



# Teaching AP Human Geography in 1 Semester

## By Lisa Sanders

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### **Introduction:**

Thank you for your interest in AP Human Geography! I am Lisa Sanders, a social studies teacher at Austin High School in Austin, MN. I have been teaching AP Human Geography since 2000 and have taught AP Human Geography as a one semester class in the fall of each year for the past 10 years.

Since 2007, I have been an AP Reader for the AP Human Geography exam as well as a table leader at the APHG exam reading. As a member of the Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education, I have organized multiple field trips focused on both agriculture and urban development across southern Minnesota. I have had the pleasure of working with other Minnesota teachers to create lessons and assessments to assist educators in the teaching human geography. I continue to work with districts and teachers in Minnesota, helping them develop human geography courses in their districts.

I hope you find these tips useful in designing a one-semester AP Human Geography for your school.

## **Helpful Tips for Teaching AP Human Geography in 1 Semester**

- 1. Fall Semester is the Ideal Time to Teach This Course:** Ideally, if teachers are going to teach this course in 1 semester, it would be best to teach it during the 1<sup>st</sup>/Fall semester as this will ensure teachers have enough time to cover the AP Human Geography concepts in preparation for the AP Exam in May.
- 2. AP Human Geography Curriculum:** Teachers need to follow the AP Human Geography course description and cover the materials listed in the course description. My advice to teachers is to make a list of the concepts that need to be covered for each unit and use that to guide their curriculum development. Teachers need to be focused and be sure they cover all the concepts in the course description, which may mean changing how the course is taught and will require students to complete work outside of school. Teachers may need to look at utilizing a learning management system and/or flipped classroom strategies.
- 3. AP Human Geography Exam Review Sessions:** While teaching the course during 1<sup>st</sup>/Fall Semester is the best for covering the concepts, it does result in a 3-4 month break between covering the material in class and taking the AP Human Geography exam in May. To assist my students in preparing for the AP exam, I offer review sessions for my students. These review sessions begin 6 weeks before the AP exam and include 2 sessions (before and after school) during the week and Saturday morning review sessions. I also provide my students with a calendar of which units will be covered during each review session and I cover the same content in the before and after school sessions – so that students can attend the session that best fits in their schedule. By providing my students with a calendar, they know what concepts will be discussed during each review session so they can be prepared for these sessions. It also provides my students with the opportunity to select those review sessions and content that the students need the most help with. While I encourage my students to attend all sessions, as it will assist them in preparing for the exam, they are not required to attend review sessions in order to take the AP exam.
- 4. Teacher Resources:** There are numerous resources available for AP Human Geography teachers. The resources listed below provide information and resources to assist the teachers in teaching AP Human Geography.
  - AP Human Geography Facebook site – This site has new information and resources on a daily basis, which geography teachers have generously shared.
  - Ninth Graders and AP Human Geography Top Ten List: This is a column written by Sharon Shelerud and is posted on the National Council for Geographic Education

website. Sharon's top 10 list column provides a wealth of information regarding how to set up an AP Human Geography course, key concepts to cover in each unit as well

as lists of great resources and videos to assist teachers in teaching AP Human Geography. If you have not viewed her top 10 lists, I would encourage you to do so. Here is the link to Sharon Shelerud's column: <http://www.ncge.org/aphg-columns>

5. **Textbooks:** If possible, allow students to keep their AP Human Geography textbooks until they take the AP Human Geography exam in May. This will provide students with the opportunity, if they choose so, to review any material in the textbook that they feel they need to review.
  
6. **Utilize a Learning Management System to provide students with access to classroom materials:** I have found that providing students with access to the course content (Power Points, assignments, etc.) through a learning management system is very valuable as it provides students the opportunity to access this material whenever they need to. I have found this is a great resource for students who were absent and it has decreased the number of students asking for additional copies of assignments, calendar, etc. as these items are all online. As a teacher, you need to select the format that works best for you and works with your district's technology plan. I have utilized Moodle in the past but last year moved to utilizing Google Docs as it was more user friendly and my students were able to access it on their phones and were able to access any Power Points, assignments, etc. whenever they needed to. Other learning management systems include Schoology, Blackboard, D2L Brightspace and Google classroom. Some of these systems are free while others require a site license or district license. Teachers should contact their technology department and administration regarding which format to utilize.
  
7. **History Background:** My students will take AP Human Geography as 10<sup>th</sup> graders and have previously taken World History as 9<sup>th</sup> graders (either Honors or regular). Ideally this scope and sequence will provide my students with the historical background that will assist them in learning Human Geography because in order to understand some geographic concepts, students need to have an understanding of world history as well. If this is not possible, teachers will need to incorporate world history into their teaching of Human Geography in order to assist students understand the concepts being taught. Teachers may also need to incorporate aspects of United States history into their teaching of human geography in order to assist students understand the concepts being taught.
  
8. **Summer Assignment:** If teachers give their students a summer assignment, be sure to work with this assignment during the first week of school. Teachers will need to determine the summer assignment that works best for their students. Over the summer, I mail a packet to all of my students who will be taking AP Human Geography in the fall. This packet

includes a map list of countries by continent and a packet of blank maps of the continents for the students to use in preparing for their 100 country map test which they will take the first week of school. As students will be working with data from countries around the world, I

feel it is important that they know where they located so they can start making connections regarding these countries and drawing conclusions regarding their similarities and differences. My students are also expected to complete a current events assignment in which they identify and describe 5 current events and explain which of the 5 themes of geography can be applied to each current event. Students are also provided with readings on the 5 themes of geography to assist them in completing this assignment. My students will share their current events in small groups and we will have a large group discussion of the 5 themes of geography during the first week of school.

9. **Notes:** Teachers will need to establish their own requirements and format for notes. I have utilized guided reading questions for students to use as a guide to assist them in taking notes on their textbook reading. These questions are collected and graded but can also be used by students on quizzes throughout the unit. While I do not require students to take a specific form of notes, many like to use Cornell notes. If students are struggling with how to take notes, teachers may need to share different note taking strategies with students at the beginning of the semester and then allow students to use the strategy that works best for them.
10. **Notebooks:** My students are required to keep a 3-ring binder in which they organize all their notes, vocabulary, class activities, etc. by unit. My students turn their notebooks in on the day of the test to be graded. Some teachers have utilized Interactive notebooks in which students take notes on specific aspects of the textbook on the right side of their notebook and then add in-class activities to the left side of their notebook. Teachers have also used foldables which provide students with the opportunity to be creative and crafty while gathering information about major geographic concepts such as the 3 agricultural revolutions, the different economic activities, types of agriculture, stages of the demographic transition model, etc. Students are able to display these concepts in a visual format that makes it easier to compare these concepts or aspects of these concepts.
11. **Vocabulary:** Vocabulary is a key component to the study of Human Geography, as many of the terms and concepts are new to students. Teachers need to determine what works best for their students regarding vocabulary. There are a variety of techniques and strategies that teachers use for vocabulary ... flashcards, vocabulary charts, definitions, etc. Teachers need to make sure that they work with the vocabulary with their students in class. Vocabulary is a vital aspect of this course and it needs to be worked with on a daily basis. Students need to use vocabulary terms and work with them in class to describe the patterns, distributions, etc. they see in the data being presented to them.
12. **Expectations:** Teaching AP Human Geography in one semester is not possible without requiring students to complete homework outside of class. Teachers need to explain to their

students and parents that homework will be required in order to be successful in this class. Students will need to read their textbook and take notes outside of class. Students may also need to view videos, read articles, gather data, etc. outside of class in preparation for in-class activities.

- 13. Flipped Classroom:** Teaching AP Human Geography in one semester requires teachers to utilize a variety of ways to teach this course. In order to cover all the concepts and information in the AP Human Geography course description, teachers will need to ask their students to complete work outside of class. Students may need to read and take notes from their textbook, view videos, read articles, gather data, etc. prior to class so they are prepared to participate in the daily activities. Students and parents need to be made aware of this and if students are not completing their activities outside of class, teachers need to have conversations with these students regarding why they are not completing their homework. This course, being taught in a semester, requires open communication between the teacher, students and parents. It is important that all people involved understand the expectations of this course.
- 14. Educannon:** Educannon is a great resource that provides teachers with a variety of ways to utilize videos in their classroom. While videos are a great way to share content with students, it might not be possible to show videos in class when teaching AP Human Geography in one semester. Teachers can embed questions into the videos they would like their students to view and students would need to answer these questions before they can continue viewing the video. This provides the teacher with the opportunity to ask students to view videos that contain information that will be utilized in a class discussion or used in a class activity. I would encourage teachers to find short videos or podcasts that they want their students to view in preparation for the in-class discussion and activity. I would caution teachers about using videos that are over 15 minutes in length, as sometime quantity decreases quality. Teachers will need to have a learning management system that they utilize for their class and their students will need to have access to this in order access these videos. I would encourage teachers to assign these videos 2 – 3 days before students will be working with them in class, to ensure that all students have the opportunity to access them as some students do not have internet access at home.

## **Calendar:**

List below is a rough outline of my calendar for teaching AP Human Geography during 1st/Fall Semester of the 2015 – 2016 school year.

Please also see example calendars to accompany this document.

I use the following textbook:

- Rubenstein's 11<sup>th</sup> Edition: "The Cultural Landscape: An Introduction to Human Geography."

### **Unit 1: Geography: Its Nature and Perspectives**

- Chapter 1
- ~ 3 weeks (along with introduction to course, summer assignment discussion, 100 country map test)
- Tentatively September 8 – 30, 2015
- Tests: (I have decided to split my tests into two days this year to ensure students have enough time to complete the test without having to come in before or after school. This process will also provide test security for the free response questions – many of which I use from past AP Exam – as the students would not see the test questions until the day they are taking the free response question test.)
  - Multiple Choice September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015
  - Free Response Questions September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015

### **Unit 2: Population and Migration**

- Chapters 2 – 3
- ~ 3 weeks
- Tentatively October 1 – 27, 2015 (with 4 day weekend in the middle of the month)
- Tests:
  - Multiple Choice October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015
  - Free Response Questions October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015

### **Unit 3: Political Organization of Space**

- Chapters 8 and 7 (last 2 sections)
- ~ 2 weeks
- Tentatively October 29 – November 10, 2015
- Tests:
  - Multiple Choice and Free Response Questions November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015

### **Unit 4: Agricultural and Rural Land Use**

- Chapter 10
- ~ 1.5 weeks
- Tentatively November 10 – 19, 2015
- Tests:
  - Multiple Choice and Free Response Quiz November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015

### **Unit 5: Industrialization and Economic Development**

- Chapters 9, 11
- ~ 2 weeks
- Tentatively November 20 – December 9, 2015 (with 5 day weekend for Thanksgiving)
- Tests:
  - Multiple Choice December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015
  - Free Response Questions December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015

### **Unit 6: Cities and Urban Land Use**

- Chapters 12 – 13
- ~ 1.5 – 2 weeks
- Tentatively December 10 – 21, 2015
- Tests:
  - Multiple Choice December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015
  - Free Response Questions December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015

## **Unit 7: Cultural Patterns and Processes**

- Chapters 4 – 6, 7 (first 2 sections)
- ~ 2 – 2 ½ weeks
- Tentatively December 22 – January 15, 2016
- Tests:
  - Multiple Choice and Free Response Questions during Finals on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016

## **Final Project:**

- Introduced October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015
- Due December 17, 2015
- Students are to apply geographic concepts to explain events in their community, events in another country in the world OR their family's migrations and culture. This assignment requires students to apply the concepts they have learned throughout this course and explain their significances at a personal, local or national level.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact me at [sandliz89@yahoo.com](mailto:sandliz89@yahoo.com) or [lisa.sanders@austin.k12.mn.us](mailto:lisa.sanders@austin.k12.mn.us)