to send me the URLs of their missing posts by a specific deadline. Unfortunately, there were quite a few.

I also have to mention the method used for students to comment on the posts of other students. It was decided that students should not review the work of others in their own Study Groups, so a random Peer Review Panel was constructed for each Google Plus assignment. A list of these panels was posted on Blackboard, and after posting their own answer to the question prompt, students were to click on the relevant Peer Review Panel to which they were assigned and see which students’ work they were to evaluate. They were provided with a scoring rubric and they were to make comments below the student’s post more than just “good job” or “way to go” – there had to be something meaningful about the post that the students were to comment on. Once they had scored the post with a number based on the rubric, they were to enter that number on a spreadsheet also posted on Blackboard. The spreadsheet was set up so that it would automatically average the score based on the number of scores that student received from the respective Peer Review Panel members. If not all students scored their peers as they were assigned to do, this affected the efficacy of the overall scoring portion of the exercise. As much as students liked to see the work of others and read peer comments on their work, they did not like the idea of scoring their peers. In fact, many students refused to do it even when they were awarded points for doing it. It was intended for students to develop evaluative skills and do a first read of the posts, while I would focus on the spreadsheet, and filter out outliers before assigning grades. When it became clear that many students were not evaluating or scoring their peers, it fell to me to do all of the baseline scoring. This was not something that I had included in my overall plan of how much additional work I was creating for myself by initiating Google Plus, ConceptMaps, film analyses, and other projects, for classes totaling over 200 students. Google Plus assignments were to relieve me of some of the scoring but instead it tripled it. Students were also confused by the Peer Review Panels and their role versus the Study Groups they were originally assigned to at the beginning of the semester. The process became quite unwieldy for such a large class, and I will not structure student responses this way again. I will use the Blackboard Discussion Board in the future, and likely require students to comment on the posts of two other students – randomly, any two students, as long as they do not already have two comments. That seems much cleaner and more simplified. I also might not make these posts worth 10 points each, but maybe only 2 or 3, but not more than 5 points. A score of 10 is much more “high-stakes” and might make students a little more reluctant to be discriminating. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, the Peer Review Panels created a significant amount of additional stress in the class. I am very sensitive to the importance of not unnecessarily provoking
more stress in student lives by confusing or complicating assignments or timelines. Student mental health is an important dimension to take into consideration when constructing a course and every effort must be made to be sure that the structure, expectations, and execution of activities in a course be transparent and coherent (Douce and Keeling 2014).

**World As I See It: A Personal Geography: An Example of an Assignment at Two Levels:** At the beginning of the semester, students were to create a 60-second video, montage, or Power Point answering a series of questions about their world. First of all, they could define their world in any way they wanted, and answer questions such as: how big is it, who lives there, where is it going, in what way or ways is it important to you, and so on. It was only a list of six questions. Students did fabulous work, and most were very creative. Many of them combined text with photos, some used voice-overs; some even dubbed in music or created animations. They were beautiful. We then proceeded through the rest of the course, studying all the ways that humans alter the face of the earth by the development of culture; we clarified the difference between place and space; addressed issues of global population, migration, language, religion, ethnicity, the geography of political space, agriculture and food, economic development, urbanization, and the spatial structure of cities. As we went along, students were also reading articles in the *Human Geography Reader* about some place in the world that illustrated some aspect of these topics, or they watched and evaluated relevant films (Appendix 4):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Emphasis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Gods Must Be Crazy</td>
<td>Contrast indigenous with popular culture according to criteria discussed in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Linguists</td>
<td>The importance of recording dying languages or face loss of culture forever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Stranger Among Us</td>
<td>Religion and ethnicity in an urban setting; religious/ethnic/cultural tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tossed Out</td>
<td>Regarding food waste in America and how we all can learn to conserve more and waste less</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the end of the semester, I assigned a 3-7 page paper with the same title and questions as their first project: The World As I See It: A Personal Geography, and they were to answer the same questions only this time, they were to review their initial project and incorporate what they had learned from the class. This turned out to be a very powerful exercise, as shown in the section below, *Impact on Students*.

**Extra Credit Assignments:** These were designed to help students make more direct connections between the material they were learning in class, their own worlds, their community, and the world around them. Each one of these was accompanied by questions and a grading rubric (Appendix 5)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Extra Credit Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population migration</td>
<td>Trace your own family migration history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Visit and evaluate a local ethnic restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Visit and evaluate an unfamiliar religious service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/The world of tomorrow</td>
<td>Any of several presentations in the Heuermann Lecture Series*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5

Analysis of Student Learning

Critical Thinking

ConceptMaps: This year I used ConceptMaps in lieu of the five-minute short answer questions I had used in previous semesters. I wanted students to mentally prepare themselves for the subject we were about to embark on and search their own knowledge bases for what they already knew about the topic. At the end of the chapter material, I asked students to take out their ConceptMaps again, consult their notes, and revise or update what they had originally mapped. This enabled students to integrate new material with old, and it illustrated to them what more they had learned throughout the week. They could literally see what they had learned. They then turned in their completed ConceptMaps for me to review and score. I would give one to two points for these: one point if the ConceptMap was very simple or superficial, two points if they had sufficiently updated their ConceptMaps with material from the week’s lectures. They could earn a third, extra credit point if they could also incorporate the week’s readings and/or film that was relevant to the topic. I gave no more than five minutes for the initial ConceptMap and five minutes for the revision. I suggested to students they use a different color of ink or some other way to distinguish the new material from the old, which would make it easier for me to evaluate their work. Even after several

* Heuerman Lectures can be found online at [http://us2.campaign-archive2.com/?u=3786e33425d77a406de2fa2a8&id=172e477c65&e=49ce4bc6cd](http://us2.campaign-archive2.com/?u=3786e33425d77a406de2fa2a8&id=172e477c65&e=49ce4bc6cd). Topics included:

- "2050: Agriculture's Role in Mitigating Global Challenges"
- "Understanding and Assessing Climate Change: Implications for Nebraska"
- "Climate Change in the American Mind"
- "Genetically Modified Animals: The Facts, the Fear Mongering, and the Future"
- "Tomorrow's Table: Organic Farming, Genetics, and the Future of Food"
- "Where America Must Lead: Ensuring the World Can Feed Its People"
- "Water for Food: Think Globally, Act Locally"
- "The Bold Future of Alternative Energy"
announcements, some students did not do this. When I present this project again, I will insist on it. I also did not give these ConceptMaps back. Since they were done on a weekly basis, the sheer amount of time and confusion created in handing them back in such a large class dissuaded me from doing so. However, I do believe that returning these ConceptMaps is important for the students and I will devise a process by which I can return papers in an orderly, efficient, and effective means. Since students sit with their groups, I will have a series of file folders, one for each group. Students will be required to indicate their group numbers on all work turned in, along with other pertinent information. All papers to be returned will be placed in those folders in the front of the room, and one member from each group will pick up that group’s folder, pull out the papers and replace the folder. They would then be responsible for distributing the papers to the group members.

Reviewing these ConceptMaps over the course of the semester, quite a few students took them seriously and it was easy to see their progress. Other students just wrote down the most general one-word responses that didn’t indicate whether they had learned anything at all. In the future I will discourage students from one-word entries and ask students to truly concentrate on describing concepts. A number of students, understandably, mentioned that they liked doing the ConceptMaps because these were an easy way to get points. I don’t disagree with that assessment, but in the next iteration of this activity, I will introduce the semester-long exercise explaining why we are doing ConceptMaps, what they are to accomplish, explain a little about how the brain learns new information and how the development of accurate ConceptMaps can help them conceptualize new material and aid in recall on the exams. One final plus to the ConceptMap exercises is that they “bookended” the material nicely for the given chapter. Students had an in-class activity at the beginning and end of the topic, which also required students to be present on those days.

Article Evaluation Questions: Over the course of the last few semesters in which I used the Human Geography Reader, I became rather disillusioned that the Study Guide questions were really inviting students to immerse themselves in the subject matter rather than skimming the articles looking for answers. I had designed both objective and short answer questions and in previous semesters I held students accountable only for the objective questions either by forming them into Maple TA questions that students would answer online, or Top Hat questions they would answer in class. This semester, I made the Maple TA questions available as anonymous practice
with unlimited attempts. Students still had a time limit for completing each session, but they would not receive a grade for their attempts. Instead, they were made aware that these questions would appear on the corresponding exam and that it was in their best interest to quiz themselves. This bordered more on rote learning and, although these were key ideas, terms, and examples, they didn’t ask the students to think more deeply about the topics. I used the opportunity of the Google Plus platform to ask students more searching questions regarding the articles and I published these questions both on Google Plus, under the appropriate week, and I published them on Blackboard. A number of students did follow the prompts and write insightful responses, and even used what they gained from reading these articles in their later more comprehensive essay. Others either did not look or completely ignored the questions and simply posted their reaction or impression of the article. I found myself repeating the same comments in response to many of these students: “there were specific questions for you to consider when evaluating this (article or film), did you forget?” Sometimes I would repeat the question they were to have considered. However, everyone who posted on Google Plus received some points. Next time I present this activity, I will be very clear about the parameters of student responses and if they do not specifically respond to the question prompts, they will receive no points. This is an opportunity for students to learn that they need to be aware of and be held responsible for direct instructions and that not following those instructions will have consequences. Students eventually heading for the workplace deserve nothing less.

Film Analysis: Portions of two of the three films I presented to the class (The Gods Must Be Crazy, and A Stranger Among Us) were posted online in Blackboard for students to watch on their own time. That way, we could spend more class time talking about important elements that ultimately had been incorporated into the films. One of the films, Tossed Out: Food Waste in America, was shown in class. Each film analysis had a rubric for students to follow (see Appendix 4), and most students did follow the rubrics although many of them took the “minimalist” approach. I also had them post their responses on Google Plus and I think that encouraged them to craft shorter replies than they would have developed had I asked for a 2-page paper. I will not ask for students to post film analyses on Google Plus in future film analysis assignments. In each case, I asked students to relate the films to material we were covering in class. The impact of these films carried over to the end of the semester paper where several students incorporated material from the films into ways their outlook on the world shifted.
Extra Credit Projects: Two of the extra credit projects really stand out as avenues by which student perceptions and experiences were broadened. One had to do with the trip to an ethnic food restaurant and the other to an unfamiliar house of worship (see Appendix 5). These were both designed to be very experiential (as well as fun), connect students more to the community around them, and help them use material from class to evaluate what they see and experience around them. Since they were optional, not all students participated, but those who self-selected these options went in with very open minds, willing to expose themselves to new situations. It took courage for some students to walk into an ethnic restaurant they had never been to before and order something, and it took even more courage for some to walk into a church or temple service. Some of them turned it into a fun date night or they went with family members or friends. In one case, the student went to a downtown Indian restaurant with a parent who also had never eaten Indian food before and they both shared a new experience (see Impact on Students section below).

Interactivity

Study Groups: Overall, the Study Group concept was a good one. Students reported that being a member of a study group did make our large class seem smaller and more personal. In some cases, they made new friends and many got to meet and interact with international students, some for the first time. International students were required to leave their comfort zone, grouping with other students from their same country of origin, and mix with the general student population. They were required to stretch their use of English and exchange ideas hopefully helping them to become more confident in their new cultural surroundings. I encouraged students to depend on others in their Study Groups to bring them up to speed if they needed to be absent from class which, parenthetically, cut down on some of the student emails I usually need to respond to asking if we did anything “important” while the student was away. Some students went with other Study Group members to local ethnic restaurants or to religious services in town for their extra credit projects. This was not a requirement, but I think it speaks to the success of the Study Group concept. In the future, I will develop more group-level activities for students to complete in class, creating at least some “flipped” segments to my course. Students have asked for this and I believe this is a next step in the development of a more interactive course.
Google Plus and Peer Review Panels: Google Plus responses need to be separated from the Peer Review Panels I used this semester to evaluate the Google Plus responses. I took an informal survey in the middle of the semester, asking students to anonymously respond to three questions about the course up to that date: What to keep, what to throw out, what to revise. I got a mixed response concerning Google Plus. A number of students really enjoyed using it while others wanted it dropped altogether. I suspect the latter group merged the difficulties of the Peer Review Panel mechanics with the content of the Google Plus posts themselves. Although many students reported that they liked Google Plus, all the students commented that the Peer Review Panels should be dropped.

Impact on Students

The best way to discuss the impact this attempt at immersion had on students is to let them speak for themselves through a small sampling of quotes from the assignments they handed in.

The World As I See It (Final Paper)

When I signed up for Geography 140, I went in with zero expectations. I had no idea what the class would be like, what the instructor would be like, and how much I would learn in just a few weeks. Today, I can honestly say that I am happy from all aspects. A few weeks into class, we were assigned to create a video showing our peers the world as we see it. Throughout the time period it was assigned and due, I was overwhelmed with the amount of different perspectives there are of the world. This was an eye opener for me, because I just assumed that we all have the same idea of how big the world is and what the people are like in it. I was completely wrong. From this assignment alone, I was exposed to many different worlds and cultures. It was interesting to see other people’s creative ways of showing their world. I definitely think my world has enlarged since I created my video…. I never thought Geography would be a class that would make me think so much about the world around me but I was completely wrong. Geog. 140:001

The world is a very large place, but by learning about the world and the different cultures that inhabit it, we can feel closer and understand the other humans around the world because we are of one species and we are all linked somehow….I have really enjoyed my time in this class. I definitely believe that my view of the world has changed, and I think that was a major goal in this class, to get people to be more aware of the world. I will definitely take the experiences from this class with me for the rest of my life, whether I stay in Lincoln, or move around the world. I think it is important to take classes like this in college, because it helps broaden views and expand horizons. My world is no longer just the people around me …. Geog. 140:001

This course made me ask “why?” Prior to this course I never took the time to understand why cities are set up as they are or how agriculture can be closely related to culture and ethnicity. I learned how geography and the environment has shaped human behavior and culture. The biggest insight I received from this class was understanding how differences in culture and region can
affect the world. Geography has shaped human behavior and entire cultures have been built around it. Population, agriculture, religion and languages are bound by geography. The environment has shaped the world into what it is and this class explained how. Geog. 140:001

Now that I have learned a small amount about human geography, I realize that the size of the world is incomprehensible. There is no way to understand every culture, every religion, or every human being. My world’s appearance is shaped by architecture and the cultural landscape: it changes from region to region. It is made up of culture and religions and economies, but most importantly, it is made up of unique people of every ethnicity and walk of life. It is headed toward an increasingly urban future, for better or worse. I now realize that I am a mere spec on this large planet and that my understanding of the world is extremely limited. It is very important to me that in the future the world is a more equal place. I hope that developed countries stop exploiting the less fortunate and give developing countries a chance to succeed. While the future may be headed towards progress and urbanization, it should also be headed toward fairness and equality for all, no matter what the geographical location. Geog. 140:001

When I was asked how I picture my world, I never had an answer or knew how to respond to that question. I have always thought it to be a place where I lived and go about my daily routine without it crossing my mind. I haven’t put much thought into what I believed my world was prior to this class or how I felt about my world at all for that matter. Throughout the semester I have realized that it is much more than that and my world is essentially filled with so many incredible people and things. Geography 140 has taught me that there are so many more things out there in the world. It is a lot larger than I have thought it to be, I just haven’t experienced it yet. Geog. 140:001

Studying human geography has made me see the world from different perspectives and as a much bigger place; even though it is huge, we are more connected than ever due to the effects of technology, globalization and urbanization. When I visit a place, I will not just be visiting the places of interest like a regular tourist but as a learner, I will be curious about the emergence of the city, how the place has influenced the people who live there, what makes it unique in terms of culture, what its population is like in terms of dependency ratios and life expectancy, what the dominant religion and language is and more. Geog. 140:001

From taking this human geography class, I have learned how to observe and analyze my world in terms of the human connections to various places that I have visited, seen, or heard or read about in the media. Because of this class, I am able to see beyond the superficial appearance of people and places and understand the deeper connections between people and the world they live in. This class has also helped me to understand my place in this world and has shaped my perception of the world as I see it…. Because of how this class has expanded my ability to think about the interconnection between different places and people I have an enhanced perception of what my world looks like. From what I know now, I can picture the world as an interconnected web of people and places that is changing and shifting dynamically across time …. Geog. 140:001

After taking this course, I also view my friends and acquaintances differently. I began to think about how they fit into the bigger picture of the world around me. I began to recognize that they all had different backgrounds that shaped who they became. I realized that a lot of us share the same places and spaces. Some of us shared sacred meanings and some of us even shared the same ethnicity…. Overall, when the semester began my view of my world was very narrow. When I did
the project the first time I interpreted it very literally. When I began I asked myself the question: what do I see around me? I based my project off of whom and what I could see. As I asked myself the same question a second time I realized my world has grown exponentially. There are tons of new dimensions in it because I have become more capable of analyzing my surroundings. I have realized just how big my world really is. I have come to respect and appreciate more cultures, ethnicities, and religions as a result of this course. I also understand that this course is just the beginning of my journey. I aspire to be a teacher some day and I believe that what I have learned in this course will really help me create an understanding and diverse classroom. I believe that I better understand why the world works the way it does and as a result I will be able to spread that knowledge to my future students. Geog. 140:001

Before this course, I knew that my world would grow as I got older, as I met new people, and as I traveled more (especially to new places). However, I never knew my world would grow if I just changed my perspective on things. Thanks to this class, I feel that my world has grown tremendously. It’s up to me to appreciate what this world has to offer and it’s up to me to also accept its offerings. I now look at the world in an entirely different, but good way. I hope I can constantly keep my eyes open to the world around me as time goes on after this course. Human geography is an exceptionally beneficial course for everyone to take. I know that I will learn so much more if I pay attention to not only what is happening in my surroundings but also to what is taking place on the opposite side of the world. I can’t wait to see what the future has in store for me as I take on new things in the moments to come because I now see the world. Geog. 140:101

…I hope to share my knowledge of this class to my students and children. It is very important for them to know how to immerse themselves into society and not distant [sic] themselves from certain people. There are a couple of foreigners on my floor who at the beginning of the year I never made the effort to talk to them. Human Geography changed my ways second semester. I have now become good friends with them and have learned about the culture they come from…. I see myself in this world as an individual who working with the other individuals to make a difference on Earth. I can complete this by not excluding others from my world and incorporating everyone. Also by leaving a positive mark on the world many different ways. Ways like always being willing to give a helping hand to those around you. Geog. 140:101

All in all human geography is a complex subject that takes into account not only humans, but also the environment around them. When trying to explain why things are the way they are there is just no simple explanation. By studying certain regions, place, space, and organisms a geographer tries to incorporate different aspects of life into a cohesive interpretation of what is happening in the world around us. This human geography course has opened up my eyes to a lot of different world issues and to become more educated about interpersonal relationships, but ultimately it has helped me grasp a better understanding of the world as I see it. Geog. 140:101

It is truly crazy how much my world has changed from the first few weeks of class to now. At the beginning of the semester my world as I saw it was very small. It was full of things that meant a lot to me, but those things were only things that were effecting [sic] my life in college or my life today. It was more of a support system and not a geographic way of looking at things. This class has opened my eyes up and expanded my world and made me reach farther out. Geog. 140:101
I created a Power Point early in the semester about the world as I see it through my eyes. I created the very generic narrow interpretation of my world as a non-geographically informed person. Now I will be able to tell my version of the world as a more open perspective as a geographically informed person because of this class… In conclusion, I believe that studying human geography has changed the way that I look at the world. I believe that I can look at the world through a geographically informed perspective. At the beginning of the semester, my perspective of my world was very self-centered and didn’t extend much out of Lincoln. But now, I think about all of the different cultures, places, and over 7.8 billion people that also inhabit the earth. **Geog. 140:101**

This class was really thought provoking and also a paradigm shifter for me. At the beginning of the semester I thought that my world involved the people around me, my hobbies, and the state I lived in. While my world does in fact have those things it also has the possibility to have many other things as well. My generation is a globalized one and we have tools to connect with people and do great things. I now realize my world has the potential to include almost anyone and anything I can think of, and I also realize my world is headed for a broad and bright future. **Geog. 140:101**

If there was one thing I would take away from this class, it would be to open your mind to new things. There are many new beliefs and ideas that many people have yet to learn, or taken the time to listen to. If it weren’t for this class, I would not have expanded my mind to new things, which ultimately helped me expand my world. **Geog. 140:101**

**Eating at an Ethnic Restaurant**

Overall, after eating at this Vietnamese restaurant I learned many things about Vietnamese culture, food, and the city of Lincoln. I learned the different types of food that are native to the Vietnamese, and got to experience a Vietnamese Banhwich. I learned not to judge a culture’s food before experiencing it. I learned this through the fact that they serve similar dishes, sandwiches, and even unexpected dishes, like waffles. Lastly, I learned that the city of Lincoln is more diverse in culture and in restaurants than I imagined. I never would have imagined a place like this to be here in Lincoln. I have never dined anywhere this authentic and while searching for an ethnic place to eat I located many more that I would like to try. **Geog. 140:001**

I am a very picky eater, so when I heard about this assignment I thought it was a good opportunity for me to try and expand my taste buds ….This was one of the best food experiences I’ve ever had. I’m glad this assignment forced me to go outside of my comfort zone. I will definitely be trying many more Latin foods in the future. I was expecting hot foods but didn’t realize how much flavor and character each food item would possess. I’m planning on trying to recreate some of these items at home for my family and friends to try as well. **Geog. 140:101**

When I first heard about this restaurant I was hesitant to try it. New restaurants with such a diverse staff and menu seem out of the ordinary, however this restaurant benefitted from this. With so many different workers representing different countries, dishes are very diverse and are cooked traditionally. The food was great and I actually learned a lot from this experience. After my experience at La Cocina, I realized how much culture there is in food and how certain dishes go along with the geographical position of the country. All in all I benefitted intellectually from eating good food, and that is pretty cool to me. **Geog. 140:101**
All in all, this was definitely the most fun extra credit project I have done. I am a total food lover and am always looking to try new things, so this was the perfect opportunity. Banhwhich café is a very cute Vietnamese restaurant with great service and food. I really liked their local roots and highly recommend this place to everyone. **Geog. 140:101**

Overall I was very pleased with my experience at this restaurant. They definitely received another customer in me, as well as many others because I am sure to introduce this place to many of my friends. This was also a sort of eye opening involvement for me, because it let me realize how many different kinds of food I have yet to try. After going to Banhwich Café I am eager to try new foods and new restaurants. **Geog. 140:101**

**Attending an Unfamiliar Worship Service**

I feel that this assignment really made me learn a lot. I definitely would have never attended a Shabbat service if it wouldn’t have been for this class. Before doing research on Judaism, I wasn’t really sure what they believed or what their rituals were. I didn’t know what Shabbat was or that Jews celebrate Purim. I always knew that Jewish people wore a head covering but I never took the time to research why… I’m really glad that I took the opportunity to attend Shabbat. It gave me some great insight into Judaism. **Geog. 140:101**

In the end I enjoyed taking time out of my day to learn about a different religion. I learned about Catholic’s [sic] beliefs and their faith. The Catholic Church is also more formal in their teachings and ways of religion compared to a Presbyterian Church. I am very glad I got to open my eyes and experience these new ways for myself instead of just listening to the stereotypes of the religion. **Geog. 140:101**

**Film Evaluation: Tossed Out: Food Waste in America**

Watching this video has honestly made me so much more aware of what I throw away. When I was home for Easter, I told my Dad that we were going to start a compost pile this summer. Even though we are cattle farmers and do use manure on a daily basis (someway) we can add to it by our food waste within our home. This morning at the dining hall, I noticed how somebody through away a complete bowl of oatmeal and a banana that had not even been opened. This is sad to me! I am now more cautious of the amount of food that I take and make sure to eat everything that I do take. In a way this can help people be healthier, because it can reduce portion size! **Geog. 140:001**

**Final Remarks and Outcomes**

I debated whether to call this Inquiry Portfolio one of *immersion* or *emersion*. Both terms fit. Initially, I was focused on what I was trying to do with my course this year, which was to create an experience of student immersion in the material, of making the course more experiential. What resulted, based on the self-reporting of many, if not most of the students in their final essays, was an emersion, or emergence of their awareness of the world, of their importance in it, and how a geographical perspective helps them see the world in more dimensions. I do not think an instructor can ask for more than this. When I think back to my
first experience with geography when I was an undergraduate, I very much wanted to recreate that blossoming for my own students; but semester after semester, I missed the mark. We had good classes, but the spark was missing. This semester, I believe I found it. I know how important the quantitative approach is in evaluating the success of a course; but it is also possible to become constrained by the evaluation method one chooses, meaning one explores some questions instead of others because the method determines the questions. This semester, I turned that around and allowed the questions to determine the method. There is a place for both, but there clearly is a place for using qualitative methods to evaluate how students are learning in a class that objective scores and self-reporting on a survey alone cannot provide. I accomplished what I set out to do more consistently across my two classes than I ever would have imagined. I also felt I had more control over the timing of my classes by developing the daily lesson plan and now I have a full set of plans for both the 50- and 75-minute classes that I can build on next year; I also have a full set of lecture notes that I can hone and even use to eventually narrate my Power Points and develop the foundation for flipping some aspects of my course, making it even more flexible and student-centered. Assigning students into Study Groups or, as I would rather call them, Learning Communities within the class was also a very successful practice and I believe I only touched on a very small part of their potential this semester. I loved the level of creativity that opened up this semester, allowing students to create videos or montages as a means of expression, and the extra credit assignments also allowed students to experiment with course material in new ways. I had been very concerned about moving to more qualitative assignments because the sizes of my classes seemed to preclude the method of evaluation that was required: short answers and essays. But these really did not take as much time to grade as I thought they would because I was looking at how students were integrating experience with the structure provided by the course and I was in a better position to help guide them in some of the higher levels of Bloom’s taxonomy, which was another dimension that seemed to be more effortlessly reached this semester than in previous ones.

**Future Directions**

There is still value in looking at quantitative data, and in my portfolio project next year I will develop a dual-method based on the foundation of maintaining this experiential approach, adding the dimension of more quantitative scores and survey results. I think there is a strong possibility that the in-class Learning Communities can contribute much more here in support of higher assignment and test scores, and this will be an approach I will build on next year. My use of Google Plus will be more focused and limited and I will shift online discussions to the Blackboard Discussion Board while Maple TA assignments will remain geared to anonymous practice for exams almost as a set of sympathetic strings that vibrate in the background of a more complex composition of experiences and activities within the course. I think the use of ConceptMaps as bookend exercises for each chapter has been very successful and I will be even more
explicit as to their purpose and use in the class as well as design a process of returning student work by using the strength of the in-class Learning Communities. Next semester, I am planning on moving more toward a flipped course design with more in-class activities to be geared toward the Learning Communities; however, overall, I want to sustain the progress I have made this year, making it more of the rule rather than the exception. Geography can be deeply transformative and essential to a student’s undergraduate education in ways other disciplines cannot provide and this year I have found a way to open this for students and I can think of nothing better than to be able to provide this level of experience for many semesters to come.
Appendices
Appendix 1: Semester Planner
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WK</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Ch.</th>
<th>Topic (Lecture)</th>
<th>WEEKLY TASKS</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Activities (Combination on-line and in-class)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>01/12-18</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Reader Questions (DscBd)</td>
<td>Reader: Rediscovering the Importance of Geography; The Four Traditions of Geography</td>
<td>In class activity (3 Traditions: 10 pts) Survey Monkey Questionnaire (by 2nd wk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nature and Perspectives of Geography</td>
<td>Orientation Exercise (MTA)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student demographic 3x5 cards (in class)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>01/19</td>
<td></td>
<td>MLK Day</td>
<td>Reader Questions (DscBd)</td>
<td>Ch. 1 Text; Reader: Place or Space?</td>
<td>Discussion of Reader Chapter in class Survey Monkey Questionnaire closes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>01/20-25</td>
<td>1, R</td>
<td>Human Geography: An Introduction</td>
<td>Orientation Exercise Closes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>01/26-01</td>
<td>2, R</td>
<td>Geography of Cultural Difference</td>
<td>Reader Questions (DscBd)</td>
<td>Ch. 2 Text; Reader: Sacred Spaces and Tourist Places</td>
<td>Film: The Gods Must Be Crazy – 15 pts. Online discussion of Reader Chapter Due: THE WORLD AS I SEE IT: A PERSONAL GEOGRAPHY – 20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>APRT Consent Form (in class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>02/02-08</td>
<td></td>
<td>Population Geography (statistics and models)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Testing Center: Unit Exam 1 (02/02-08): Chs. 1, 2, &amp; Readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>02/09-15</td>
<td>3, R</td>
<td>Population Geography (models &amp; migration)</td>
<td>Reader Questions (DscBd)</td>
<td>Ch. 3 Text; Reader: Displaced Livelihoods</td>
<td>On-line discussion of Reader Chapter Extra credit: Family migration history (15 pts)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>02/16-22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Ch. 4 Text</td>
<td></td>
<td>Film: The Linguists 15 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>02/23-01</td>
<td>7, R</td>
<td>Geography of Religion</td>
<td>Reader Questions (DscBd)</td>
<td>Ch. 7 Text; Reader: Women and Islam</td>
<td>On-line discussion of Reader Chapter Extra credit: Attend unfamiliar religious service (15 pts) Survey Monkey Mid-Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>03/02-08</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Geography of Religion</td>
<td>Reader Questions (DscBd)</td>
<td>Ch. 7 Text</td>
<td>Due: SACRED LANDSCAPES ON THE GREAT PLAINS – 25 points Survey Monkey Mid-Term Closes</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>03/09-15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Geography of Race and Ethnicity</td>
<td>Reader Questions (DscBd)</td>
<td>Ch. 5 Text</td>
<td>Film: A Stranger Among Us – 15 pts. Extra credit: Ethnic foods (15 pts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>03-16-22</td>
<td>6, R</td>
<td>Organization of Political Space</td>
<td>Reader Questions (DscBd)</td>
<td>Ch. 6 Text; Reader: Senegalese Émigrés</td>
<td>On-line discussion of Reader Chapter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>03/23-29</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spring Break!!</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>03/30-05</td>
<td>8, R</td>
<td>Geography of Agriculture</td>
<td>Reader Questions (DscBd)</td>
<td>Ch. 8 Text; Reader: Politics of Place</td>
<td>On-line discussion of Reader Chapter Film: Tossed Out: Food Waste in America 15 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>04/06-12</td>
<td>9, R</td>
<td>Geography of Economics and Development</td>
<td>Reader Questions (DscBd)</td>
<td>Ch. 9 Text; Reader: From Farm to Factory</td>
<td>On-line discussion of Reader Chapter In class activity (Economic Inventory) – 20 pts,</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>04/13-19</td>
<td>10, R</td>
<td>Geography of Urbanization</td>
<td>Reader Questions (DscBd)</td>
<td>Ch. 10 Text; Reader: Firm Linkages</td>
<td>Discussion of Reader chapter in class Extra credit: Land use change from Lincoln to Omaha (15 pts) Survey Monkey-Final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>04/20-26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Inside the City</td>
<td>Reader Questions (DscBd)</td>
<td>Ch. 11 Text</td>
<td>Final Essay: The World as I See It – 30 points Summary of course Survey Monkey-Final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>04/27-05/03</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dead Week</td>
<td>Reader Questions (DscBd)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Final Exam will be up as of Friday, 05/01 and run throughout Finals Week to Friday, 05/08 Survey Monkey-Final Closes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>05/04-08</td>
<td></td>
<td>final Exam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FINALS WEEK (05/01-08): Chs. 9, 10, 11 &amp; Readings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Revised 01/03/15
### Appendix 2: Sample Daily Lesson Plan

**Geog. 140**

**Spring 2015**

**Notes:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 2.5: Fri Jan. 23</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Student Objectives &amp; Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **What is Cultural Geography?** | 15   | • Students to draw map of campus  
| | | • Note where they choose to start  
| | | • What “angle” they use (aerial, side, mixed)  
| | | • What they include or exclude  
| | | • Where are the places and where are the spaces?  
| | | • Groups to compare maps in class  
| **Place and space come from two different visions of what geography is basically about** | 05   | Revise ConceptMaps to turn in  
| **Sense of Place** | |  
| • Space  
| • Place  
| | 20 | **Place or Space?**  
| • Main ideas  
| • Sense of belonging  
| • Place stands for set of cultural characteristics  
| • Lived connection—identification and Communities  
| • Space and place on the landscape  
| • Technology and experience of space and Place  
| • Humans relate to world around them  
| • Embedded knowledge  
| • Engagement with the world  
| | 10 | Students to reflect and write down muddiest point to turn in (no grade)  
| **Total** | 50 | |

Two bookend exercises each class period (lecture in 15 min. segments):
- **ConceptMaps:** Opening exercise for students to visualize what they already know about the topic—students hold onto this until the end of the unit where they will add to/revise/edit to see what they have learned, this is turned in (2 pts. ea. = 22 pts. total)
- **Compare notes within community**
- **Explain model or process within community**
- **Muddiest point (turn in, no grade)**
- **Discuss most important ideas and supporting examples within community**
- **Think-pair-share**
**Appendix 3: Sample Question Prompts for Reader Articles**

**Hint:** These questions will be much easier to answer if you have completed the reading and the study questions first. In answering these questions, there is no single right answer, or in some cases, there is no right or wrong answer. By doing your best, you can receive up to 8 points for your original contribution and 2 points for commenting on the contributions of two other students. Duplicating what someone else has chosen or simply repeating what someone else has said, even if all you are saying is “I agree” will receive zero points. You can receive points for the comment “I agree” if you then explain why.

**Sacred Spaces and Tourist Places:** Based on the article, Sacred Spaces and Tourist Places, provide an example of how a religious understanding of a site creates one set of places while touristic interpretations produce a different set of places ... at the same site. Then comment on two other students’ explanations. 10 pts.

**Displaced Livelihoods:** Draw on the various descriptions and characteristics provided for you in the article, Displaced Livelihoods, and provide a brief verbal sketch of what you think it must be like to be a refugee in a protracted situation either as a camp-dweller or someone who is self-settled. Then comment on two other students’ verbal sketches. 8 pts. for original post; 2 pts. for comments on two other posts = 10 pts.

**Women, Islam, and the New Iraq:** What surprised you the most in the article, Women, Islam, and the New Iraq, or what did you find most interesting? Be sure to comment on the observations of two other students. 8 pts. for original post; 2 pts. for comments on two other posts = 10 pts.

**Applying Islamic Principles in the 21st Century:** Based on the article, Applying Islamic Principles in the 21st Century, describe one way in which Islam is adapting to the dynamics of the 21st century while trying to balance its traditional values. Then comment on the observations of two other students. 10 pts.

**Senegalese Émigrés:** From the article, Senegalese Émigrés: New Information & Communication Technologies, define what New Information and Communication Technology is, then provide at least one way that NICT is changing the roles and rules of the Senegalese. Remember to comment on the observations of two other students. 10 pts.

**Politics of Place:** As illustrated in the article, The Politics of Place: Geographical Identities Along the Coffee Supply Chain from Toraja to Tokyo, there are many ways geographic space and place contribute to the creation of Toraja Coffee, some of which are unique to this coffee brand. Provide one example of how Toraja Coffee is embedded in
geographic space and place or depends on its embeddedness, then comment on the examples of two other students. . 8 pts. for original post; 2 pts. for comments on two other posts = 10 pts.

**From Farm to Factory:** Village Change in a Rice-growing Region: If you look at the article, *From Farm to Factory: Village Change in a Rice-growing Region*, from a more holistic perspective, what are the authors describing? What is going on in this area? What process or processes are at work here? After you have provided your analysis, be sure to comment on the analyses of two other students. . 8 pts. for original post; 2 pts. for comments on two other posts = 10 pts.

**Firm Linkages, Innovation and the Evolution of Urban Systems:** The authors of *Firm Linkages, Innovation and the Evolution of Urban Systems* point out that there are only two types of cities in today's world: global and globalizing, and they use cities and urban processes in Europe as a contrast to the more traditional model of city hierarchies described by Walter Christaller. Using an example from this article explain what is different between the dynamic authors Rozenblat and Pumain are describing and the model by Walter Christaller that we have read about in our textbook. Also comment thoughtfully on the observations made by two other students. . 8 pts. for original post; 2 pts. for comments on two other posts = 10 pts.
Appendix 4: Sample Film Analysis Rubric

Film Evaluation: A Stranger Among Us: 47:29 min.

- Please provide a brief evaluation of the film including the following information:
  - Identify the several groups (ethnic and otherwise) that were represented in the film
  - Whose perspective or perspectives were presented in the film? Give examples
  - Describe in as much detail as you can, the urban ethnic neighborhood of the Hasidim – what did you observe?
  - What did Detective Eden learn about the Hasidic culture?
  - What were some of the mistakes Detective Eden made?
  - What do you believe the value was of showing this film in class? How does the film relate to what we have been learning about ethnicity?
- For MWF class, film evaluation due March 18; comments are due by Sunday, March 29
- For T-Th class, film evaluation due March 19; comments are due by Sunday, March 29.
- This critical thinking exercise is worth 15 points total including your comments to your Peer Review Panel members.
- #wk10 #sec #Stranger #Grp

Evaluation of Film:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>2 points</th>
<th>1 points</th>
<th>0 point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups represented &amp; perspectives</td>
<td>More than 2 perspectives</td>
<td>2 perspectives</td>
<td>1 perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe neighborhood</td>
<td>Several details</td>
<td>Two or three details</td>
<td>One detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did Eden learn</td>
<td>Several examples</td>
<td>Two examples</td>
<td>One example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes Eden made</td>
<td>Several examples</td>
<td>Two examples</td>
<td>One example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of showing film &amp; how does film relate to class</td>
<td>Value of showing film, how film relates to class and comment showing insight or personal impact</td>
<td>Value of showing film &amp; how film relates to class</td>
<td>Value of showing film OR how film relates to class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: Grading Rubrics for Extra Credit Projects

Geog. 140: Human Geography
Family Migration History Extra Credit (15 points)

Trace your family’s migration history!! Contact your parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and others to help you find all the places your family came from. Use maps to help you tell your story. Use a world map to show where your family came from outside of the United States, identifying as many relatives as you can find. Create a second map of all the places in the United States your family lived in their migration across the United States, or the locations in the United States where family members now live. If you can indicate dates of residence, you might be able to actually see a migration pattern emerge. Use a third map to show how your family came to live where they now do if there was migration from places outside of where your family now lives.

Your maps should be accompanied by a paper of 3-5 pages that is a narrative of your family’s migration history, explaining in as much detail as you can the locations of your family’s travels from outside the United States, states within the United States, and how your family came to settle where it is living now. You should have at least four references. If these are interviews, please provide the name, relationship, date of the interview, and location. Also indicate whether the interview was conducted in person, by phone, email ... and the like. If you have diaries or old letters, you can use them as references as well. You also might have some photographs you might like to use of relatives and/or interesting bits and pieces of your family’s history.

Final Project to hand in (hard copy in class): 3-5 page paper with relevant maps charting:
A. Map location of as many relatives outside of the United States as you can find
B. Map location of as many relatives outside of Nebraska (or home state) as you can find
C. Trace migration of your immediate family to home state going back as far as you can
D. Paper providing narrative of your family’s history
E. References (interviews): Name, relationship, date of contact, and location; these could be your parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts, others; maybe you have letters, diaries, and/or photos you would like to use.

Grading Rubric (these are approximate, based on the quality of the final project):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>5 points</th>
<th>4 points</th>
<th>3 points</th>
<th>2 points</th>
<th>1 point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maps</td>
<td>Very clear, nicely drawn, good detail (locations and dates clearly indicated) 5 or more locations.</td>
<td>Clear, detail is there (locations and dates) but is a little difficult to read</td>
<td>Map has locations indicated but there are no descriptions or dates</td>
<td>Map has locations indicated but these are difficult to identify against the background of the maps</td>
<td>At least one map is included with a few reference points indicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>3-5 pages of good narrative with plenty of supporting detail</td>
<td>3-4 pages of fair narrative with some supporting detail</td>
<td>2-3 pages of narrative, relatively little detail</td>
<td>1-2 pages of narrative, relatively little detail</td>
<td>1/2 – 1 page of narrative with very little detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refs.</td>
<td>Student has contacted at least 4 relatives; has also included information from diaries, letters, etc. and/or has included photos</td>
<td>Student has contacted at least 3 relatives; may have information from diaries, letters, etc., but these are not clearly referenced</td>
<td>Student has contacted at least 2 relatives; may have information from diaries, letters, etc., but these are not clearly referenced</td>
<td>Student has contacted at least 1 relative; only sketchy information provided at best.</td>
<td>Student has not contacted any relatives; narrative based on hearsay only (family narrative passed down through the generations)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is there a religion you have always been curious about? Or, maybe you want to broaden your own cultural experiences. There are many branches of religions in Lincoln as well as many denominations to choose from. This is an activity you can do alone, with a friend, or with members of your Study Group. You can look online for various branches of religion in Lincoln, or check out the Yellow Pages in the telephone book under churches to find Christian denominations. You need to do a little research on the religion you choose, so you have a better idea of what the religion is about before you attend. You can look online for a website that focuses on that religion. Write a complete summary of what you have learned about the religion before you attend. If you want a deeper experience, call ahead of time and arrange to interview a representative of that religion and ask if you can take interior pictures of the structure after the service is over. Then you are ready for your visit; please include the address of the service you attended in your paper. You might want to visit more than once if you want a fuller experience, and if you do that, you might want to have your interview between the two visits. Next, summarize in detail what you observed and experienced, adding what you learned from your interview, if you had one, and compare this to what you read about and summarized before you visited. Finally, write a paragraph of what you learned by doing this project. If you attend with friends or members of your Study Group, you are welcome to experience, but you will each need to write an individual paper because your experiences and insights will be different. You might want to take pictures outside of the structure, and if you have permission, you might be allowed to take pictures inside after the service is over. **DO NOT** take inside pictures during the service or after unless you have permission. You don’t want to be disrespectful. Total points possible for this project is 15 points.

### Grading Rubric (these are approximate, based on the quality of the final project:)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>5 points</th>
<th>4 points</th>
<th>3 points</th>
<th>2 points</th>
<th>1 point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research</strong></td>
<td>Student had an in-person interview with a representative of the religion, and has referenced at least two websites for background. Attended one or more services.</td>
<td>Student had a telephone interview with a representative of the religion and has referenced two websites for background. Attended one service.</td>
<td>Student had a telephone interview with a representative of the religion and has referenced one website for background. Attended one service.</td>
<td>Student did not conduct a personal interview, but has consulted one website before attending. Attended one service.</td>
<td>Student did not conduct a personal or telephone interview, and did very little or superficial research before attending. Attended one service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Thorough summary of initial research, detailed observations of experience and interview, and descriptions of visit with thoughtful insights of experience.</td>
<td>Three or more paragraph summary of initial research and interview, good observations and descriptions of visit, and general insights from experience.</td>
<td>Three or more paragraph summary of initial research and interview, good observations or descriptions of visit, and general insights from experience.</td>
<td>At least two paragraph summary of initial research, few observations or descriptions, and little insight from experience.</td>
<td>One paragraph summary of initial research, few observations or descriptions, and little insight from experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paper</strong></td>
<td>3-5 pages of good narrative with plenty of supporting detail and at least one exterior photograph.</td>
<td>3-4 pages of fair narrative with some supporting detail, and at least one exterior photograph.</td>
<td>2-3 pages of narrative, relatively little detail, and at least one exterior photograph.</td>
<td>1-2 pages of narrative, relatively little detail, and at least one exterior photograph.</td>
<td>1/2 – 1 page of narrative with very little detail, and at least one exterior photograph.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ETHNIC FOODS IN LINCOLN (15 POINTS)

Have lunch or dinner at one of Lincoln’s local ethnic restaurants!! If any of you would like to go as a group, that would be fine, too; but you will each have to write up your own evaluation separately. This is an assignment where you will need to know a little bit about the restaurant, and have a bit of background regarding the country or region before you go – so you will have a better idea of the foods and ingredients. This will NOT be like the food challenge on Survivor, so don’t worry!! But you can be much more observant if you go to dinner prepared with background about the region first. So, here’s what you do:

1. Try something different! Choose an ethnic food you haven’t eaten before – make this a food adventure! You are to AVOID any chain of restaurants, or fast food restaurants. You must avoid Mexican restaurants and Chinese restaurants. Try to find restaurants where the owner or most of the people who eat there/work there are from the region the restaurant represents. This is important to try to find genuine representations of the foods. Be thoughtful about your choice considering the design of this course (for example, the Tilted Kilt is not an appropriate choice).

2. Talk to the owners of the restaurant if possible. You might ask the following kinds of questions:
   • Why did they choose Lincoln?
   • Are most of the people who come there of that ethnicity?
   • How do the foods or the specific ingredients reflect the country?
   • Do they use special spices?
   • Do they prepare their food in unique ways?
   • What might they suggest you try that is representative of their cultural diet?
   • What can they tell you about the dish you have ordered?

3. Besides the meal you ordered, what other kinds of dishes do they serve?
   • How does this relate to the country of origin?
   • What part or parts of the country of origin do the dishes reflect?

4. You MUST bring back your receipt and staple it to your paper

5. What did you learn about the culture, their food, and/or about Lincoln that you didn’t know before? What did you expect and what was different from what you thought?

The paper is to be typed, double spaced, and approximately 2-3 pages long. If you do a credible and complete job of evaluating your restaurant based on the 5 requirements above, you will receive up to 15 points toward your final grade. If you turn in a brief accounting of the restaurant without the geographic analysis, you will receive 1 point for your work. Please hand in a hard copy in class.

Enjoy!
Appendix 6: Semester Syllabus Spring 2015

Geography 140: Human Geography
University of Nebraska
Spring 2015

Instructor: Dr. Katherine Nashleanas (Dr. K.)
317 Hardin Hall (East Campus)
Phone: 472-7905
Email: knashleanas2@unl.edu
Testing Center: http://scimath.unl.edu/wba/testingcenter_home.php

Purpose of the Course
This is an active learning course. Its purpose is to introduce students to the systematic study of patterns and processes that have shaped human understanding, use, and alteration of Earth’s surface. Students will learn to employ spatial concepts and landscape analysis to examine human social organization and its environmental consequences. Students will also learn about the methods and tools geographers use in their science and practice.

This course satisfies ACE 9: Exhibit global awareness or knowledge of human diversity through analysis of human populations, cultures, and landscapes, with particular attention to human-environment relations and global interconnections.

Course Goals
1. Use and think about maps and spatial data.
   - Geography is concerned with the ways in which patterns on Earth’s surface reflect and influence physical and human processes.
   - You will learn to use maps and spatial data to pose and solve problems. You also will learn to think critically about what is revealed and what is hidden in different maps and spatial arrays.

2. Understand and interpret the implications of associations among phenomena in places.
   - Geography looks at the world from a spatial perspective seeking to understand the changing spatial organization and material character of Earth’s surface.
   - One of the critical advantages of a spatial perspective is the attention it focuses on how phenomena are related to one another in particular places.
   - You will learn not just to recognize and interpret patterns but to assess the nature and significance of the relationships among phenomena that occur in the same place. You will learn how tastes and values, political regulations, and economic constraints work together to create particular types of cultural landscapes.

3. Recognize and interpret the relationships among patterns and processes at different scales.
   - Geographical analysis requires a sensitivity to scale, not just as a spatial category but as a framework for understanding how events and processes at different scales influence one another.
• You will learn that the phenomena you are studying at one scale (e.g. local) may be influenced by developments at other scales (e.g. regional, national, or global). You will learn to look at processes operating at multiple scales when seeking explanations of geographic patterns and arrangements.

4. Define regions and evaluate the regionalization process.
• Geography is concerned not simply with describing patterns but with analyzing how they came about and what they mean.
• You will learn to see regions as objects of analysis and exploration and move beyond simply locating and describing regions to considering how and why they come into being and what they reveal about the changing character of the world in which we live.

5. Characterize and analyze changing interconnections among places.
• At the heart of a geographical perspective is a concern with the ways in which events and processes operating in one place can influence those operating at other places.
• You will learn to view places and patterns not in isolation but in terms of their spatial and functional relationship with other places and patterns. Moreover, you will be able to analyze how those relationships can constantly change and understand how and why such change occurs.

Required Materials


Nashleanas, Katherine. 2014. Human Geography Reader First Edition. Toronto Ontario, Canada: Cognella Press. Available through the University Bookstore and also see Blackboard (Course Documents) for ordering instructions directly from the publisher.

Basic Course Information
This is an undergraduate 100 level survey course and it will require adult-level responsibility to complete all assignments on time. Our approach will cover a broad sweep of topics related to human culture from the micro- to the macro-scale with a focus on environmental quality. In order to prepare properly for lecture, you will need to:
1. Read the text and come to class prepared for the topic.
2. Attend class regularly and get your assignments done on time. Make sure you know when assignments, quizzes, and exams are due; check your semester planner on Blackboard frequently—better yet, print it out and post it on your wall.
3. Be a productive and supportive class member, be willing to participate. Class is so much more interesting for everyone when class members participate. I’m sure you all have experiences and insights that can add a great deal to our discussions, and I would love to hear from you.
4. Concentrate on learning specifics about the aspects of the human cultural environment we are studying bearing in mind all the elements of scale that are interacting.
5. Be willing to ask questions, investigate new ideas, identify and challenge your assumptions.
Learning Module Tab in Blackboard

• Your assignments in this course consist of:
  • Reading textbook chapters and articles in *The Human Geography Reader*
  • Discussion Board activities
  • Video/montage/PowerPoint presentations (2)
  • Film evaluations
  • Any additional reading assignments as posted
  • In-class or online assessments
  • Unit exams

• **Orientation Exercise**: Designed to help you navigate through Blackboard.
• **Unit Exams**: These will cover several chapters of the textbook, lecture, and readings; you will have a week within which to take them, and you will take them at the Testing Center, 127 Burnett Hall any time during the week they are up, when you feel most ready.
• **Film Evaluations**: Reflective evaluation responses to films you will view and will review evaluation of other students’ reflections using a scoring rubric.
• **Reader Questions**: These will help guide you through the readings and I will select some of these questions to be on the unit exams.
• **Reader Discussions (online)**: Short evaluation responses to readings and response to two other students’ evaluations online on the discussion board.
• **Video/Montage/Power Point**: This is where you get to be creative! Responding to an assigned topic, you will learn to create a video, photograph montage, or short PowerPoint presentation.
• **Reflective Essay**: To serve as a summary of the course and a reflection of ways in which your worldview has changed as a result of what you have learned this semester
• **ConceptMap**: (In-class only) Allows you to inventory what you already know about a topic at the beginning of a unit; then you will edit, add to, or otherwise change your ConceptMap at the end of the unit to indicate what you have learned. This completed ConceptMap will be turned in for credit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Worth</th>
<th>Overall Course Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Orientation Exercise (MTA) (MTA)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4% 29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams (4 @ 25 pts. ea.) (MTA)</td>
<td>4, 9, 13, 16</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>3, 6, 9, 12</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>16% 42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Evaluations (4 @ 15 pts. ea.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Discussions (9 @ 10 pts. ea.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Traditions (in-class)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>05% 29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video/montage (The World As I See It)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video/montage (Sacred Landscapes)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report (Inventory in-class)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay (The World As I See It)</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Maps (in-class) (11 @ 2 pts. ea.)</td>
<td>Semester</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>100% 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Points</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>Up to 10 pts.</td>
<td>Extra Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Extra Credit</td>
<td></td>
<td>Extra Credit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regarding email:

- Students are responsible to make sure they are getting emails from me. I depend on email to communicate important information to the class. I will send out a test email at the beginning of the semester so students can be sure they have registered their correct email address with MyRed.
- Students must identify themselves by NAME, IDENTIFY THEIR CLASS, AND SECTION NUMBER if they want me to respond to their email.
- If you are copying an old email to send me a new email, it is very important to change the subject line. I rely on the subject line to prioritize my messages so I believe the subject line you send. If you don’t change the subject line, I might think it is in reference to old emails and I might not get to it until later.
- So, the beginning of your email subject line should look like this (including your section number):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geog. 140:001 RE: Your subject heading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geog. 140:101 RE: Your subject heading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- I will make every effort to respond to an email within 24 hours. If it takes a little longer, have patience. If you do not provide your name, class identification, or relevant subject line, I may mistake your email for spam and not respond at all.
- **Be sure to identify yourself by name in your email.** Some of you have very creative email addresses that suggest hobbies, interests, or even private jokes. To avoid receiving an email from me asking who you are, please make sure you identify yourself by first and last name.
- One way to get some of your questions answered more quickly is to check the Syllabus to see if I have already answered your question. I know it will take a little time to become familiar with the Blackboard tool for this course, but the sooner you know how to use it and where to go for answers, the easier the semester will go.
- I will have a link on Blackboard, “Internet Cafe” where I will post questions students have sent me that I believe the rest of the class would also benefit from. As the semester progresses, it might be helpful to check this link, too, before emailing me ... someone may have already asked the same question you have. You can also use this link to communicate with other members of the class. If you want to check your notes with someone, if you are an international student and would like to arrange for a study partner, or even if you would like to simply make a comment about something we covered in class and would like to talk about it more, you can use the Internet Cafe. Everyone is welcome!!

Course Policies

- **Academic Dishonesty**
  - Any academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.
  - Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to the following:
    - Cheating on a quiz, examination, paper, or other required work
    - Handing in any assignment or project that is not your own work and/or duplicates another student’s assignments, papers, and so on.
    - Plagiarism is using any material without giving credit to the source. This is the equivalent of academic theft and it is taken very seriously.
    - Students caught plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive a zero for the assignment and according to UNL’s Student Conduct Policy, they will be reported to the school administration.
• **Accommodation**
  - Reasonable accommodations are available to students with special needs, as long as they have submitted proper documentation to support the request through the Students with Disabilities Office.
  - Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

• **Assignments**
  - All assignments are to be completed on time. No late assignments will be accepted unless you have sufficiently explained to me beforehand why your assignment will be late and I have granted you an extension. Otherwise, when the assignment date has passed, you will no longer have the opportunity to complete the assignment.
  - Any assignment duplicated by two or more students will be graded as 0 (F)
  - Maple TA assignments, quizzes, and exams will only be available for the days indicated. Please check the Class Schedule to make sure you are aware of deadlines.

• **Attendance**
  - In-class exercises, and occasional sign-up sheets will be ways I will be taking attendance.
  - You are also expected to participate in class, which includes taking lecture notes. Some of the in-class quizzes will be taken directly from class lecture notes. You are responsible for making a record each class period of what we covered that day.
  - You are expected to be in class each class period
  - CAUTION!!! If you just quit attending, you will receive an “F” for the course. To remove this F, you will have to re-take the course and pay for it a second time. In order to avoid this financial burden, if you are going to stop coming to class, please be sure to officially drop the course. If you are receiving financial aid, your lack of attendance will be reported to Registration and Records.

• **Exams**
  - Dates of quizzes and examinations are listed on the Class Schedule and I will make every attempt to honor the dates published. Some of these dates may slip depending on how the class proceeds. If you miss any class meetings, you are responsible for making sure you find out about any announcements.
  - If you need to use a foreign language dictionary, permission will be granted as long as there are no marks or notes in the dictionary or notes stored on an electronic device pertaining to this class.
  - Unit Exams will be computer-based (Maple TA) and will be administered at the Testing Center, 127 Burnett Hall, and you will need to bring a picture ID with you. The exams will usually be open for at least 3 days, and you can take the test any time the Testing Center is open, when you are most ready for it. Be sure you know the days and times the Testing Center is open. Questions will be taken from text readings, handouts, class discussions, student presentations, and any media shared in class.
  - If you are going to miss an exam the following procedure must be followed:
    1. Contact me by email before the exam and explain why you must miss the class. Only excused absences warrant make-ups. If you just don’t show up for the exam, you will forfeit your option of making it up. It also depends on the reason – illness and family emergencies are the general rule. It’s difficult to make a case for missing the exam when it is available for an entire week.
2. It is expected that you will take the exam before the next exam is given.
3. Missed, unexcused exams count as an F (0). Exceptions are made rarely and only in very special circumstances. Simply telling me you are going to miss an exam does not constitute an excused absence.

- **Professionalism**
  - It is important to maintain a proper learning environment where everyone is free to express an opinion based in thoughtful consideration and backed by readings in the course. I hope my students will feel comfortable and relaxed; they will choose to participate, to have fun, and to learn.
  - **PLEASE DO NOT:**
    1. Use your laptops or other electronic devices for anything other than in-class work. There will be a lot going on in class and if you divide your attention, you are likely to miss significant information or announcements (besides the fact that it is incredibly rude). In addition, you will distract the attention of students next to you and behind you, doing them a disservice. Please be a responsible peer and colleague.
    2. Read newspapers or other material that does not pertain to the class after class has started. This also is very rude. If I see this happening, I will stop the class and ask you to put the material away.
    3. Eat or snack in class unless you can do it very discretely.
    4. Distract others by whispering loudly or holding private conversations during class, taking up class time for personal issues, or by “packing up” early to leave class (this last one really bugs me).
    5. Sleep in class. I know many of you have work schedules and challenging schedules, but it is your responsibility to remain alert in class and motivate yourself to learn.
    6. Allow cell phones or pagers to go off during class. Cell phones and pagers must be turned off (not to vibrate) and NOT used in class. If a cell phone should go off during class, I will stop lecture and we will all stare at YOU.
    7. Leave the classroom during lecture or class activity in order to make a call, answer a cell phone or pager, to go to the restroom, or get snacks. This causes undue disruption and breaks the concentration of the other students. Be sure you are prepared to remain for the entire period once the class begins.
    8. Behave in an obnoxious manner, display an intolerant attitude toward the views of others, or display a disruptively negative attitude in/toward the class. Negative attitudes only reduce your own ability to learn and they negatively affect the learning environment for your peers.

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I believe in fair and not necessarily always equal treatment for all students. I will treat my students with respect and expect respectful treatment in return. I look forward to sharing the world with you this semester!
First Online Discussion:
What does this cartoon mean and what is its relevance to our course?

Please think about the significance of this boy’s question and its significance for our class. Then post your observations on the class discussion board and respond to at least two other students’ observations. Let’s get a good discussion going (10 points extra credit)!

Dad, if a tree falls in the forest ...
and the media aren’t there to cover it ... has the tree really fallen?
References


