

Geography 141: The Natural Environment (Spring 2018)

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 3pm-4pm and Thursdays 2pm-3pm

Graduate Employees:

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Course Fees/Costs:

1) **\$25 testing fee.** This fee will be assessed to you upon course registration and goes to UO distance education for proctoring course exams. If you will be testing at an institution other than UO, they may assess you an additional fee to use their proctoring services.

2) **\$18 PackBack registration cost.** PackBack is an online interactive discussion forum. More information on PackBack and why we are using the service are provided in the section of this syllabus describing PackBack.

3) A required textbook will not be used in this course, so there are no additional materials you need to purchase.

** NOTE **

This is an online course where course materials and assignments (except exams) will be posted on Canvas.

Exams are administered by University of Oregon Distance Education (<https://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/>).

You will receive emails from both me and distance education regarding setting up a proctor.

If you will be taking exams ON CAMPUS, :

https://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/information/on_campus

If you will be taking exams OFF CAMPUS, please visit this page:

https://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/information/off_campus

Course Objectives:

1. Using readings, lectures, and laboratories to develop an understanding and appreciation of natural processes that occur every day or over every year. The basics of meteorology (study of the atmosphere and weather), climatology (longer-term trends in weather and its variation over the earth), biogeography (distribution of life on earth) and geomorphology (processes that shape the surface of the earth).
2. Students will understand the important properties of maps and students will use maps and digital mapping tools to explore spatial patterns on earth.
3. Topics in meteorology will range from why weather changes daily to the causes of global patterns of climate. Students will be able to interpret patterns, and explain causes, of maps of various weather elements (temperature, air pressure, humidity, wind).
4. In climatology, students will study the causes of seasonal patterns of temperature and rainfall in different locations on earth. Students will be able to link the causes of these seasonal patterns to patterns in atmospheric circulation, and the role of various other factors such as elevation and location within continents. Last, students will be able to roughly locate climatic data (presented as a graph) to actual locations on earth.
5. In biogeography, students will be able to explain why climates produce major biome types on earth, including the causes of the changes in vegetation in Oregon.
6. In geomorphology, students will understand the pathways of water from precipitation to ocean and atmosphere, and how rivers sculpt the surface of the earth. Students will be able to identify mass-wasting and glacial features from topographic maps.

Required Materials:

- 1) Google Earth desktop application, version 6 or higher (this is free software you can download, and this software is also installed on Academic Workstation computers in campus libraries)
- 2) A subscription to Packback, an online classroom discussion platform
- 3) Other material will be made available on canvas.uoregon.edu

Computer skills required for course: This course will be administered through Canvas. In Canvas, you will need to know how to send a message, attach files and documents, and check that your email address is current. Please take time at the beginning of the course to familiarize yourself with Canvas, Packback, and Google Earth if you are not already familiar.

General course structure: This course will progress through a series of 10 modules, roughly 1 module per week of the class. Each module will open on the Saturday of its respective week at 12am, and the assignments for that module are due by 11:59pm on Fridays (with exceptions for week 1 and 2, which have time extensions for late course registrants). Module 6 has a reduced material load because that is the week the midterm exam is due, and during finals week you only have the final exam.

Assignments and Grading:

We do not give grades, but as instructors evaluate and assign the grade that you earn.

Your class grade will be based on the following categories and percentage breakdown of points:

Lab exercises	25%
Packback interactive discussion	10%
Fieldwork exercises	5%
Practice Quizzes	5%
Pre/post module short answer responses	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	25%

Grades are not curved, but the grading scale reflects the breadth and depth of material covered. Lower grade boundaries are:

A+:98; A:92; A-:88; B+:84; B:80; B-:76; C+:72; C:68; C-:64; D+:60; D:56; D-:52

NOTE: You must receive a passing grade in the lab section (> 60%) of the course in order to pass the class.

Exams (45% of total grade): There will be two exams. The midterm will be 20% of the grade and the final exam will be 25% of the grade. Both exams will be proctored over a two week time window, meaning you can test any time within those two weeks. You will schedule a time to take the midterm exam during week 5 or week 6 (between April 30th and May 11th) and you will schedule a time to take the final exam during week 10 or finals week (between June 4th and June 14th). If you plan to take exams on the UO you will sign up for exam times with UO Distance Education to test at the Social Science Instructional Lab. If you will not be testing on the UO campus, you must work with UO Distance Education and your proctor at a different institution to establish a time to take the midterm and final exam during the exam window. Exam point distribution for both the midterm and final exams will be approximately 70% based on multiple choice questions and 30% on short written response or essay questions, subject to some flexibility as I write the exams. The exact number of questions and breakdown of points will be announced at least 1 week in advance of the testing window.

If you fail to take an exam within the testing window you will receive a score of ZERO for that test.

Labs (25% of total grade): There are 9 labs in the quarter, 1 each for each module (except module 6). You can open and modify a lab without submitting and Canvas will save your work, but you only get 1 submission. Your labs for each module are due by 11:59 PM on the respective due date provided under “weekly assign due dates” in the table at the end of the syllabus.

NOTE: If your average grade for the labs (after dropping the lowest lab grade) is not a passing grade (>60%), you will not pass the course. No late submissions for labs are accepted.

PackBack interactive discussion (10% of total grade)

Being in an online course can be an isolating experience. The goal of this interactive component of the course allows students to link the digital world and real world with concepts covered in this course. PackBack is a moderated discussion board that is student-driven. The goal is for you to develop a better understanding of the topics and to spark your curiosity of events in the world.

In order to receive your points per week, you must **post 1 Question and 2 Answers** *relevant to our class subject matter* per week. By posing and answering questions, the goal is to build some level of engaged community and collaborative learning driven by student interests. Your question and answers for each module are due by 11:59 PM on the respective due data provided under “weekly assign due dates” in the table at the end of the syllabus.

Before you start posting, be sure to read the Community Guidelines found in the tutorial on Packback. If your post doesn't follow the Packback Community Guidelines, there is a chance it will be removed and you won't receive points for that post.

To start posting on Packback Questions:

1. Navigate to <https://Packback.co/questions> and click “Register as a new student”. Note: If you already have an account on Packback you can login with your credentials.
2. Make sure to register with your SCHOOL email address and real first name and last name.
3. Enter our class community's access code into the “Join a new Community” module on your dashboard. Our Community access code: **61A8BA49-081B-4497-1924-17489590F956**
4. Follow the instructions on your screen to finish your registration.

For a brief introduction to Packback Questions and why we are using it in class, watch this video: vimeo.com/packback/Welcome-to-Packback-Questions

Fieldwork exercises (5% of total grade)

Geography is more than understanding how to analyze a map or memorizing how human and environmental processes operate; it is also about being able to travel to or see different places and to understand why those places look and operate the way they do. The ability to look around our world and understand what is going on is an important skill to develop regardless of what you do beyond this course. The two fieldwork exercises will not be very time consuming but will require you to “get out and look around”. You will complete one field work exercise between weeks 1-6 and the second between weeks 6-10.

Practice Quizzes (5% of total grade)

Some learning does not happen all at once but rather occurs through sustained effort and practice. To help in this practice, each course module contains a practice quiz with several multiple choice questions. You can take these quizzes as many times as you want, and your highest score is recorded in the gradebook. To incentivize you to use the practice quizzes to study, some of the questions in these practice quizzes will also appear in the exams. Practice quizzes for modules 01 through 05 will remain open until the last day the Midterm Exam is available (May 11th).

Similarly, practice quizzes for modules 06 through 10 will remain open until the last day the Final Exam is available (June 14th).

Pre/post module short answer questions (10% of the total grade):

Learning is not only about what you know but about what progress you've made. Each module will start with a question you will be required to answer before completing the rest of the module. At the end of the module, you will be asked that same question, which helps both myself and you see how as a student you've come to better understand answering the question. These questions are in short answer format and are meant to help provide an opportunity to reflect on larger thought-provoking questions and sharpen your critical thinking skills, which are important beyond the 10 weeks of this term and are what I want you to take away from this class. Many of these questions will also form the basis of short answer/essay questions on the exams. You will submit these assignments in Canvas into the Vericite interface.

Time-Management Suggestions for “weekly” modules for this Online Course:

Sunday to Tuesday – Answer the pre-module short answer question, view the weekly lecture videos and/or slides

Monday to Wednesday – Read any assigned readings, take the practice quiz

Monday to Thursday – Post and answer PackBack questions

Tuesday to Friday – Complete the lab and answer post-module short answer question

Post any questions (lecture or assignment related) on the discussion boards by Thursday ~ 3pm

* **NOTE:** Module 6 has a reduced course load with no lab and the pre/post short answer not due until the following week to help you prepare for the midterm exam. All other modules will be “normal” with similar course load and a lab, short answer, and PackBack responses for you to complete.

Posting questions related to the course:

If you have any questions arise while working on a weekly module, please post them in the respective week's discussion under the Discussion tab in our Canvas course page. This entails any questions related to course assignments and class lecture material. Please post the questions in the Discussion tab so myself or our class Graduate Employees can answer the question for everyone to see, in case other people have the same question come up later. Please check the boards to see if your question has been asked and answered before posting.

My office hours will be Wednesdays 3pm-4pm and Thursdays 2pm-3pm. These are the times I will read and respond to your discussion question posts, but if you have questions and want to meet with me in person or have a phone call/skype during this time, please email me to schedule a meeting time.

Graduate Employees also have office hours and will respond to lab-based questions posted on the canvas discussion boards during their listed online office hour times.

* **NOTE:** You can expect a reply email from myself and course GE's within 24 hours. We are **NOT** obligated to be “on call” for you whenever you need help. Said another way, if you wait until Thursday or Friday to begin a module myself or GEs **ARE NOT** obligated to help your emails. I usually try to do a “last call” reply to any emails/posts Friday afternoons related to weekly assignment questions, but this might not be guaranteed per week. In other words, please make sure you stay on top of your work and ask any questions in a timely manner so we have plenty of time to reply to your question and you can use our responses effectively for your assignments.

Academic Honesty:

Cheating, such as copying material from other students on tests or lab assignments will result in failing the test at a minimum and may require involvement from the Dean of Students. Copying other's work is not allowed and

electronic submission of the lab material makes detecting such cases less difficult. In serious cases, you will flunk the class or be expelled from the university.

Disability Services Notice:

I want to ensure a quality learning experience to all students. If you need specific accommodations to obtain the most you can out of this class, please let me know by (1) either contacting me yourself or having campus learning services contact me about your particular needs, and (2) providing the appropriate documentation from campus learning services. I will make every effort to accommodate your needs, but you must notify me by the first week of class if you need special arrangements.

Note:

I consider this syllabus a contract between myself and the students in this course. In writing this syllabus, I have obligated myself to follow the policies and procedures contained herein. By registering for this class, you are responsible for understanding and following these policies as well. I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus. You will receive written notification if major changes to the course occur.

Tentative Schedule (Subject to change)

Module	Weekly assign due dates*	Topic (Lab Topic)
1	4/13	Introduction, Geography Essentials and Planet Earth, Mapping Earth's surface and Earth-sun relationships (Map skills)
2	4/16	Radiation and heat balance, the Greenhouse Effect, Composition and temperature of the Atmosphere (Earth-Sun relationships)
3	4/20	Atmospheric pressure, winds, Coriolis force and geostrophic winds, Ocean currents (Temperature)
4	4/27	Atmospheric moisture and weather (Humidity and Adiabatic Processes)
5	5/04	Climates, natural and human impacts on climate (Global climate change)
6	5/11	Climate Classification, Midterm Exam between 04/30 and 05/13
7	5/18	The Biosphere (Global Biomes & Climates)
8	5/25	Plate movement, mountain formation, Earthquakes, and Volcanoes (Topographic maps + air photos)
9	6/01	Weathering, Mass Wasting, Groundwater (Landforms & Mass Wasting)
10	6/08	Fluvial and Glacial landscapes (Rivers)
		Final Exam between 06/04 to 06/14

* The “weekly assignments” refer to pre/post module short answers, PackBack responses, and labs. See detailed descriptions above of assignment types.