G O A

Student Program

AP Human Geography

LENGTH OF COURSE: 28 WEEKS (Yearlong)

Course Overview

Human geography helps explain the connections between people, places, and the patterns that shape our daily lives. AP Human Geography introduces students to human activity across Earth's surface: from population growth and migration to cultural exchange, political boundaries, agriculture, urban development, and globalization. The course prepares students for the AP Exam and meets all College Board requirements while building geographic thinking skills such as analyzing processes, spatial relationships, data, sources, and scale.

Across two semesters, students investigate seven major units: thinking geographically; population and migration; culture; politics; agriculture and rural land use; cities and urban land use; and industrial and economic development. They analyze how cultural practices, political structures, and economic systems influence human landscapes and interact with the environment. By interpreting maps, satellite imagery, demographic data, and real-world case studies, students connect geographic concepts to contemporary issues and develop a deeper understanding of the forces that shape the modern world.

Pre-requisites

There are no prerequisites required for this course.

Competency-Based Learning

GOA courses use a competency-based learning approach in which students build both GOA core competencies and course-specific ones. Throughout the semester, we assess outcomes tied to each competency to track student progress with the goal of students leaving the course able to use and apply these competencies well beyond the final day of the semester.

Course Competencies & Outcomes

Reflect and take responsibility for your learning and that of others.

- Spatial Reasoning: You explain spatial patterns and processes using geographic concepts, evidence, and models.
- Collaborative Learning: You engage in peer discussions and group work to refine explanations of geographic processes.
- Metacognitive Reflection: You reflect on how your understanding of spatial relationships and geographic perspectives evolves over time.

Communicate and empathize with people who have perspectives and experiences different from your own.

- Cultural Perspectives: You explain how cultural practices, values, and identities evolve and diffuse across space, shaping and being shaped by geographic context.
- Landscape Perspectives: You compare how different cultural groups shape and interpret landscapes through varied land uses, design choices, and spatial organization.
- Global Awareness: You evaluate social, political, and economic consequences of geographic patterns at local, national, and global scales.
- Interconnected Geographies: You reflect on how the movement of people, goods, and ideas connects places and shapes diverse experiences of opportunity, identity, and development.

Curate and create content relevant to real-world issues.

- Application of Models: You use geographic models and theories to explain real-world spatial processes and evaluate their limitations.
- Data Analysis: You analyze quantitative and qualitative data to explain geographic phenomena.
- Pattern Recognition: You identify and explain spatial patterns and relationships, and apply geographic reasoning to propose solutions to real-world challenges.
- Case Study Connection: You select, curate, and present case studies that illustrate geographic concepts in practice.

Thinking Skills and Big Ideas

The following summarizes the geographic thinking skills that students will develop throughout the AP Human Geography course. These skills form the foundation of the course and are directly assessed on the AP Exam. Alongside them, the Big Ideas provide an organizing framework that spirals across units.

Thinking Skills

- Skill 1 Concepts and Processes: Analyze geographic theories, approaches, concepts, processes, or models in theoretical and applied contexts.
- Skill 2 Spatial Relationships: Analyze geographic patterns, relationships, and outcomes in applied contexts.
- Skill 3 Data Analysis: Analyze and interpret quantitative geographic data represented in maps, tables, charts, graphs, satellite images, and infographics.
- Skill 4 Source Analysis: Analyze and interpret qualitative geographic information represented in maps, images (e.g., satellite, photographs, cartoons), and landscapes.
- Skill 5 Scale Analysis: Analyze geographic theories, approaches, concepts, processes, and models across geographic scales to explain spatial relationships.

Big Ideas

- Big Idea 1: Patterns and Spatial Organization (PSO)
- Big Idea 2: Impacts and Interactions (IMP)
- Big Idea 3: Spatial Processes and Societal Change (SPS)

Semester 1 Outline

Weeks 1-3	Orientation & Unit 1: Thinking Geographically
TOPICAL OUTLINE: • 1.1 Introduction to Maps • 1.2 Geographic Data • 1.3 The Power of Geographic Data • 1.4 Spatial Concepts • 1.5 Human–Environmental Interaction • 1.6 Scales of Analysis • 1.7 Regional Analysis	
TEXTBOOK READING: • Chapter 1 Geography – Its Nature and Perspectives	
SAMPLE ACTIVITY: Students will develop a case study that explores and documents a spatial	

association within their local community or a national context. Using a variety of resources, such as maps, media reports, and other relevant data sources, students will analyze how and why specific geographic phenomena are spatially related and present evidence to support their findings. (Skills 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5; PSO)	
Weeks 4-7	Unit 2: Population and Migration Patterns and Processes
TOPICAL OUTLINE: ● 2.1 Population Distribution ● 2.2 Consequences of Population Distribution ● 2.3 Population Composition ● 2.4 Population Dynamics ● 2.5 The Demographic Transition Model ● 2.6 Malthusian Theory ● 2.7 Population Policies ● 2.8 Women and Demographic Change ● 2.9 Aging Populations ● 2.10 Causes of Migration ● 2.11 Forced and Voluntary Migration ● 2.12 Effects of Migration	
TEXTBOOK READING: ● Chapter 2 Population and Migration	
SAMPLE ACTIVITY: Students will participate in a Model United Nations simulation, representing an assigned country. Using demographic data, policy reports, and other relevant sources, they will investigate key population trends and analyze how migration policies could influence those patterns. During the simulation, students will present their country's perspective, propose evidence-based policy responses, and engage collaboratively in debate and negotiation. (Skills 1, 2,3, and 4; IMP)	
Weeks 8-12	Unit 3: Cultural Patterns and Processes (including Week 9 Break)
TOPICAL OUTLINE: ● 3.1 Introduction to Culture ● 3.2 Cultural Landscapes ● 3.3 Cultural Patterns ● 3.4 Types of Diffusion ● 3.5 Historical Causes of Diffusion ● 3.6 Contemporary Causes of Diffusion ● 3.7 Diffusion of Religion and Language ● 3.8 Effects of Diffusion	
TEXTBOOK READING: ● Chapter 3 Cultural Patterns and Processes	

SAMPLE ACTIVITY: Students will create a photo essay documenting cultural patterns and trends in their local area. Using original photographs supported by maps, captions, and brief written analysis, they will explore elements such as religion, language, and the cultural impacts of migration. The project should highlight how these patterns are expressed in everyday spaces and what they reveal about cultural diversity and change. (Skills 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5; SPS)

Weeks 13-15	Unit 4: Political Patterns and Processes

TOPICAL OUTLINE: ● 4.1 Introduction to Political Geography ● 4.2 Political Processes ● 4.3 Political Power and Territoriality ● 4.4 Defining Political Boundaries ● 4.5 The Function of Political Boundaries ● 4.6 Internal Boundaries ● 4.7 Forms of Governance ● 4.8 Defining Devolutionary Factors ● 4.9 Challenges to Sovereignty ● 4.10 Consequences of Centrifugal and Centripetal Forces
TEXTBOOK READING: ● Chapter 4 Political Organization of Space
SAMPLE ACTIVITY: Students will represent countries with competing territorial claims in the South China Sea, applying AP Human Geography concepts such as sovereignty, territoriality, UNCLOS, geopolitical power, EEZs, and resource disputes. Each group will negotiate a peaceful, mutually acceptable resolution to overlapping maritime claims. (Skills 1- 4; SPS & IMP)

Week 16	Midterm Review and Practice

TOPICAL OUTLINE: ● Cumulative review of Units 1–4 ● Practice multiple choice and FRQs ● Midterm reflections and self-assessment
SAMPLE ACTIVITY: Practice assessments build confidence for the AP Exam. Skills 1-5 and Big Ideas 1-3 will be covered.

Semester 2 Outline

Weeks 1-3	Units 1-4 Review and Unit 5: Agricultural and Rural Land-Use Patterns and Processes, Part I

TOPICAL OUTLINE:

- 5.1 Introduction to Agriculture
- 5.2 Settlement Patterns and Survey Methods
- 5.3 Agricultural Origins and Diffusions
- 5.4 The Second Agricultural Revolution
- 5.5 The Green Revolution
- 5.6 Agricultural Production Regions

TEXTBOOK READING:

- Chapter 5 Agriculture, Food Production and Rural Land Use

SAMPLE ACTIVITY:
Students document their personal food consumption and investigate the agricultural systems that produce the items in their diet. By tracing foods from plate to place, students analyze global supply chains, farming methods, environmental impacts, and regional patterns of agricultural production. The assignment integrates spatial thinking, map creation, and geographic analysis to help students understand how culture, economics, and the environment shape both individual diets and global food systems. (Skills 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5; PSO, IMP, SPS)

Weeks 4-5	Unit 5: Agricultural and Rural Land-Use Patterns and Processes, Part II

TOPICAL OUTLINE:

- 5.7 Spatial Organization of Agriculture
- 5.8 Von Thünen Model
- 5.9 The Global System of Agriculture
- 5.10 Consequences of Agricultural Practices
- 5.11 Challenges of Contemporary Agriculture
- 5.12 Women in Agriculture

TEXTBOOK READING:

- Chapter 5 Agriculture, Food Production and Rural Land Use

SAMPLE ACTIVITY:
Students will participate in a guided discussion that explores the environmental impacts of agriculture and the sustainability practices employed worldwide. Building on key concepts such as land-use patterns, agricultural systems, and the challenges of feeding a growing population, students will consider real-world examples, weigh the pros and cons of different sustainable strategies, and reflect on how human–environment interactions shape agricultural outcomes. (Skills 1, 5, SPS, IMP)

Weeks 6-10	Unit 6: Cities and Urban Land-Use Patterns and Processes (including Week 9 Break)

TOPICAL OUTLINE:

- 6.1 The Origin and Influences of Urbanization
- 6.2 Cities Across the World
- 6.3 Cities and Globalization
- 6.4 The Size and Distribution of Cities
- 6.5 The Internal Structure of Cities
- 6.6 Density and Land Use
- 6.7 Infrastructure
- 6.8 Urban Sustainability
- 6.9 Urban Data
- 6.10 Challenges of Urban Changes
- 6.11 Challenges of Urban Sustainability

TEXTBOOK READING:

- Chapter 6 Industrialization and Economic Development

SAMPLE ACTIVITY:
In small groups, students will compare several urban models, identifying key similarities, differences, and the reasons behind them. Using a shared graphic organizer, each group will record its insights. The class will then come together to analyze contemporary urban maps and discuss the limitations of traditional urban models in explaining modern city structures. (Skills 1-4, PSO & SPS)

Weeks 11-14	Unit 7: Industrial and Economic Development

TOPICAL OUTLINE:

- 7.1 The Industrial Revolution
- 7.2 Economic Sectors and Patterns
- 7.3 Measures of Development
- 7.4 Women and Economic Development
- 7.5 Theories of Development
- 7.6 Trade and the World Economy
- 7.7 Changes as a Result of the World Economy
- 7.8 Sustainable Development

TEXTBOOK READING:

- Chapter 7 Cities and Urban Land Use

SAMPLE ACTIVITY:
In small groups, students predict spatial patterns of development and then compare their predictions with actual indicators. They analyze similarities and differences across measures, assess the value of multiple indicators, and examine how economic sectors reflect development levels. This activity builds skills in spatial analysis and data interpretation. (Skills 1-3; PSO & IMP)

Weeks 15- 16	Cumulative Review and AP Exam Practice

TOPICAL OUTLINE: ● Cumulative review of Units 1-7 ● AP Exam Practice: Multiple Choice and FRQs
SAMPLE ACTIVITY: Practice assessments build confidence for the AP Exam. Skills 1-5 and Big Ideas 1-3 will be covered.

Required Materials

Material: Puyallup School District. (2017). Human Geography: An open textbook for Advanced Placement (1st ed.). Puyallup School District.
Access: PDF provided in course
Cost: No purchase needed