

Mapping the World
Tuesday 9:00-10:30, 2025-2026
Instructor: Lori Peters

Course Overview and Objective

This **full-year course** will allow students to dive deeply into world geography, starting at any level. By the end of the year (if attending all four sessions and completing all assignments and recommended independent practice), students will be able to **draw a map of the world by heart**, on an equirectangular grid, and— dependent on their starting point of knowledge— will include many of the world’s 196* countries, major bodies of water, and major landforms. Like anything, the final product is determined by the time and effort put into the class. Lessons taken from David Smith’s “**Mapping the World by Heart**” curriculum, as well as video and other sources, will support the understanding of various maps, globes, regions, climates, coordinates, the spatial relationships of countries and continents to one another, and regional/cultural and historical information about some countries. **Instructor Lori Peters** has taught this unit more than 25 times, and former students claim it was, without a doubt, one of the most beneficial projects they have ever had. (*According to the United Nations.)



Mapping is an ART:

Students will learn about the geography of various parts of the world, create maps, and explore the history and culture of various regions. Beside the geography lessons, there will be a lot of focus on accurate drawing, coloring, lettering, and spelling! After all, maps are art, and the final product will be a masterpiece. The picture to the left shows a student focusing on his final product, which was in full color by the time he was done. ☺

Course Expectations:

- Attend all classes, or study the focus area if absent.
- Arrive on time to class and be prepared. Bring your sketchbook weekly to show practice work.
- Check the **online grading platform** weekly for added assignment details.
- Materials needed each week:
 - Sharpened colored pencils, pencils, erasers, and good, thin, black art pens for outlining (not water-based). Best are “architect-type” or Pilot Precise Rolling Ball, black and fine point
 - 3-ring binder with pockets (less than 1 inch) or similar for organizing weekly handouts
 - Spiral notebook for notes, journaling
 - A spiral blank sketchbook, 8.5 x 11” or larger
 - It is recommended that each student have their own physical world atlas and know how to use it. Recommended: **National Geographic “Kids” Student World Atlas**, 5th Edition
 - Optional: a **hard copy of a large map** (not online) that shows longitude and latitude. Recommended: 30x48 World Wall Map by Smithsonian Journeys - Blue Ocean Edition (30x48 Laminated). Please avoid a Mercator map.
- Homework: Students should plan to **spend 2-3 hours a week on their mapping practice and independent work**. There is NEVER “no homework”. More time may be needed during “project weeks”.

SYLLABUS

(Subject to change depending on student pace)

Session 1

8/26 Blank grid first map (this won't be seen again until the end of the year). Introduction to various types of maps, themes of geography, and coordinate grids to find locations.

- Independent Practice: A Traveler's Tools #1. Practice sketch.

9/2: Longitude and latitude, and units of measure in geography. Focus: World features and major bodies of water. Definition of key terms.

- Independent practice: using grids to find locations. Need access to a hard copy map or atlas (not online). A Traveler's Tools #2. Practice sketch. (Sketching practice continues)

9/9: Grapefruit lesson: map distortion. Focus: The Americas.

- Independent practice: sketching a continent.

9/16: Outline/blank grid map of the Americas, with major landforms.

- Independent practice: sketching a continent.

9/23: Focus: USA geography, regions, and major landforms.

- Independent practice: sketch the USA. Can you add in 48 contiguous states, and then Hawaii and Alaska? Use the state guide for spelling!

9/30: Focus: review of the USA and add landforms. Introduce Canadian regions, provinces.

- Independent practice: political map of Canada. Province sketch.

10/7: Focus: Canadian regions, provinces, including Greenland.

- Independent practice: map of Central America and Mexican states; sketch.

Session 2

10/21: Focus: Canadian topography, territories. Introduce Central America.

- Independent practice: physical map of North America; sketch.

10/28: Focus on Central America, the Caribbean, and the West Indies.

Independent practice: political map of Central America. Country sketch.

11/4: Focus: South America geography, regions, and major landforms. Select a Central or South American country to study for the Session 2 presentation.

- Independent practice: Political map of South America.
- Independent practice: start country research.

11/11: Focus: South America geography (physical), and review of the Americas. Review of latitude and longitude lines with Peters-Gall Projection. Review presentation details.

- Independent practice: Create a detailed map of your country, at least 18" x 24". Be sure names are correctly spelled!
- Independent practice: prepare visuals for your presentation. PRACTICE.

11/18: Share Presentation #1 projects (maps and short oral presentation) of the Americas.

- Independent practice: Peters-Gall Projection world map (focus on continents, major water bodies, major landforms, and some countries in the Americas)

Session break 11/24-11/28

12/2: Introduction to Africa, major landforms. Start a blank grid map of Africa, political.

- Independent practice: finish the map of Africa. How much more can you add? Use the country guide to add correctly spelled locations!

12/9: Focus: Africa, more regions and landforms, practice with coordinates.

- Independent practice: practice sketching Africa, political and surrounding areas.

12/16: Focus: Northern Africa and Western Europe, identify major landforms, regions, and cultures, bodies of water.

- Independent practice: Fact-finding mission, Western Europe (using graphs/charts). Sketch.

Session 3

1/13: Focus: Western Europe, region and culture, bodies of water. Outline blank grid map of Western Europe using coordinates.

- Independent practice: map of Western Europe, sketch.

1/20: Focus: Western Europe, region, culture, bodies of water. Select an African or European country for Project #2.

- Independent practice: map of Europe and country research.

1/27: Focus: Eurasia (continental divide). Practice with coordinates. Eurasia's physical map.

- Independent practice: Create a detailed map of your country, at least 18" x 24". Be sure names are correctly spelled!

2/3: Focus: Eurasia (continental divide). Practice with coordinates. Eurasia political map.

- Independent practice: prepare visuals for your presentation. PRACTICE.

2/10: Share Presentation #2 projects (maps and short oral presentation) of Africa/Europe.

- Independent practice: Arabian Peninsula and sketch.

Mid-session break 2/16-2/20

2/24: Focus: Western Asia, the Middle East, regions, and culture.

- Independent practice: Eastern Asia and sketch.

3/3: Focus: Northern Asia, regions, landforms, countries, and culture, including Siberia.

- Focus: Independent practice: North Asia and sketch.

3/10: Focus: SE Asia overview map, bodies of water, and other landforms.

- Independent practice: Southern Asia and surrounding islands and peninsulas, sketch.

3/17: Focus: Australia and Oceania. Practice using coordinates.

- Independent practice: Australia and Oceania. (Two maps)

Session 4

Please note: Independent practice/ review of any areas that students may have missed is critical at this point.

3/24: Southern Hemisphere, including Antarctica, plus world sketch practice.

- Independent practice: Antarctica map. Continent review and practice world map.

3/31: World sketch and pull it all together. Focus: Review the Western hemisphere, grid map using coordinates.

- Independent practice: Complete grid map. Review of Western Hemisphere island groups.

Spring break 4/6-4/17

4/21: Practice world sketch. Use country guides to add correctly spelled locations!

- Independent practice: Mnemonic strategies, begin review of the world with practice sketches
- Independent practice: regional free sketch

4/28: Practice world sketch. Use country guides to add correctly spelled locations! Prepare the grid for the final map!

- Independent practice: regional free sketch

Final map takes approximately 6-8 hours over three days/weeks. Students may arrive early. Maps stay on site.

5/5: Final World Map, part 1: Prepare equirectangular grids. Begin a light outline.

- Independent practice: study country lists. Sketching/tracing the world!

5/12: Final World Map, part 2: outlining countries, begin labeling. **Please ARRIVE at 8:30.**

- Independent practice: study country lists! Free sketching. Study.

5/19: Final World Map, part 3: outline lettering of countries and bodies of water. Shading and coloring. **Please ARRIVE at 8:30.**

5/26: Final touches for shading! **World Map celebration.** Parents are encouraged to attend. Take home maps!