

Section 1: Program Overview and Rationale

Program Overview

At the primary, elementary and intermediate levels of schooling, geographic knowledge, skills, and values are integrated into the social studies program. At the senior high level, students have the opportunity to subscribe to (1) a two-credit course in Canadian geography as part of the required two-credit stream in Canadian studies, and (2) a two-credit course in world geography to fulfil the required two-credit stream in world studies. World Geography 3202 is one of the options for acquiring an honours-level world studies credit. World Geography 3200 is a more general steam course designed for students who require a world studies credit, but who would find an honours social studies credit very challenging.

World Geography 3200/3202 promotes an understanding and appreciation of how major physical, climatic, biotic, and cultural features of the earth are inter-connected. These courses examine the relationship between humans and the environment and how this relationship finds expression in activities that are spatially organized. Students who enrol in World Geography 3200/3202 bring with them a broad range of understandings and competencies as a result of their prior experiences in social studies programs. Their emotional and intellectual maturity now allows them to build on this knowledge and develop a more sophisticated and comprehensive investigation of the world around them.

To examine how the physical earth and human activity are inter-connected, organizational themes from three sub-fields within the discipline of geography provide the basic structure for World Geography 3200/3202; namely, physical (landforms, climatology, and ecosystems), economic (primary, secondary, and tertiary activity), and population and urban (refer to page 19).

Physical Geography

Units 1, 2, and 3 provide an overview of basic components of the physical earth. Surface features, climate and ecosystems are interrelated and, at the same time, provide a range of possibilities for humans to satisfy their needs and wants.

Economic Geography

Unit 4 examines the range of primary economic activities in which humans engage as they extract resources from the land and oceans to satisfy their needs and wants. Unit 5 explores how humans

process the raw materials extracted from the land and oceans into semi-finished and finished products, and how the provision of specialized services form an integral part of the economy.

Population and Urban Geography

Unit 6 and 7 focus on changing populations and the human imprint on the land as evidenced by where people live and how they organize and distribute themselves on the earth's surface. Students will select **one** of units 6 and 7 for study.

These geographical themes, presented on page 18 as a set of seven knowledge-based general curriculum outcomes (GCOs), determine the content of World Geography 3200/3202. The skills-based and attitudinal GCOs shape the instructional and learning context in which students acquire the content. Each knowledge-based GCO is developed through a set of specific curriculum outcomes (SCOs) with an accompanying set of delineations. Teachers may choose from a variety of strategies for teaching/learning and student assessment to support the specific curriculum outcomes that are selected for the study. The skills- and values-based GCOs are incorporated, where appropriate, into the delineations and the strategies for teaching/learning and assessment.

It should be noted that although the geographical themes are organized separately for purposes of presentation and analysis, they are interconnected. The interconnectedness is deliberately promoted in World Geography 3200/3202. For example, each of landforms and water forms, climate, and ecosystems ends with an SCO that examines how they influence human activity. Teachers are encouraged to help students to draw upon the links throughout the whole course in order see the “big picture” of how natural phenomena and human activity relate to each other.

Each theme provides opportunities for students to engage in research activities that introduce and/or reinforce geographic research methods and skills, engage students in active learning, and meet the learning objectives for the topic. At appropriate points, comparisons are drawn between geographic phenomena and current circumstances. Students are challenged to consider that perspectives on events from the past change over time and often differ from the values and perspectives at the time of the event.

Since research is an important part of this course, students will use both primary and secondary sources and will draw upon traditional sources of information including reference books, documents, newspapers, field studies, and case studies as well as appropriate sites on the world wide web.

The program clearly supports resource-based and inquiry-learning approaches to teaching and learning. Cooperative learning strategies, project-base learning, and the use of technology are considered good examples of instructional strategies. Various resources have been identified to support each topic and activity. As well the student resource will provide a foundation for each topic.

Program Rationale

Geography as a Discipline

Late in the nineteenth century, due to Darwinian influences, geography focused primarily on the study of how the environment determined how humans organized themselves and went about to meet their needs and wants.

In time, the environmental determinist notions were regarded as too extreme and simplistic in their explanation of the underlying causes of human activity. At the turn of the twentieth century, French geographers began to examine how human culture is a major influence that helps humans to be active rather than passive agents in determining how they live.

For much of the first half of the twentieth century, British and American geographers attempted to synthesize elements of environmental determinism and possibilism to explain a real differentiation. According to the possibilist school of thought, the environment provides a range of possible choices about how needs and wants can be met. On a global scale, for example, elements of climate and vegetation may be associated to delineate natural regions. Within each region, the landscape becomes altered and developed by the activities of successive generations of people. Traditional regional studies consisted of such elements as physical features, climate, vegetation, farming, and industries.

Geographical inquiry during the last half of the twentieth century shifted somewhat from the regional paradigm for two major reasons. Regional approaches often result in a weary description of natural and human phenomena. Second, the assumption that the whole of the earth's surface can be divided into distinct regions is open to question. Recently, geographers approach the discipline more as a social science that searches for patterns or law-like statements that "capture" the spatial arrangement of significant features on the surface of the earth.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, professional geographers and educators examined how academic geography and school geography are related. In 1982, a consortium of professional geographers and teachers in the United States collaborated to develop five fundamental and inter-related themes to lend

structure to the study of geography in American schools (Joint Committee for Geographic Education, 1984). These themes are outlined below.

Location

Geographic education helps the learner to know how to determine and describe the absolute location (e.g., grid coordinates, street location) and relative location (e.g., the location of a stock exchange in a city's central business district). Equally as important, the individual is encouraged to discover factors or conditions that account for the location of phenomena.

Place

A location takes on the character of place when meaning is given to natural and human phenomena occurring there. Each place has a character that is expressed by such features as patterns, differences, similarities, sequence, and connections. Geographers are concerned both with identifying these features and the processes underlying them. For example, a dominant feature of the cultural landscape along the St. Lawrence River is the long-lot survey system. The examination of place in this context would have to account for the combined influence of landforms, political structures, and economic activities during the French colonial period.

Interaction

This theme attempts to reconcile environmental determinism and possibilism. Basically, it holds that the environment helps shape human activity since it provides a range of possibilities for humans to satisfy needs and wants. The choices made are also a function of such influences as cultural preferences, political structures, and historical antecedents. This principle is illustrated when one examines how human activity on Asian grasslands contrasts with that on North American grasslands.

At the same time, interaction is felt in the opposite direction. Human activity leaves its impact on the land. This feature is currently the basis for geographical inquiry that examines the impact of resource utilization upon ecosystems.

Movement

Natural and human systems are fluid rather than static. A given place is what it is as a result of the movement of energy, goods, services, ideas, and people to and from other places. Geographers are interested in finding patterns that help describe this exchange and factors that cause them.

Region

In geographic terms, a region is an area in which significant characteristics relate to each other (i.e., areal association) to make it unique and definable from other areas (i.e., areal differentiation). These characteristics may be natural (i.e., geomorphic, climatic, or biotic) or human (e.g., economic, political, or cultural). A natural region may be described as formal, and a human-made region as informal.

The American Geography Education Standards Project revisited the nature and purpose of geographic education and in its 1994 report delineated the scope of geographic literacy. The geographically literate person is one who knows and understands:

The World in Spatial Terms

- How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
- How to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context.
- How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on earth's surface.

Places and Regions

- The physical and human characteristics of places.
- That people create regions to interpret earth's complexity.
- How culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions.

Physical Systems

- The physical processes that shape the patterns of earth's surface.
- The characteristics and spatial distribution of ecosystems on earth's surface.

Human Systems

- The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on earth's surface.
- The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of earth's cultural mosaics.
- The patterns and networks of economic interdependence on earth's surface.
- The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement.
- How the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of earth's surface.

Contribution of Geography to Social Studies Education

Environment and Society

- How human actions modify the physical environment.
- How physical systems affect human systems.
- The changes that occur in the meaning, use, distribution, and importance of resources.

The Uses of Geography

- How to apply geography to interpret the past.
- How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.

According to the Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum Guide, social studies is intended to enable and encourage students to examine issues, respond critically and creatively, and make informed decisions as individuals and as citizens of Canada and of an increasingly interdependent world.

Social studies is a program area that derives its content and methods of inquiry primarily from the social sciences in order to explore issues affecting their lives from personal, academic, pluralistic, and global perspectives. At the personal level, students reflect upon the implications of issues and events for them individually, and for their families and communities. The academic perspective is promoted as students apply concepts and processes afforded by the social science disciplines. Students develop a more pluralistic stance as they incorporate a diversity of identities, beliefs, and practices into their study of events and issues. Students build a global perspective as they explore equitable, sustainable and peaceful solutions to perplexing global problems.

Social studies, then, provides learning situations that predispose the individual to engage in desirable forms of participatory citizenship in issues of local, national, or international importance. Geography makes its contribution as it equips the individual with the understandings, dispositions, and competencies vital for such a role. Geography is not deemed to be worthwhile solely in terms of its intrinsic worth but in terms of its instrumental value in the long-term goal of developing the person-citizen.

First, geographic education provides unique opportunities for the student to develop conceptual frameworks or perspectives on the contemporary world. These frameworks relate to the earth environment, human use of it, similarities and differences in the earth environment, differences in human capacity to use the environment, and human interactions at a variety of scales - community, regional, national, continental, and global. The

emphasis is on a perspective of the earth as a vast interacting system of non-human and human activity. The geographically literate person is one who seeks to understand this interacting system in terms of

- spatial patterns of phenomena;
- the concept of place and region;
- physical systems;
- ways in which people interact with physical systems;
- patterns in the movement of people, goods, services, and information;
- historical, cultural, economic, and political characteristics of global regions;
- geographic factors that have impacted on the development of Canada and other countries; and
- consequences of human activity for the total ecosystem.

Second, students are encouraged to use selected competencies to formulate meaningful and relevant conceptual frameworks from these understandings. Since our modern society is characterized by rapid change, low-order information quickly becomes dated; higher-order knowledge and conceptual frameworks, however, have greater transferability to new situations. Geographic education today recognizes the need for a balance between knowing about a geographical content and using it to analyze contemporary issues. Accordingly, case studies can be used to facilitate problem-solving and decision-making, analyzing how local, national, and global trends affect real individuals or groups, and examining issues from alternative perspectives. In this approach, the learner not only becomes knowledgeable about a geographical phenomenon or issue, but also asks what can be done about it to make the world a better place.

The Instructional Environment

A Context for Effective Teaching

The most effective instructional approach is one that is eclectic in nature. The classroom teacher employs those instructional strategies deemed most appropriate given the needs of the learner, the learning outcomes, and the resources available. One cannot be prescriptive in favour of any single teaching method in World Geography 3200/3202 since (1) students differ in interest and ability, and (2) components of the course differ in terms of intent, level of conceptual difficulty, and the relative emphasis on knowledge, skills, and values. Therefore, the discerning teacher will use a variety of methods in response to a variety of instructional situations.

The history of geographic instruction in schools reflects a strong transmission orientation. Content was heavily factual and descriptive, and instruction relied upon (1) direct instructional methods such as lecture, didactic questions, and drill, and (2) independent study methods such as homework and assigned questions. Curriculum developers see the need for transactional and transformational orientations in instruction. These approaches deliberately engage the learner through the use of (1) experiential methods such as field trips, simulations, games, and surveys, (2) indirect instructional strategies such as problem-solving, case studies, and concept formation, and (3) interactive strategies such as debates, brainstorming, discussion, and interviewing.

ABalancedApproach

A balance of transmissional, transactional, and transformational approaches rests on the following assumptions:

- As we move into the 21st century, knowledge deemed to be of most worth rests less on the memorization of facts and more on the process of knowing.
- The process of knowing relies largely upon accessing and organizing information, detecting patterns in it, and arriving at generalizations suggested by the patterns.
- Transformational and transactional approaches bring high motivational value to the classroom.
- Transactional and transformational approaches allows for the active participation of students as they evaluate the relevance of what they are learning, bring their perspectives and prior knowledge to the process, and are involved in decisions about what they are learning.

In spite of the merits of transactional and transformational orientations, transmission still has a place in World Geography 3200/3202. The content of these courses has a defined structure as indicated by the outcome goals, specific curriculum outcomes, and learning outcomes. Within this structure, all three orientations may be utilized in the achievement of the outcomes.

To illustrate some of the principles of effective teaching and a balanced approach to instruction, Appendix 2 provides several instructional approaches that are particularly relevant to the teaching of World Geography 3200/3202.

Assessment and Evaluation

Introduction

The evaluation of student learning is an integral part of the planned instructional cycle. Its intent is to determine if the intended outcomes have been achieved, judge the effectiveness of the course and learning environment in meeting the needs of the learner, and assist in designing future learning situations.

Broadly defined, evaluation is the process of systematically collecting data (i.e., assessment), detecting patterns in the data, forming judgements about possible responses to these patterns, and making decisions about future actions.

The quality of assessment and evaluation has a profound and well-established link to student performance. Regular monitoring and feedback are essential to improving student learning. What is assessed and evaluated, how it is assessed and evaluated, and how the results are communicated send clear messages to students and other stakeholders about what is really valued – what is worth learning, how it should be learned, what elements of quality are considered most important, and how well students are expected to perform.

To determine how well students are learning, assessment strategies have to be designed to systematically gather information on the achievement of the curriculum outcomes. In planning assessments, teachers should use a broad range of strategies, appropriately balanced, to give students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Many types of assessment strategies can be used to gather such information including, but not limited to

- formal and informal observations
- work samples
- anecdotal records
- conferences
- teacher-made and other tests
- portfolios
- learning journals
- questions
- performance assessments
- peer-assessments and self-assessments
- case studies
- interviews
- essay writing
- oral and multimedia presentations
- research

Evaluation

Evaluation is a continuous, comprehensive, and systematic process. It brings interpretation, judgements and decisions to the data collected during the assessment phase to address key educational issues. More specifically, how valid and reliable is the data gathered? What does the data suggest in terms of student achievement of course outcomes? Does student performance confirm instructional practice or indicate the need for change? Are students ready to move on to the next phase of the course?

Teacher-developed assessments and evaluations have a wide variety of uses, such as:

- providing feedback to improve student learning;
- determining if curriculum outcomes have been achieved;
- certifying that students have achieved certain levels of performance;
- setting goals for future student learning;
- communicating with parents about their children's learning;
- providing information to teachers on the effectiveness of their teaching, the program, and the learning environment;
- meeting goals of guidance and administrative personnel.

Evaluation is conducted within the context of the outcomes, which should be clearly understood by learners before teaching and evaluation take place. Students must understand the basis on which they will be evaluated and what teachers expect of them. The evaluation of a student's progress may be classified as pre-instructional, formative, or summative, depending on the purpose.

Pre-instructional assessment is conducted before the introduction of unfamiliar subject matter or when learners are experiencing difficulty. It gives an indication of *where students are* and is not a measure of what they are capable of doing. The purpose is to analyze the student's progress to date in order to determine the type and depth of instruction needed. This type of assessment is mostly conducted informally and continually.

Formative assessment is conducted throughout the process of instruction. Its primary purpose is to improve instruction and learning. It is an indication of *how things are going*. It identifies a student's strengths or weaknesses with respect to specific curriculum outcomes so that necessary adaptations can be made. Formative assessment may be conducted by the teacher, or by the students themselves as they assess their own learning.

Summative evaluation occurs at the end of a designated period of learning. It is used, along with data collected during the formative stage, to determine learner achievement. This assessment is used to report *the degree to which curriculum outcomes have been achieved*.

Instruction and evaluation are centred on outcomes. Not only are outcomes used in providing structure for teaching and learning, but they also provide a framework for assessment and evaluation. However, in any social studies classroom there should be a balanced approach to assessment ensuring that emphasis is given to the learning process as well as the products of learning.

Process outcomes identify the skills that students develop as they come to know, to value, and to be able to do. The emphasis in teaching shifts from a passing on of '*the what*' to '*the how*' - the process by which it is acquired and utilized. Students are taught to find information, to become autonomous thinkers, and to use knowledge to solve new problems and make decisions for themselves.

The product can be thought of as '*the what*' of learning. The *what* is that which students should know and value. The *what* is spelled out in outcomes, which are the base for a program, a course, or a theme of study.

The process is also designed to develop the affective outcomes where students can begin to consider their own personal values, and teachers can help them develop the capabilities and processes they need in order to clarify those values. In fact, the process of having students experience activities and clarify their own values might be the product the teacher is trying to achieve.

Guiding Principles

In order to provide accurate, useful information about the achievement and instructional needs of students, certain guiding principles for the development, administration, and use of assessments must be followed. *Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada* (Centre for Research in Applied Measurement and Evaluation, 1993) articulates five basic assessment principles:

- Assessment strategies should be appropriate for and compatible with the purpose and context of the assessment.
- Students should be provided with sufficient opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviours being assessed.
- Procedures for judging or scoring student performance should be appropriate for the assessment of strategy used and consistently applied and monitored.
- Procedures for summarizing and interpreting assessment results should yield accurate and informative representations of a student's performance in relation to the curriculum outcomes for the reporting period.

- Assessment reports should be clear, accurate, and of practical value to the audience for whom they are intended.

These principles highlight the need for assessment that ensures that

- the best interests of the student are paramount.
- assessment informs teaching and promotes learning
- assessment is an integral and ongoing part of the learning process and is clearly related to the curriculum outcomes
- assessment is fair and equitable to all students and involves multiple sources of information

While assessments may be used for different purposes and audiences, all assessments must give each student optimal opportunity to demonstrate what he/she knows and can do.