Course Description

Why study physical geography? For many, there is a natural curiosity about how Earth processes work and how different landscapes formed. This is what physical geographers do: investigate natural patterns and processes.

We will study the Earth’s atmosphere, weather, and climate; and its geologic structure and surface features – focusing upon landforms, soil, and ecological systems. We will examine the interactions between humans and our natural environment, mainly here in the United States, but also globally. We will begin to understand concepts of balance and equilibrium in complex environmental systems that are subject to change over several time scales. Our focus will be geographical and spatial: where things are, why they are there, and how place and spatial relationships make a difference.

This course will deal with maps and data systems involving processes and spatial patterns in the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere. Our focus will be quantitative and analytical, producing and interpreting graphs and statistical relationships.