

GEOG 2320A – Introductory Biogeography Course Outline: Section 001 Fall 2025

This course is taught in-person

1. Course Information

*Details about design and delivery of the course are listed below in Section 6



Classes Start	Fall Reading Week	Classes End	Study day(s)	Exam Period
September 4	November 3-9	December 9	December 10	December 11-22

Friday September 12, 2025: Last day to add a second-term half course

Tuesday September 30, 2025: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (non-instructional day).

Monday October 13, 2025: Thanksgiving Holiday

Monday December 1, 2025: Last day to drop a first term half course without penalty



Course Instructor	Contact Information	Office Hours
Dr. Gabor Sass	gabor.sass@uwo.ca	Thursday 11:30 to 12:30

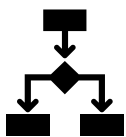
Teaching Assistant(s)	Contact Information	Office Hours
Aviva Fournie	afourn6@uwo.ca	By appointment

☒ Office hours will be held in person in Dr. Sass's office in SSC2221 every Thursday from 11:30 to 12:30



☒ Students will be able to sign up for an appointment (outside of office hours) by sending the course instructor an email

2. Calendar Description



Spatial distributions of plants and animals; evolutionary and environmental controls on distributions; impacts of human settlement.

2 lecture hours, 1 laboratory hour, 0.5 course

Antirequisite(s): none

Prerequisite checking is the student's responsibility.

Senate Regulations state, "unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

3. Textbook

☒ All resources will be posted in OWL

☒ Required textbook:

- Lomolino, M.V., B.R. Riddle, & R.J. Whittaker. 2016. Biogeography. 5th edition. ISBN 978-1605354729 (TAY QH84.B76 2017)

☒ Additional recommended resources:

- Flannery, T. 1994. The Future Eaters: an ecological history of the Australasian lands and people, Grove Press.
- McCarthy, D. 2009. Here Be Dragons: How the study of animal and plant distributions revolutionized our views of life and Earth, Oxford University Press. (QH84.M34 2009)
- Quammen, D. 1997. The Song of the Dodo: Island Biogeography in an Age of Extinction, Pimlico. (QH541.5.I8Q35 1996)



4. Course Objectives and Format

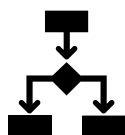
The objective of Geography 2320 will be to examine how the distribution and nature of plants and animals vary over the surface of the Earth and how we can account for this variation. An important part of the course will be a discussion of **The Theory of Island Biogeography**, how this theory can be used to understand problems faced by animals and plants in today's human-dominated landscapes, and what can be done to alleviate and hopefully solve these problems.

Specifically, the following topics will be addressed:

- historical and environmental controls on distributions of plants and animals;
- the Theory of Island Biogeography and its application to real-world problems;
- impacts of human activities on other organisms;
- conservation and restoration.

☒ Attendance is required

☒ Missed work should be completed within [48 hours]



All course material will be posted to the new OWL Brightspace learning environment: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/home>. Any changes will be indicated on the OWL site and discussed with the class.

Current versions of all popular browsers (e.g., Safari, Chrome, Edge, Firefox) are supported with OWL Brightspace; what is most important is that you update your browser frequently to ensure it is current. All JavaScript and cookies should be enabled.

If students need assistance, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help page](#). Alternatively, they can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#). They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

5. Course Content and Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	What's due?
1	Sep 4	Introduction to the course, What is Biogeography?	Chapter 1 (3-11), Chapter 2 (13-38)	
2	Sep 11	Ecological Foundation: The Geographic Template	Chapter 3 (41-59)	Quiz 1; Assignment 1
3	Sep 18	Ecological Foundations: Distributions of Species	Chapter 4 (71-100)	Quiz 2; Assignment 2
4	Sep 25	Ecological Foundations: Distributions of Communities	Chapter 5 (101-112)	Quiz 3; Assignment 3
5	Oct 2	Ecological Foundations: Biomes	Chapter 5 (113-139)	Quiz 4; Assignment 4
6	Oct 9	Mid-Term Exam	Chapters 1-5	In-class exam
7	Oct 16	Fundamental Biogeographic Processes: Dispersal and Immigration	Chapter 6 (143-176)	Quiz 5; Assignment 5; Part 1 of Research Assignment
8	Oct 23	Fundamental Biogeographic Processes: Speciation and Extinction	Chapter 7 (177-220)	Quiz 6; Assignment 6
9	Oct 30	Fundamental Biogeographic Processes: The Changing Earth (Plate Tectonics and Climate Change)	Chapters 8 & 9	Quiz 7; Assignment 7
10	Nov 6	Reading Week (Nov 3-7)		
11	Nov 13	Island Biogeography	Chapter 13	Quiz 8; Assignment 8
12	Nov 20	Conservation Biogeography	Chapter 15 (605-633)	Quiz 9; Assignment 9
13	Nov 27	Cultural Biogeography	Chapter 15 (589-605)	Quiz 10; Assignment 10;
14	Dec 4	Restoration Biogeography	Markwith (2011); Fei et al. (2012)	Part 2 of Research Assignment



6. Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Gain knowledge about the fundamental characteristics of, and processes operating in, biophysical systems.
- Gain knowledge about the interactions between biophysical and human landscapes and environments.
- Gain knowledge about geographical and environmental change across a range of spatial and temporal scales.
- Be able to identify, analyze, and interpret spatial patterns and relationships within natural systems.
- Improve skills in independent research and written communication.



7. Communication

- ☒ Students should check the OWL site every 24 – 48 hours
- ☒ A weekly update will be provided on the OWL announcements
- ☒ Students should email their instructor and teaching assistant using OWL Brightspace
- ☒ For any other communication, the centrally administered **e-mail account** provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at their official university address is attended to in a timely manner. You can read about the privacy and security of the UWO email accounts [here](#).
- ☒ Emails on OWL "messages" will be monitored daily; students will receive a response in 24 – 48 hours



8. Evaluation

Below is the evaluation breakdown for the course. Any deviations will be communicated.

Assessment	Format	Weighting	Due Date
Attendance & Participation	iclicker	10%	Weekly
Quizzes	OWL "Quizzes"	10%	Weekly
Tutorial assignments	OWL "Assignments" – Word Document	15%	Weekly
Research assignment – annotated bibliography and research paper	OWL "Assignments" – Word Document	20%	Part 1 – Oct 16 Part 2 – Dec 4
Mid-term exam	In-person written exam	15%	October 9
Final exam	In-person written exam	30%	TBA

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course. Students are responsible for material covered in the lectures as well as the assigned chapters/sections in the text.



- ☒ All assignments are due at 11:59 pm EST unless otherwise specified
- ☒ Written assignments will be submitted to Turnitin (statement in policies below)
- ☒ Rubrics will be used to evaluate assessments and will be posted with the instructions
- ☒ After an assessment is returned, students should wait 24 hours to digest feedback before contacting their evaluator; to ensure a timely response, reach out within 7 days
- ☒ It is imperative that students read through the detailed expectation documents for the different assessment components listed above (see OWL "content" [Week0])

8.1. Attendance & Participation (10%):

Participation is a fundamental part of the learning environment. You will need to be present in all lectures and tutorials as well as be ready to participate actively in the communal learning. There will be lots of emphasis on active learning and critical thinking. Students will get the most out of lectures by reading the material ahead of time. An individual attendance and participation grade will be awarded based on your attendance, readiness, and discussion during class activities, including answering *iclicker* questions. I will be using the *iclicker* software (free to Western students) to take attendance and record your answers to clicker questions.

8.2. Quizzes (10%):

In order to help you prepare for each lecture, you will have to complete a short quiz (using OWL) of a few questions before each lecture. The questions will be structured to test your basic comprehension of the material. Some of the questions from the quizzes may make it onto the mid-term and final exams. For each week, course materials will be announced well in advance and you will have 24 hrs prior to the lecture to answer the questions.

8.3. Tutorial assignments (15%):

Each week there will be an individual assignment due. The objective of the assignments is to test your general understanding of the materials covered as well as to develop your graphing, critical thinking & analysis skills on various biogeographic topics.

8.4. Research assignment (20%):

In mid-September you will be asked to choose a topic to research for the individual research assignment. You will then hand in an annotated bibliography for your research topic along with a statement of your research topic (due October 16th). The annotated bibliography and statement of research will then be assessed and approved (worth 5%). The final research assignment will include a properly referenced list of the sources you used (7 academic papers, plus 3 others), and an 8-page (max) report of what you've learned. It will be due on December 4th and will be worth 15%. I will be happy to go over your assignment with you at any stage of preparation.

8.5. Exams (45%):

There will be one two-hour mid-term exam (15%) and a final examination (30%) in Geography 2320. The mid-term will be held on October 9th in class. The final examination (3 hours) will be scheduled by the Registrar during the December examination period. The examinations will include questions from material covered in lectures, discussions, assigned readings, tutorial exercises and films. The final examination will include material from the entire term. The format of the examinations will be a combination of multiple choice, short and long answer type questions. No electronic devices (e.g. laptop computers, cell phones, etc.) will be allowed during an examination.

Click [here](#) for a detailed and comprehensive set of policies and regulations concerning examinations and grading. The table below outlines the University-wide grade descriptors.

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

Information about late or missed evaluations (for exams please see point 12 below):

- ☒ Late assignments without illness self-reports will be subject to a late penalty 10 %/day
- ☒ Late assignments with illness self-reports should be submitted within 24 hours of submission of the last illness self-report
- ☒ An assignment cannot be submitted after it has been returned to the class
- ☒ A make-up mid-term exam will not be offered [The weight of a missed exam will be transferred to the final exam.]

Grades will not be adjusted on the basis of need. It is important to monitor your performance in the course. Remember: *You* are responsible for your grades in this course.

9. Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

General Information about missed work:

University policy on academic considerations are described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further

information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found here.

Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

Formal Documentation Designation statement:

Please note that the **Mid-term exam** is considered to be central to the learning objectives for this course. Accordingly, students seeking academic consideration for this assessment will be required to provide formal supporting documentation. Students who are granted academic consideration for this assessment will be provided with the following opportunity to be accommodated [the final exam will be reweighted, no mid-term make-up exam will be offered].

Absence from Course Commitments

Students must familiarize themselves with the Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled during the last week of the term. Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described elsewhere in this document. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor of this course, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the Student Medical Certificate or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Course Assessments that Require Supporting Documentation

For this course the following assessment has been designated as requiring supporting documentation:

- **Mid-term exam – October 9th**

Academic Consideration for Course Components with Flexible Deadlines

This course has 10 quizzes with only 9/10 quizzes counted towards your final grade. Academic consideration will not be granted for missed quizzes. If students miss 1/10 quizzes, the remaining 9 quizzes will be used in the calculation of the final grade. If students miss greater than 1 quizzes, they will receive a grade of zero on each missed quiz.

This course employs flexible deadlines for assignments. The assignment deadlines can be found above in the course outline. For each assignment, students are expected to submit the assignment by the deadline listed. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their **tutorial assignment** up to 24 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 24 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 10% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their **research assignment** up to 48 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 48 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 10% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. As flexible deadlines are used in this course, requests for academic consideration will not be granted. If you have a long-term academic consideration or an accommodation for disability that allows greater flexibility than provided here, please reach out to your instructor at least one week prior to the posted deadline.

Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the policy for [Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

10. Make-up Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents.

The format and content of make-ups may differ substantially from the scheduled test or examination.

[If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, permission to write another Special Examination will be granted only with the permission of the Dean in exceptional circumstances and with appropriate supporting documents. In such a case, the date of this Special Examination normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time the course is offered and the maximum course load for that term reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. If permission for such a further deferral or other accommodation is not granted, a course grade based on an examination mark of zero (0) will be entered.

You can find the actual policy [here](#)]

11. Use of Electronic Devices

No electronic devices will be allowed during tests and examinations.

11.1. iClicker Application:

This course requires that you have and bring an electronic device that can connect to the internet to class. You will use this device to download the iClicker app for activities such as attendance checking and answering questions assigned during class time. To download the app visit: <https://www.iclicker.com/>

Please note: this software is *free* for all Western students.

12. How to Be Successful in this Class:

Students enrolled in this class should understand the level of autonomy and self-discipline required to be successful.

1. Invest in a planner or application to keep track of your courses. Populate all your deadlines at the start of the term and schedule time at the start of each week to get organized and manage your time.
2. Make it a daily habit to log onto OWL to ensure you have seen everything posted to help you succeed in this class.
3. Follow weekly checklists created on OWL or create your own to help you stay on track.
4. Take notes as you go through the lesson material. Keeping handwritten notes or even notes on a regular Word document will help you learn more effectively.
5. Connect with others. Try forming a study group and try meeting on a weekly basis for study and peer support.
6. Do not be afraid to ask questions. If you are struggling with a topic, check the online discussion boards or contact your instructor(s) and or teaching assistant(s).
7. Reward yourself for successes. It seems easier to motivate ourselves knowing that there is something waiting for us at the end of the task.



13. Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Please refer to: [AI at Western](#) and [AI Do's & Don'ts](#)

14. Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a [Scholastic Offence](#).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

15. Western's Commitment to Accessibility

The Department of Geography and Environment strives at all times to provide accessibility to all faculty, staff, students and visitors in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519-661-2147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website.

More information about "Accessibility at Western" is available.

16. Mental Health

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit Western's Health and Wellness website for more information on mental health resources.

17. Support Services

Western's Support Services
Student Development Centre

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html.

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

18. Important Dates

September 4: Classes resume

September 12: Last day to add a first term half course

September 30: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (non-instructional day).

October 13: Thanksgiving Holiday – Department Office Closed

November 3-9: Fall Reading Week (No classes; Department Office open)

December 1: Last day to drop a first term half course or a full course without penalty

December 9: Classes end

December 10: Study day

December 11-22: Examination Period