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 class is taught using teams. Each team, when formed, will be together for the entire course. Teams will work together on assignments and class discussions.

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.

Catalog Description. Introduction to Physical Geography (3-0) An introduction to features and processes of the atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere, and lithosphere, with emphasis on spatial (distribution) patterns, and
Course Objectives

- to describe how locations and spatial relationships of properties of the earth’s atmosphere and surface are displayed on maps;
- to explain the Earth’s radiation energy balances and their relationships to temperatures;
- to describe the circulations of the lower atmosphere and upper oceans, and relate them to associated weather systems;
- to explain the global hydrologic cycles and the distribution of global and US water resources;
- to describe how soils and ecological communities develop and are structured;
- to describe how the gross topography of the Earth is related to its plate tectonic framework;
- to explain how landscapes are shaped by rivers, wind, ice, and coastal ocean waters;
- to identify how human activity is affecting environmental change;
- to explain how scientific methods, models, and theories are used to describe and explain environmental processes and patterns; and
- to understand the framework for the scientific consensus on global climate change.
- Enhance academic skills including the use of electronic resources.

Course Expectations

This course will be taught using Team-Based Learning (TBL) techniques. The primary learning objective beyond simply covering content but to focus opportunity to practice using course concepts; you will be organized into permanent semester. Grades will be earned individually and as a team. Team evaluations/grades will be given in which you will have the opportunity to members participation in the team project.

For each Learning Module you will have a project that requires individual input, and team level. In order to ensure you are prepared for project and class discussions there will be a quiz (individual and team) over the reading assignment.

Next, each team will be working on a project, contributing, and answer questions related to The project will be graded not only on correctness but also on member peer evaluations. Each team will also work on a class discussion that the entire class to comment on. This, too, level based on participation in the discussion.

Since this class is team-based, all for assignments, please note that they are due at the due date. Each team assignment is designed to take approximately 2 hours to complete, so plan your time accordingly. If you missed the due date you will have until the next due date to turn in. However, there will be a late penalty applied. The availability for each assignments are posted, take note of when they are due and when
they will become unavailable.

We will be taking advantage of internet resources in this course, so expect to download and install programs such as Google Earth, Excel, your computer imaging processing program (such as Paint or Preview) and take digital photographs. If you aren’t comfortable with your computer please expect the activities to take extra time. Don’t hesitate to contact the Help Desk for technical assistance. They are trained in answering those types of questions. The computer labs in the library and UGLC have the latest software.

Assessment

Grades will be based on the following criteria and will be assigned using the scale:

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

- Class work will be posted and should be accessed under the Learning Modules tab. Each Learning Module will include: an introduction to the topic, the iQuiz, Team Assignment and Class Discussion. Due dates are given on the schedule. **DO NOT MISS DUE DATES. It is important to keep up.**

- You should access each Learning Module as soon as you can and note what needs to be done and plan your work accordingly. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to ask.

- You may submit work at any time before the due date and the earlier the better. It is not wise to wait until the last minute because 'technical difficulties' are not a valid excuse for missing a deadline.

- If your work is submitted before 5 pm of the due date, I will make every effort to review your work and let you know if you need to revise it before it is officially graded. I will leave a comment as to what you are missing or have answered incorrectly. You have until the due date/time to revise and resubmit.

- I will typically visit the electronic classroom daily and will try to acknowledge all e-mails within 2-4 hours during the workweek until 5pm. I am usually working online and I will get back to you right away. Questions and messages posted after 5 pm or over the weekend may not be acknowledged until the following day.

- Extra credit, if/when offered, is offered to the entire class, not to individuals and only if turned in by the due date.

- For technical difficulties please contact the Help Desk.

- Do **NOT** submit work anywhere but the Team Assignment dropbox or in the Class Discussion. If the dropbox is not accepting your upload, email me and let me know to reset the folder. I may also ask you to contact the Help Desk for further assistance.

- **NO** work will be accepted after the last day of class. The last day of class is the last day of instruction, not the last day of finals. NO work is accepted during finals.

- I make every attempt to present this class free of errors, but they do happen. If you see an error (due date, quiz question, etc.) please email me and let me know so I can fix it ASAP.

Semester Schedule
Assessment and Grading Criteria

**Team Assignments: 35%**

- A link to class assignments will be available under the Table of Contents for each Learning Module.
- Most Team Assignments are set up so team members contribute to the project individually and the Team Leader compiles the information into one submission. The Team Leader can also assign different aspects of the assignment to individual team members.
- Each Team Assignment will have a link to an accompanying team blog. This is where the team can work together and upload their work as they complete it. Teams may also use other forms of communication, such as texting.
- Each team member will fill out a peer evaluation form for every other member in order to rate their contribution/participation. It will count for 30% of the Team Assignment grade.
- The assignments and peer evaluations are to be submitted via the Assignment link.
- A comment box is available in the Assignment dropbox where you may post any comments you want me to read concerning your work. I, too, will use the comment box to post any comments I may have on your work as I was grading it. Please return to read the comments, especially if you do not receive a grade for an assignment within a few days of the due date.
- If you upload your work early (by 5 pm of the due date) I will look it over and notify you if you have any errors/mistakes. I will leave you a comment. You will have until the due date/time to revise and resubmit your work.
- I prefer your work to be answered using your own words, not copied verbatim from the text, the internet, or a fellow student. Copying answers, especially if not referenced, is plagiarism.
- Assignments will be graded on a 10 point scale. The grade will be based both on content and on completeness of the response.

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<th>Topic</th>
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<th>Due</th>
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<td>Chapter 1</td>
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<td>Atmosphere</td>
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<td>Learning Module 4</td>
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<td>Hydrosphere</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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Assignments are due Tuesday at midnight (Mountain Time). Assignments posted after the deadline will lose 1 point.
Assignments can be turned in late up until the availability date.

iQuizzes: 30%
- Quizzes will be taken individually, not as a team.
- The quizzes will be multiple choice and are designed to test your reading comprehension. You will have a single opportunity to take each quiz and will have an hour to complete the quiz. You may use your book.
- The quizzes will become unavailable after the due date (Sundays at midnight) and if you miss the deadline you will not have an opportunity to complete the quiz.
- Quizzes will be graded automatically after the due date and grades will be posted in the grade book. After the quiz has been graded you can review the quiz results, including your answers, correct answers and comments by clicking on the Completed link in the attempts column on the quiz page.
- One quiz grade will be dropped.

Class Discussions: 25%
- Class discussions will also be team based. In each discussion the team will be tasked with preparing a presentation related to the topics covered in the Learning Module.
- Each class discussion will be accompanied by a team blog area where the team members can collaborate on the discussion topic. You may also use other forms of communication, such as texting.
- The Team Leader for the Learning Module will be in charge of the class discussion and will determine the division of labor and when the work is to be turned in.
- Discussions will be peer-graded. A rating and comment box will be available for each discussion. All members of the class will review all other discussions other than their own.
- Half the grade for the class discussion will be earned for participation in the preparation of the presentation and half will be earned for reviewing AND commenting on the other presentations.

Final Exam: 10%
The final exam in this course will be delivered on-line and will consist of multiple choice questions (similar to those in your Learning Module quizzes).

UTEP Policies for Students

Informed Consent: Some individuals may choose to disclose personal information during class. Therefore, it is important that all classmates agree not to discuss or write about what others have discussed in class.

Disability Statement: Services for students with disabilities are provided through the Academic Support Center’s Disability Services Office. Some examples of the assistance provided are: audio materials for the blind or dyslexic, note takers, readers, campus guides, audio recorders, a quiet testing area, and undergraduate academic tutors. In order to qualify for these services, documentation must be provided by qualified professionals on an annual basis. Disability Services forms are available in the Academic Support Center.

Military Statement: If you are a military student with the potential of being called into military service and/or training during the course of the semester you are encouraged to contact the instructor regarding these matters.

Professionalism: Students are learning professional skills and are expected to engage in classroom discussions, complete reading assignments and turn in assignments in a timely fashion as befitting professional behavior.

Scholarly Writing: Use clear college level writing with correct spelling and grammar for all assignments.

Integrated Use of Technology: Because this is an online course, I am making the assumption that you are comfortable utilizing a
computer, and navigating various software programs like Microsoft Word, Powerpoint. If you have any questions about computer requirements see the Student Resources in Blackboard.

Need Help?

1. Post a question to the Discussion Board. There is no such thing as a dumb question.
2. Post a question as a Blackboard email to your instructor.
3. Click on the Help button in Blackboard.
4. If the Blackboard system goes down or you have other technical questions, contact the UTEP Help Desk

Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures: Each student shall observe standards of honesty and integrity in academic work completed at UTEP. Students may be penalized for violations of the Academic Integrity policy. Please refer to the Academic Integrity section in the current UTEP Catalog. (Clearly specify what you consider to be violations of academic honesty.)

Caveats: The schedule and procedures in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.

Code of Civility: In order to promote a positive, professional atmosphere among students, faculty and staff, the following Code of Civility has been developed:

- **Respect:** Treat all students, faculty, staff and property with respect and in a courteous and professional manner. This includes all communications, whether verbal or written. Let your actions reflect pride in yourself, your university, and your profession.
- **Kindness:** A kind word and gentle voice go a long way. Refrain from using profanity, insulting slang remarks, or making disparaging comments. Consider another person’s feelings. Be nice.
- **Truth:** Exhibit honesty and integrity in your dealings with fellow students, faculty and staff members. Don’t lie, don’t cheat, and don’t steal.
- **Responsibility:** Take responsibility for your actions. This includes gracefully accepting the consequences of your behavior.
- **Cooperation:** Exhibit a cooperative manner when dealing with students, faculty and staff so we may all work towards our common goals and mission.
- **Acceptance:** Accept differences in others, as they accept differences in you. This includes diversity in opinions, beliefs and ideas and everything else that makes us unique individuals.
- **Professionalism:** Always conduct yourself in a manner that will bring pride to your profession, to the University of Texas at El Paso, and, most importantly, to yourself.

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