GEO 412.101(W) Physiographic Regions of North America

Tuesdays, 6:00-8:45 p.m., LSCB 018

Spring 2012

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Office Hours: 3:00 - 5:15 pm Mondays & Tuesdays, 1:00-2:30 pm Thursdays, *or by appointment*

Course description:

The study of the major and minor natural regions of the North American continent, from Alaska to the Mexican border, including the Caribbean area. The course will focus on the different physically defined regions of North America, studying the homogenous variables that make each region distinct, including the topography, vegetation, soils, surface features, and past climates.

Objectives

The objective of the course is to introduce students to the physiographic regions of North America. Students will be asked to make connections between homogenous and heterogeneous variables to discern what makes a physiographic region. Additionally, students will analyze the connections between past climates in North America to present physiographic regions. Students will learn how different landscape processes interact within specific regions of North America. Throughout the semester, students will be completing assignments to learn how compile and present research on particular physiographic regions.

Course content (see schedule for detailed projection of topics)

Major and minor physiographic regions of North America
Identification of dominant landform processes that shaped each region
Identification of physiographic regions- the homogenous and heterogeneous variables
Climates, biomes, and soils associated with each physiographic region
Characteristics of the physiographic regions
Topography of the region
Past climates of the physiographic regions
Surface water distribution in each region

Course material

Physical Geography of North America (Anthony Orme, editor, Oxford University Press, publisher) is a required text for the course and is on reserve in the University Library. Also on reserve at the library are:

Geomorphic Systems of North America, William L. Graf; *Physiography of western United States*, Nevin Fenneman; *Physiography of eastern United States*, Nevin Fenneman; *Natural Landscapes*, James A. Henry and Joann Mossa

Other readings will come from the texts placed on reserve in the library and from journal articles.

Attendance and classroom policies

Students are expected to attend and to be on time for all classes. You will be marked absent if you are late to lecture or leave early. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet. Attendance may be taken twice during a class period – before and after the break each night. Please keep in mind that missing any lecture, excused or not, will likely have a detrimental affect on your grade.

There is no talking in class, reading newspapers or other non-course related material (including on your computer), coming late, sleeping, leaving early or texting/messaging. Turn off all cell phones, pagers, and text messaging devices and **put them away**! You will be asked to leave if you text during class. The University of South Alabama's policy regarding Academic Disruption is published online in *The Lowdown*. Disruptive academic behavior is defined as conduct that interrupts or interferes with any educational activity or environment, infringes upon the rights and privileges of others, results in or threatens the destruction of property and/or is otherwise prejudicial to the maintenance of order in an academic environment.

Writing assignments, peer reviews, and term paper

Students are required to complete four (6 full pages minimum) writing assignments for the course, all of which will focus on a single physiographic region. Each paper will focus on a different aspect of the region, including the characteristics of the region (i.e. soils, topography, vegetation), recent geologic history of the landforms, topographic profiles of the region, and the uniqueness of the region.

The writing assignments will be peer reviewed by fellow classmates and the professor. Each student will be required to read and provide *written* comments on a fellow student's writing assignment. Peer reviews give students an opportunity to learn how to objectively assess the work of others, in addition to becoming familiar with other regions of North America from reading their fellow students assignments. Upon return of their assignments and written comments from the peer reviewer and professor, each student is expected to correct mistakes and address comments made by the reviewers.

The final term paper (20-30 pages) will consist of all the sections of the writing assignment, in corrected form, seamlessly tied together. This paper should not simply be the papers stapled together but rather one single paper describing physiographic regions adjacent to each other. All previous drafts and comments must accompany the final paper. All papers (assignments, term paper, and peer reviews) are to be typed in a word processor software package (i.e. Microsoft Word) in 12-point font, Times New Roman. The assignments should have a 1-inch margin around the text and be double-spaced. No hand written assignments will be accepted.

To receive full credit, assignments, peer reviews, and the term paper must be turned in on the announced due date unless other arrangements have been made IN ADVANCE. Late assignments lose 10% of their grade per day, including weekends.

Given the focus of the written assignments, students will need to cite other people's work in the assignments. Proper format for citing other works is expected to be followed for the writing assignments and term paper.

Exams

Two exams will be given in the course. The exams will include short answer and essay-type questions. The exams will cover material presented in lecture and in the assigned readings.

Grading

The four writing assignments are worth 34% of your course grade (8.5% each). The term paper is counts as 16 % of the course grade. You will complete four peer reviews worth 2% each or, together, 8% of the course grade. The mid term is worth 20% and the final exam 24% of the course grade. Attendance will be taken in each class. Those students who have perfect attendance will have 10 extra points added to their final point total and students who miss one class will have 5 points added to their final point total. Students who arrive more than 20 minutes late for class or who leave early will be counted absent.

The *final* grades will be determined based on the following rules:

100 to 90% = A 89 to 80% = B 79 to 70% = C 69 to 60% = D <60% = F

Grade Breakdown

Task	Percentage	Points	Total Points
Writing assignments (4)	34 % (8.5% each)	42.5 each	170
Peer reviews (4)	8 % (2% each)	10 each	40
Final term paper	14 %	70	70
Mid term	20 %	100	100
Final Exam	24 %	120	120
Total	**100%**		**500**

Make-up policy

If you have a valid excuse for missing an exam, contact me via email within two class days following the exam to schedule the make-up. All legitimate excuses require written validation. Valid excuses include: illness (your's or a dependent's), a death in the immediate family, or participating in a university-sponsored event. Only exceptional excuses from work-related absences are accepted. Make up exams *will be different* than those given at the scheduled time. Students who miss an exam with a valid excuse are responsible for contacting the instructor to schedule the make-up exam. Being absent on a day when an assignment or exercise is due does not excuse the student from turning in the work. A ten percent penalty/day will apply to all late work. Student can turn in the assignments to the Earth Sciences main office (LSCB 136).

Students with disabilities

The University of South Alabama provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities. In accordance with the American with Disabilities Act, students with bona bide disabilities will be afforded reasonable accommodations. If you have a specific disability that qualifies you for academic accommodations, please notify me and provide certification from Disability Services (Office of Special Student Services). OSSS is currently located in the PTCL building, at 5828 Old Shell Rd (phone: 460-7212).

Academic honesty policy

The University of South Alabama is committed to the fundamental value of academic honesty. The student handbook, The Lowdown, defines plagiarism as one form of academic misconduct which is "subject to investigation and disciplinary action through appropriate university procedures." Cheating includes using or taking someone else's work and using it as your own. This includes using fellow classmate's work. Plagiarism is using somebody else's ideas and/or words in your writing without correctly identifying the sources. As one resource for helping you avoid plagiarism, your written work in this class may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of sources. Assignments submitted to Turnitin.com will be included as source documents in a restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting possible plagiarism of such documents. As part of this process, you may be required to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your writing. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may be subject to some form of originality review. A paper not submitted according to procedures and format set by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.

Changes in course requirements*:*

The course may be changed the number and frequency of exams, exam dates, or the number and sequence of assignments, as circumstances dictate. Inclement weather may also force rescheduling of lectures, assignments or exams. When ever possible, this material will be made up. Students will be given adequate written notification of such changes.

Student Privacy

In accordance with University policy and federal law, I can only discuss your grades in the course in person. This means I cannot email your grades (even if you email me requesting your grades) or discuss your grades over the telephone. To talk with me about your grades, please come to see me during my office hours or set up an appointment to see me.

Tentative course schedule*

Week of:	Topic	Activities
Jan 16th	Introduction and review of basic landforms	
Jan 23rd	Rock types, Tectonics, Weathering Past climates	
Jan 30th	Northern/Arctic region	
Feb 6th	Appalachian Mountains and Plateaus	
Feb 13th	Appalachian Mountains and Plateaus (continued)	Assignment 1 due
Feb 20th	**Feb 21st – NO CLASS** (Mardi Gras Holiday)	
Feb 28th	Eastern Coastal Plain and Continental Shelf	Assignment 2 due
Mar 6th	**Mar 10th – Mid term**	
Mar 12-16th	**NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**	
Mar 27th	Western Coastal Plain	Assignment 3 due
Apr 3rd	Great Plains Region and Lowlands Region	
Apr 10th	Rocky Mountains	
Apr 17th	Western Plateaus and Plains	Assignment 4due
Apr 24th	Pacific Border and Mountain Provinces	
May 1st	Pacific Border and Mountain Provinces continued	
May 8th	Comprehensive final exam	Term paper due

*The course schedule and the due dates of the assignments may change or be adjusted as the semester progresses. Students will be notified of any adjustments at least one week in advance.