

GEO 2410 – INTRODUCTION TO PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

SOUTHWEST TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY, SPRING 2003

Instructor: Mark A. Fonstad

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Office Hours: 1:30 PM – 3:30 PM Mondays and Wednesdays or by appointment

Class Time: 3:30 PM – 4:45 PM Mondays and Wednesdays

Classroom: Evans Liberal Arts (ELA) Building, Room 116

Course Line Number: 247026

Laboratory Instructors:

Amanda Keen-Zebert (Keen-Zebert@swt.edu, ELA 391, 245-1937)

Cathryn Springer (cs1117@swt.edu, ELA 399, 245-0327)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a systematic study of the various elements that make up the Earth's physical environment, weather, climate, vegetation, soil, and landforms. These systems transfer matter and energy among different earth systems (atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, biosphere).

This course is concerned with the natural processes that interact to produce the earth's varying physical environments. Relationships and explanations involving the basics of matter and energy transfer are emphasized throughout the course -- not descriptions. Because geography is a discipline that encompasses both natural and social science, physical geography deals with the interface between human and natural systems. The emphasis of the course, however, is on the nature of the processes that affect the lithosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere, and biosphere.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Knowledge outcomes. By the end of this course, you should be able to understand introductory principles of how the earth "works" within its relationship with the sun and solar system, and the nature of the earth's surface. In addition, you should have developed a basic understanding of the atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere, and lithosphere of the earth. Toward this end, an integral part of this course will be both lectures and laboratory exercises.

Skills outcomes. In the laboratory section of this course, you will learn skills used in the measurement of earth's physical systems. These include the development of your abilities to interpret and extract information from physical maps, development and testing of your own hypotheses of system behavior, and your introduction towards using specialized tools to measure particular characteristics of each of the earth's major systems.

COURSE MATERIALS

Readings for this class will be from the textbook, Essentials of Physical Geography by Gabler, Sager, Wise, and Petersen (6th Edition) available at the SWT Bookstore. Other materials are required for the lab sections, and will be discussed by your lab instructor.

EVALUATION AND GRADING POLICIES

I will evaluate your performance and assign grades based on two major areas of work in this course. First, I will assess your knowledge of the lecture material with three examinations

(two midterms and a final). Second, your performance in the laboratory section is also used to evaluate your final grade.

All students are expected to take exams at the scheduled time. Make up exams will be given to students who have excused absences; however, make up exams will be different than those given at the scheduled time, and all make up exams will be given on the same day as the Final Exam.

There is a maximum of 400 points for all of the lecture exams and lab exercises. The basis for grading will be as follows: 100 points for each of two midterm examinations, 100 points for a final examination, and 100 points for the laboratory section grade. The final grades will be determined based on the following rules:

A	≥90% (≥360 points)
B	≥80% and <90% (320 – 359 points)
C	≥70% and <80% (280 – 319 points)
D	≥60% and <70% (240 – 279 points)
F	<60% (< 240 points)

CLASSROOM AND ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Good attendance in lecture and lab is key to your success in this course. First, the exams will be based on lecture material. Second, the lab schedule is rigorous, and you will quickly fall behind if you repeatedly miss labs. If you have an unexcused absence on an exam or assignment due day, you will receive a zero on that exam or assignment.

If you must miss class or an exam because of an illness, a personal emergency, or some other extenuating circumstance, please contact me as soon as possible so I can make alternative arrangements for you (this is key). Of course, good attendance means more than just showing up for class. Please read and adhere to the policy on classroom etiquette that appears below. These codes of conduct will allow everyone to participate equally as learners. Thank you for your cooperation.

In the Department of Geography, instructors strive to create an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect in which learning, debate, and intellectual growth can thrive. Creating this atmosphere, however, requires that instructors and students work to achieve a classroom in which learning is not disrupted. At the most basic level, this means that everyone should attend class, be prepared with readings and assignments completed, and that students pay attention. This means no conversations with friends, reading the newspaper, coming late, or leaving early. Such behavior is disruptive to the instructor and to your fellow classmates.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with special needs (as documented by the Office of Disability Services) that will require compensatory arrangements must contact the instructor no later than the fourth class period to discuss specific arrangements and logistics. Students who have not already done so will be required to contact the Office of Student Disability Services located at LBJ5-5.1 (245.3451). ***SWT is dedicated to providing these students with necessary academic adjustments and auxiliary aids to facilitate their participation and performance in the classroom.***

SWT ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

Learning and teaching take place best in an atmosphere of intellectual fair-minded openness. All members of the academic community are responsible for supporting freedom and

openness through rigorous personal standards of honesty and fairness. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty undermine the very purpose of the university and diminish the value of an education. Specific sanctions for academic dishonesty are outlined in *SWTexan*.

Schedule by Week	Topics	Readings
Jan 13, 15	Class Introduction Earth Measurement, Earth Systems	Chapter 1 & 2
Jan 20, 22	<i>No Class Monday (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)</i> Earth Systems, Earth-Sun Relationships	Chapter 3
Jan 27, 29	Electromagnetic Spectrum, Composition & Structure of the Atmosphere	Chapter 4
Feb 3, 5	Radiation and Budgeting, Greenhouse Effect, Atmospheric Temperature and Pressure	Chapter 4 & 5
Feb 10, 12	Winds, Global Circulation Patterns	Chapter 5 & 6
Feb 17, 19	Exam 1 (Monday, February 17) Moisture and Air Masses, Synoptic Meteorology	Chapter 7 & 8
Feb 24, 26	Present-day Climatology, Climate Classification	Chapter 9 & 10
Mar 3, 5	Paleoclimatology , Regional Climates <i>No Class Wednesday – (AAG Meetings)</i>	Chapter 10 & 11
Mar 10, 12	<i>No Classes – Spring Break</i>	
Mar 17, 19	Biogeography and Introduction to Ecosystems	Chapter 12
Mar 24, 26	Soils	Chapter 13
Mar 31, Apr 2	Exam 2 (Monday, March 31) Plate Tectonics	Chapter 14
Apr 7, 9	Constructional Landforms, Weathering	Chapter 15 & 16
Apr 14, 16	Mass Wasting, Hillslopes, Karst, Groundwater	Chapter 16 & 17
Apr 21, 23	Fluvial Processes and Landforms	Chapter 18

Apr 28, 30

Glacial, Arid, and Coastal Landforms

**Chapter 19, 20,
& 22**

No class Wednesday

Final Exam, Monday, May 5, 3:00 – 5:30 pm

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

The instructor is Mark A. Fonstad, assistant professor of geography. He is a specialist in spatial and hydrological analysis of river systems, applied remote sensing, and theoretical fluvial geomorphology. Mark received his Ph.D. in Geography from Arizona State University (2000) where he researched mountain fluvial systems and the prediction of channel change in New Mexico. For the past three years, Mark has directed the field research on channel morphology, watershed hydrology, and the remote sensing of rivers in Yellowstone National Park.

