

Western University

GEOG2131A The Natural Environment

Course Outline

Fall 2014

- Specifics are subject to change -

Instructor Information

Name and title: Mr. Nathaniel Bergman

Contact: Office – 2404
Email – nbergma@uwo.ca

Office Hours: Wednesday 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm (or by appointment)

Course Information

Lecture Room: UC 30
Days: Monday
Hours: 12:30pm – 2:20pm

Seminar Room: UC 30
Days: Wednesday
Hours: 12:30pm – 1:20pm

Course Syllabus

Course description

This course introduces students to our planetary natural environment. It presents the general concepts and principles of climatology, hydrology, geomorphology, soils and terrestrial ecosystems using North America as the focus, and for case study examples. The course emphasizes the processes, origins, and characteristics of the natural environment and their variations in space and time.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, you will excel at:

- Explaining the physical principles and structure of the natural environment; namely atmospheric, geomorphic, hydrologic, pedologic, ecologic and biogeographic processes in Canadian context.

- Describing spatial and temporal variations in the characteristics of the processes and physical structures of the natural environment.
- Discussing and elaborating human impacts on the above-mentioned processes and physical structures.
- Understanding the natural environment as an integrated system.
- Implementing basic techniques used for the analysis of processes and structures of the physical environment.

Anti-requisite – GEOG1300B (Physical Geography)

0.5 credit course

2 hours of lecture and 1 hour of seminar per week

Course Materials

Reading assignments

I. Course textbook readings

de Blij et al. (2009), Physical Geography: The Global Environment, 2nd Canadian Edition, Oxford University Press Canada.

This text is required reading for the course and all students are strongly encouraged to purchase a copy as the lectures will draw from the text. This text will provide important supplementary information for integrating and contextualizing the lecture and seminar materials. Copies of the text are available on 2-hour reserve at the Weldon Library.

The course text comes with extensive student resources (study guide and interactive quizzes) that are available at <http://www.oupcanada.com/deblij2>. These resources can be accessed using the following login information:

Username: deblij_pg

Password: Wes3E

II. Readings for Summary Assignments

Assignment #1 – DeMont, J. (2010) In the eye of the storm. *Canadian Geographic*, 130(5): 58-66.

Assignment #2 – Gregoire, L. (2008) Cold warriors. *Canadian Geographic*, 128(5): 34-50.

Assignment #3 – Casey, A. (2010) Water for a dry land. *Canadian Geographic*, 130(5): 32-46.

Assignment #4 – Herriot, T. (2004) Snakes in the suburbs. *Canadian Geographic*, 124(5): 87-98.

Copies of the articles for summary are available on 2-hour reserve at the Weldon Library and can also be found online through the library web page. Students are encouraged to find the periodical issue to take advantage of the added context of the article photographs

Methods of Evaluation

Course Evaluation

Article Summaries

Students will be required to produce and submit summaries of 4 articles associated with the impacts of humans on environmental processes and physical structures and the reciprocating effects of environmental change on humans. Summaries are to be in abstract format and include descriptions of the problem, the cause and effects of the problem and potential solutions. Summaries are to be less than 250 words and will be graded on content, clarity and writing style. Assignments should be handed in electronically through the course OWL page prior to seminars. Any assignment submitted after 10:30 am on the due date will be considered late (*see late policy*)

Examinations

There will be 2 midterm exams and a final examination. The mid-term exams (1 hour) will be held during scheduled tutorials in early October and early November. The final examination (3 hours) will be scheduled during the examination period at the end of the Fall term. The midterm and final examinations assess knowledge of lecture, tutorial and assigned reading materials.

Course Evaluation Summary

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Article Summaries | 20% (2, 4, 6, 8% per summary) - written summaries of assigned articles |
| Midterm Exam 1 | 20% - exam will cover all lecture and seminar material covered/assigned to date |
| Midterm Exam 2 | 20% - exam will cover all lecture and seminar material covered/assigned to date |
| Final Exam | 40% - exam will cover all lecture and seminar material covered/assigned to date |

Your evaluation will base on your knowledge of course materials as substantiated in the midterm tests, final exam, class and tutorial participations.

In order to maximize your experience in this course, and strive towards a high mark, it is strongly recommended that you:

- Attend and participate lecture and tutorial sessions
- Before class, make sure you read the entire lecture and all reading materials and bring to class concepts, theories and terms that are not clear for you

- During class, take reasonable notes, ask questions for clarification of any terms, concepts or theories you have not understood.
- After class, combine your notes on assigned reading materials and the notes you took during class, and integrate concepts, theories and definitions.
- Ask for help in case you need additional clarification using office hours and tutorial sessions.

Course Schedule

Lectures, Tutorials, and Readings

This course will be using OWL to deliver lectures, seminar articles, assignments and post grades. Lecture notes will be posted 2 to 7 days prior to a lecture session. It is your responsibility to print out these lectures and bring them to class. The lecture notes contain illustrations, photographs, maps, tables etc... that will make following a lecture easy in class. Tutorials for this course consist of documentary movies and discussions on topics covered in class.

Predicted Lecture Schedule

| Week | Topics | Text Readings |
|-------------|--|----------------------|
| Sept. 8 | The Planet Earth and Space | Units 2 & 4 |
| Sept. 15 | The Atmosphere: Heat and Temperature | Units 5-7 |
| Sept. 22 | Wind and Circulation | Units 8 & 9 |
| Sept. 29 | Water, Water Everywhere | Units 10-12 |
| Oct. 6 | Global Climates and Climate Change | Units 16-19 |
| Oct. 13 | Thanksgiving Day – no lecture | |
| Oct. 20 | A Planet of Rocks <i>or</i> Got Stones | Units 20-23 |
| Oct. 27 | Volcanoes and Earthquakes to a Fault | Units 24-27 |
| Nov. 3 | Landscape Evolution and Weathering | Units 28-30 |
| Nov. 10 | Surface water, Streams and Erosion | Units 31-34 |
| Nov. 17 | Glacial Process and Landforms | Units 35-38 |
| Nov. 24 | Extreme Environments | Units 39-42 |

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|--------|---------------|-------------|
| Dec. 1 | The Biosphere | Units 43-48 |
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Seminar schedule (Subject to change until Oct. 1)

| Week | Topics |
|----------------|--|
| Sept. 10 | "How to write an article summary" |
| Sept. 17 | Video: Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change Assignment #1 Due |
| Sept. 24 | Class Discussion on Article #1 and "Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change" |
| Oct. 1 | Video: Journey to the Disaster Zone: Japan 311 (The Nature of Things) Assignment #2 Due |
| Oct. 8 | Mid-term exam 1 |
| Oct. 22 | Class Discussion on Article #2 and "Journey to the Disaster Zone: Japan 311" |
| Oct. 29 | Video: Save My Lake (The Nature of Things) Assignment #3 Due |
| Nov. 5 | Class Discussion on Article #3 and "Save My Lake" |
| Nov. 12 | Mid-term exam 2 |
| Nov. 19 | Video: The Last Grizzly of Paradise Valley (The Nature of Things) Assignment #4 Due |
| Nov. 26 | Class Discussion on Article #4 and "The Last Grizzly of Paradise Valley" |
| Dec. 3 | No Seminar |

Course Policies

Late Policy

All article summaries must be handed in before the allocated deadline. Late submissions will be penalized at a rate of 10% per day for the first seven days. A mark of 0%-mark will be recorded if work is submitted more than a week late.

Extensions

If you have genuine extenuating circumstances and will not be able submit an assignment on time, you may submit a written request for extension, clearly outlining why you should be granted an extension. This request must

be submitted to the course instructor at least seven days before the assignment is due.

Accommodation

If you have genuine extenuating circumstances and failed to submit an assignment on time, you must submit a signed doctor's letter or other legitimate documentation explaining why you failed to meet the deadline. This documentation should be submitted directly to the Dean's Office, not the course instructor. It is the Dean's Office that will determine if accommodation is warranted.

NOTE: Also see UWO's Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>).

Illness

If you have an illness during the term that affects your work or ability to write exams or to complete work on schedule, please contact me as soon as you can, so I that can help with any accommodation. Also, please refer to Western's Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

You can download a Student Medical Certificate (SMC) from: <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading.

Additional Statements

Attendance

Attendance at lectures and seminars will not be taken. However, the course material is cumulative and poor attendance may make it difficult for the student to keep up with subsequent material. Regular attendance is thus strongly recommended. It is the student's responsibility to keep up with course material of missed lectures and seminars.

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Students are encouraged to bring their cell phones to class for participation in class polls. Outside of use for polls, students will have their cell phones turned off.

No electronic devices will be allowed during tests and examinations.

Statement on 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, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Mental Health

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit the site below for more information on mental health resources:
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>.

Western's commitment to accessibility

The University of Western Ontario is committed to achieving barrier free accessibility for persons studying, visiting and working at Western.

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 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

Support Services

Registrarial Services: <http://www3.registrar.uwo.ca/index.cfm>

Student Development Services: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>