

GEO 490 Special Topics: Geography Orientation

Fall 2008

Saturdays, 9:00 a.m. to 10:40 a.m., LSCB 45

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Office Hours: 11:00 – 12:00 p.m. Mon. & Wed. 4:30 – 5:30 p.m. Tuesdays, *or by appointment*

Course Description:

This 1-credit hour course will cover topics that are important to geography students, such as: which geography courses to choose, the major sub-disciplines of geography, and career choices available for geography majors. You will meet the Geography faculty as they give brief overviews of the courses they teach and their research interests. Field trips, which will generally take place during the class time, are included in the course and will showcase examples of the research interests of faculty members.

Objectives

The objective of the course is to introduce students to the study of geography, specifically the topics of courses taught by the Geography faculty in the Department of Earth Sciences. The students will be introduced to the Geography faculty members. Students will learn about the geography courses taught by each faculty member. Additionally, students will learn about career options for geographers.

Course Content (see schedule for details)

Geography as a discipline offers students a wide range of topics to study. This course will briefly introduce students to: biogeography, soil geography, historical geography, GIS, remote sensing, geomorphology, extreme weather/hazards, mountain geography, and protected lands. We will also look at career options for geographers and graduate school opportunities.

Course Material

Geography in America at the Dawn of the 21st Century, Gary L. Gaile and Cort J. Willmott, Oxford University Press is a required text for the course (see instructor first). Supplemental readings may be assigned and are the student's responsibility to acquire and read. Supplemental readings will be handed out in class, posted on the course website, or placed on reserve in the library.

Attendance and classroom policies

Students are expected to attend and to be on time for ALL classes. Twenty-eight percent (77 points) of the course grade is based on your attendance. You are expected to be on time and stay for the entire lecture. You will be marked as absent if you are late or leave early.

No smoking or chewing tobacco is allowed during class. Cell phones are to be turned off during class. You are encouraged to share your ideas and opinions, and you are expected to treat your classmates and professor with courtesy and respect.

Participation

Students are expected to take part in the discussion about each week's topic, including their likes and dislikes about the readings, their opinions on the research of each sub-discipline, ask the guest speakers relevant questions, and to relate the sub-discipline to nonacademic careers

and current events. The ability to adequately participate on each topic is dependent on completing the weekly readings. Each student will be assigned a portion of the readings for each week and will be expected to verbally communicate the contents of their readings to the class. Failure to participate will be evident in your ability to contribute to the discussion. Twenty-eight percent of the course grade (77 points) is based on participation. Students who never voice a thought, opinion, or ask a question throughout the class cannot expect to be given points for participation.

Assignments

Students are required to complete six writing assignments for the course. Assignment topics will be given the week before the assignment is due. Five assignments are each worth 7% of the course grade (19 points each). One assignment will be longer and therefore will be worth 9% of the course grade (26 points each).

All assignments 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 must be turned in on the announced due date unless other arrangements have been made IN ADVANCE. Late assignments lose 10% per day, including weekends. Assignments are due at the beginning of class unless otherwise noted.

Task	Grading Points	Percentage
Written assignments (5)	95 (19 points each)	35 (7% each)
Final Assignment	26	9
Participation/discussion	77	28
Attendance	77	28
Total	300	100%

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

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

Make-up policy

All students are expected attend every class, stay current with the assigned readings, and complete the written assignments on time. If you have a valid excuse, you must contact me via email either **before** the class or **within** 24 hours after a class to make arrangements on completing the missed material. 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. ***Participation points cannot be made up.***

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 fide disabilities will be afforded reasonable accommodations. The Office of Special Student Services will certify a disability and advise faculty members of 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). The Office of Special Student Services is located in the Student Center, room 270. Their phone number is (251) 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." 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.

Class meeting times

Occasionally, we may need to meet for a longer time to accommodate a required field trip. Students will be given adequate notification for these trips.

Changes in course requirement

Since all classes do not progress at the same rate, the instructor may need to change the number and frequency of assignments and assigned readings, as circumstances dictate. Additionally, the order of appearance of the speakers may change due to scheduling conflicts. Inclement weather (e.g., hurricanes) may also force rescheduling of lectures, assignments or exams. When ever possible, this material will be made up. Students will be given adequate notification of such changes.

Tentative schedule

Date	Topics	Speakers	Readings*	Assignments
Aug 23 rd	Geography Intro		Chapter 1, pgs 1-16 *Additional reading will be assigned by August 30th	
Aug 30 th	NO CLASS – Labor Day Holiday			
Sept 6 th	Severe weather	Ms. Gina Wade		Assignment 1 due
Sept 13 th	Biogeography and Alabama geography Soil geography and Latin America Hazards and geomorphology	Dr. Miriam Fearn Dr. Roy Ryder Dr. Carol Sawyer		Assignment 2 due
Sept 20 th	NO CLASS – Coastal Cleanup			Assignment 3 due
Sept 27 th	REQUIRED FIELD TRIP			Assignment 4 due
Oct 4 th	Historical geography, Protected Lands, & Economic Geography	Dr. Lary Dilsaver Mr. Rajiv Thakur		Assignment 5 due
Oct 11 th	NO CLASS			
Oct 18 th	Geographic Information Science & Remote Sensing	Mr. Sam Stutsman Ms. Karen Jordan		Assignment 6 due

***Specific pages to be read will be given in class.**