Syllabus for Geography 6: World Regional Geography

Lecturer: Jared Diamond, Professor of Geography and of Environmental Health Sciences

Subject of the course. One of the most important single factors influencing a person’s life is the place where he or she was born and spends his or her life. For instance, Americans, Haitians, Germans, Nigerians, and South Koreans differ greatly, on the average, in their annual incomes, life expectancies, daily calorie intakes, and access to medical care and education. The reasons for these differing outcomes are fascinating, complex, debated, and vitally important to us as individuals and to world politics. World regional geography examines the differing environments and histories of different regions of the world, in order to understand why geography has such a big impact on our lives.

NOTE: THERE IS AN ENROLLMENT RESTRICTION FOR THIS COURSE (SEE BELOW).

Jared Diamond is Professor of Geography, Public Health, and Physiology at UCLA. His six best-selling books Guns, Germs, and Steel, Why Is Sex Fun?, The Third Chimpanzee, Collapse, The World Until Yesterday, and Upheaval have won a Pulitzer Prize, a Los Angeles Times Book Prize, and (twice) Britain’s Science Book Prize. His many other awards include the National Medal of Science, the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement, and three UCLA teaching awards. For the last 40 years, he worked especially on biological membranes and on New Guinea birds, and has now shifted his focus to environmental history.

Material of the course. There are four components:

1. Lectures: one per week; Tuesdays from January 7 to March 10, 9:00 A.M. to 11:50 A.M., by Jared Diamond. The lectures focus on the history of how regional differences among human societies developed. Room: Bunche Hall A163, in the Palm Court, one level below ground level.

2. Discussion sections: one 2-hour meeting per week, with options of four different meeting times on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Each student will enroll in one of these four options and will remain in the same section for the whole course. The section meetings will be devoted to a discussion of the lecture and the reading for that week.

3. Reading. It consists of articles on contemporary conditions, and classic articles on the past, in the region being discussed for that week. Each article is copied on to the password-protected course website for enrolled students. These readings, selected for their interest, are to be read for their overall content, rather than for details. There will also be several popular documentary films to watch.
4. **Weekly mini-papers.** Each week, each student will write and submit by 7 pm Monday night a mini-paper of about one page, discussing the assigned reading for that week.

---

**Course books.** There is no assigned course book.

---

**Grading.** It will based on four components, each contributing 25% of the final grade:

1. A midterm exam on Tuesday, February 4.

2. A final exam, to be given in finals week in March at the time that UCLA assigns for all Tuesday 9:00 – 12:00 classes. Students who receive an especially high grade on the midterm may, if they prefer and with a teaching fellow’s approval, replace the final exam with a paper on a course-related topic of their own choice.

3. The weekly mini-papers.

4. The student’s verbal contributions to the weekly discussion meetings.

The dates of the midterm and final exams are fixed. If a student misses an exam for any reason, it is not possible to take a make-up exam. We have no control over the date and time of the final exam, which is presently unknown and will be set by the registrar’s office. Students must be willing to take the final exam on whichever date during finals week the registrar chooses for the exam.

---

**Expectations of students.** We expect students:

- to attend all lectures (note: the lectures and readings cover different aspects of regional geography, so one is not a substitute for the other). In particular, attendance at the first two lectures is mandatory; a student who misses either of those two lectures for any reason may not continue in the course;

- to attend all meetings of the discussion section in which you are enrolled, and to participate;

- to read all of the reading; and

- to write all of the mini-papers.

The mini-papers and (if you choose to do it) the paper in lieu of the final exam must be your own work, and must not be copied or drawn substantially from the work of someone else, from a website, or from another source. UCLA official policy is as follows: According to the UCLA Code of Conduct (Sec. 102.01c) “Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the use of another's words or ideas as if they were one's own; including, but not limited to, representing, either with
the intent to deceive or by the omission of the true source, part of or an entire work produced by someone other than the student, obtained by purchase or otherwise, as the student's original work; or, representing the identifiable but altered ideas, data or writing of another person as if those ideas, data or writing were the student's original work.”

Students should be aware that the weekly reading, lectures, mini-papers, and discussions add up to a significant work load – considerably more than is usual for a UCLA lower-level course. This course is appropriate only for students confident that they will be able to keep up with the load. Tape-recording of lectures and discussion sections is not permitted under any circumstances.

Admission to the course

About 100 students will be admitted to the course. Please send me (jldiamond@geog.ucla.edu) a short account (one page is enough) about yourself, your background, your interests, where you have spent your life, what parts of the world you are familiar with, what languages other than English you speak well (it’s perfectly OK to answer “none”), and your major and career plans if you have decided (it’s perfectly OK to say that you are undecided). Mention why you want to take this course. Include your name, year, and student ID number. When you e-mail your page to me, please make sure that you also cc your essay to the course TA Scott Lydon (s.lydon@ucla.edu), and indicate your first and second choices among the four course discussion sections. When you submit your essay, please do not send it as an attachment.

Lecture Schedule


