

# GEA 2601: GEOGRAPHY OF AFRICA

## Summer A 2025

### 3 Credits, Online

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**Office Location:** 1215 Turlington Hall

**Office Hours:** By Appointment (please email to schedule).

**Co-Instructors:** Ronald Odongo & Audrey Smith

**Recommended Textbook:** Africa South of the Sahara: A Geographical Interpretation, 3rd edition, 2013. Author: Robert Stock. ISBN-13:978-1606239926

**Note:** *This textbook is **NOT** required but may serve to supplement the material provided in Canvas and enhance your learning. It is available through Amazon, with both paperback and hardback versions of the book as well as new and used copies, and an e-book version for purchase.*

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## Course Description

This course presents the Geography of Africa in a comprehensive and systematic survey of Africa's population, natural resources, and regional geography. The course will emphasize the significance of Africa's economic and political affairs in a globalizing world. The class will incorporate lectures, guests, readings, various media, and exercises. Media stereotypes and contemporary questions will be addressed in geographical context and evaluated through assignments. *Rather than the poor, starving, diseased populations impacted by corruption and environmental degradation, we will consider the diverse and resilient landscapes and people.* Students will be asked to address their preconceptions and work to understand contemporary Africa.

## General Education Objectives

This course is both a social and behavioral sciences (S) and international (N) subject area course in the UF General Education Program. Students should anticipate a writing intense course and develop an understanding of the approaches used by geographers to identify and analyze environmental systems and human-environment relationships in Africa. This course will enhance student awareness of how geographic concepts apply to, and have influenced their lives specifically to the continent of Africa

**S** - Social Science    **N** - International    **Writing requirement** – 6,000 words

Social and behavioral sciences courses provide instruction in history, key themes, principles, terminology, and underlying theory or methodologies used in the social and behavioral sciences. Students will learn to identify, describe, and explain social institutions, structures, and processes. These courses emphasize the effective application of accepted problem-solving techniques. Students will apply formal and informal qualitative or quantitative analysis to examine the processes and means by which individuals make personal and group decisions. Students are expected to assess and analyze ethical perspectives in individual and societal decisions.

International courses equip students to identify, describe, and explain the historical, cultural, economic, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize the contemporary world. Students will exercise critical thinking to analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultural, economic, political, and/or social systems and beliefs mediate understandings of an increasingly connected contemporary world.

These general education objectives will be accomplished through:

- a) Discussion and explanation of Africa's population, natural resources, and regional geography.
- b) Description and explanation of the significance of Africa's economic and political affairs in a globalizing world.
- c) Analysis of historical context and case studies in Africa to discern origins of stereotypes and their context to modern Africa
- d) Evaluation and discussion of recent and ongoing African issues to understand how negative consequences emerge and propagate through interconnected national and international economic and political systems

## Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

At the end of this course, students will be expected to achieve the following learning outcomes in content, communication, and critical thinking:

- a) **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories, and methodologies used within the subject area. Students will acquire a comprehensive survey of knowledge of Physical Geography (tectonics, landforms, climate, soil, vegetation), Human-Environmental Interactions (desertification, deforestation, impact of conservation), Social Geography (role of women, education, development perspectives, historical influences), Agriculture (traditional verses cash crops, policy questions, climate impacts)' Political Geography (colonialism, post-colonial government systems, conflict), Population and Medical Geography (birth and death rates, age cohorts, disease, mobility), Geography of Development (globalization, economic development, financial systems, transportation) and Urbanization. Achievement of this learning outcome will be assessed through four written assignments, three quizzes and a final exam.

- b) **Communication:** Students clearly and effectively communicate knowledge, ideas, and reasoning in written or oral forms appropriate to the subject area. Students will individually prepare three written assignments and participate in group presentation preparation. Assignments will be assessed according to the rubric provided on Canvas. Students must communicate their responses to African current issues through 5 discussion postings. Achievement of this learning outcome will be assessed through the written assignments and five discussion postings of African issues.
- c) **Critical Thinking:** Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the subject area. Students address personal stereotypes about Africa and interact with classmates on stereotype origins and relevance. Students will analyze data and information for an African country of their choice and come up with a country portfolio. To do that, students are expected to engage with course content and put the issues into context. Achievement of this learning outcome will be assessed through an introductory written report on stereotypes, five written discussion postings, and four written assignments.

## Class Objectives

The objective of this course is the development of an understanding of the importance of the geography of the continent of Africa. The relationships between physical environment and human systems are the basic tenant of geography. The physical and human landscapes of Africa will be evaluated in relation to current events, politics, and challenges, while considering the historical perspective.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify and describe Africa's physical features, climates, and biomes.
2. Understand the impact of climate on human evolution and the development of civilizations in Africa.
3. Explain how external influences and colonial legacies have influenced African development and identify key development challenges.
4. Analyze human-environment interactions in Africa using geographical concepts and identify causes and outcomes of land degradation.
5. Discuss wildlife policies, conservation efforts, and environmental degradation in Africa.
6. Conduct research, outline ideas effectively, and write essays that communicate complex ideas and arguments clearly and support by adequate evidence.

This class will **NOT** be about geography trivia. My goal for this course is to instill an ability to write and think geographically, rather than the requirement to memorize information. While this course is based on its nature fact based, the assignments are designed to develop the following important skills: (1) written and verbal communication; (2) research and critical thinking; (3) problem evaluation and analysis; and (4) application of knowledge. Each assignment will provide an opportunity for a student to demonstrate creativity in applied geography.

## Class Expectations

This is an Online Class. If you are reading this, you have already mastered the essentials of the Learning Management System (Canvas). I expect you to check the Learning Management System (Canvas) for messages and content at least 3 times a week. I suggest you conduct yourself online as you would in person. To that end, it may help if you assign yourself regular times each week to review the lectures, take quizzes and post discussion items. This is a 3-credit class with a 6,000-word writing requirement. You should anticipate it will be rigorous, and you should spend considerable time per week reviewing lectures, taking notes, and reading the text.

## Prerequisite Knowledge and Skills

- Good Attitude
- Proficient use of the library databases for research of scholarly materials for assignments. Library materials and database orientation through the UF library is suggested if you have not done this before. You will use APA citation style in all your work for this class. Your ability to use this style is part of the demonstration of your writing competency. There is a Module in Canvas dedicated to Library resources and APA citation style.
- Good written and oral communications skills. This class contains a substantial expectation for college level writing in the discipline of geography. References to scholarly material must be made in APA citation style. All work should be well structured, clear, and concise.

## Course Assignments

There are five categories of assignments for the course: (a) Module Quizzes, (b) Reflection Essays, (c) Discussion Posts, (d) African Country Portfolio Essays, and (e) Final Exam. A description of each is given below:

**Module Quizzes:** Throughout the semester, there will be **three** module quizzes. These quizzes will include map identification activities, or 10 questions based on module content, including assigned readings, PowerPoint lectures, videos, and other provided materials.

- **Quiz 1:** Modules 1-2
- **Quiz 2:** Modules 3-4
- **Quiz 3:** Modules 5-6

**What to expect:** The quiz will comprise 10 multiple-choice (True/False) or fill-in-the-blank questions. You'll have two attempts, with the highest score being recorded.

### **Reflection Essays:**

***Reflection Essay 1: Preconceptions of Africa.*** In this assignment, students are required to write a 500-word essay reflecting on any previous knowledge or preconceptions they may have about Africa, or topics related to Africa.

**Reflection Essay 2: Final Reflections:** For this assignment, students will write a 750-word essay reflecting on their learnings from the course. They should discuss any previous misconceptions and stereotypes of Africa that they reassessed after studying the continent. Additionally, students should highlight the topics they found most interesting and express what they would like to delve deeper into regarding the geography of Africa or Africa in general. *No outside sources are required for this essay.*

**Discussion Posts:** Students must complete **five 300-word** Discussion Posts on assigned topics related to the course modules. These posts can respond to readings, research articles, videos, or general questions. They should showcase critical thinking and analysis, reflecting on African context and broader relevance. *Posts must be in essay format without citations and submitted as text entries by 11:59 pm on the due date; late submissions will not be accepted.*

**African Country Portfolio Essays:** Students will create a "Portfolio" focusing on an African country of their choice. **Portfolio Essays 1 & 2, each 1500 words**, will delve into their selected country within the context of course module topics.

**Portfolio Country Selection:** By the end of Week 2, students must select an African country for their Portfolio. They should conduct preliminary research to ensure sufficient information is available through journal articles, research papers, and scholarly sources related to module topics.

**Portfolio Essays:** Students must submit **two 1500-word** portfolio essays citing a minimum of **4** scholarly sources using APA citation style. They need to provide a reference list and use in-text citations throughout the essays.

- **Please note:** In-text citations are required for any information that is derived from outside sources (not just for direct quotes). You should generally avoid using direct quotes unless the phrase retains the same meaning or has the same effect if re-worded. For this course, you are expected to avoid using direct quotes- the written words should be your own words!
- **Scholarly Sources:** Scholarly sources include research articles that are written by scholars, scientists, or professionals who are experts in their fields and are published in **peer-reviewed academic journals**. **Google Scholar** is a useful internet search tool, and online digital libraries such as **JSTOR** (<http://www.jstor.org> (Links to an external site.)). You can also access scholarly sources from the **UF Library Off Campus Access**.
- **Non-scholarly Sources:** Students may also use and cite non-scholarly sources (e.g., news articles, blogs, etc.) but only in addition to the required minimum of 4 scholarly sources.

**Final Exam:** The final exam is worth **100 points**.

**What to Expect:**

- The exam will consist of 50 fill-in-the-blank or multiple-choice (True/False) questions sourced from content in course Modules 1-6, which includes PowerPoint lectures, assigned readings, videos, and provided materials. Questions will be randomly selected

to ensure each student receives a unique set. *The exam will be an open book, and there will be no use of Honorlock or ProctorU.*

- The exam is designed to assess your comprehension and understanding of all materials covered throughout the entire course. This includes lectures, videos, readings, activities, and other elements from the modules.

### **Other Assignments:**

- Syllabus Quiz
- Introduce Yourself

## Student Evaluation

Assignment	Words Required (6000)	Total Points (1000)	Due Dates on Class Calendar
Syllabus Quiz		10	Due Friday Week 1
Introduce Yourself	250	25	Due Friday Week 1
Portfolio Country Selection		25	Due Friday Week 2
Module Quizzes (3 @ 30 pts. each) Quiz 1 Quiz 2 Quiz 3		90	Due Sunday Week 3 Due Sunday Week 4 Due Sunday Week 5
Reflection Essay 1 Reflection Essay 2	500 750	50 50	Due Friday Week 1 Due Sunday Week 6
Portfolio Essays (2 @ 200 pts, 1500 words) Portfolio Essay 1 Portfolio Essay 1	3000	400	Due Friday Week 3 Due Friday Week 5
Discussion Posts (5 @ 50 pts, 300 words)	1500	250	Discussion Posts are due on Sunday every week
Final Exam		100	Taken on Canvas, timed, due on date shown on the course calendar

## Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>. Grades will not be rounded. **A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.**

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
92% - 100%	<92% - 90%	<90% - 88%	<88% - 82%	<82% - 80%	<80% - 78%	<78% - 72%	<72% - 70%	<70% - 68%	<68% - 62%	<62% - 60%	<60%

## Canvas e-Learning System

This class will be conducted using the e-Learning System, Canvas. The syllabus, course calendar, reading materials and resources will be available through Canvas. All assignments must be posted through Canvas unless otherwise instructed. Grades will be posted on Canvas. Please consult [eLearning - University of Florida \(ufl.edu\)](https://ufl.edu/elearning/). If you experience problems with the e-Learning system, such as log-in issues, please contact the UF Computing Help Desk at the Hub, or at 392-HELP for assistance.

## Late Work Policy

We recognize that this class is not the only thing in your life, and sometimes other things happen that get in the way of submitting work on time. Late work is accepted and **will lose 5 points per day after the assignment due date**. This allows the most flexibility and fairness across the whole class, so if you need an hour or two extras to finish work, you'll be penalized, but not so much that it wrecks your grade. Make-up work is not allowed beyond this policy without documentation of a university-approved absence. Quizzes and exams are exempt from this policy and will not be accepted late.

## University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, *"We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."* The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are

obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructors in this class.

## Attendance Policy

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>.

## Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

## UF Evaluation Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email, they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>

## Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/>, 352-392-1575; and the University Police Department: 352-392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

## The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.