

Midland College
Master Syllabus

GEOG 1301: Physical Geography

PARTICIPATION STATEMENT: For online courses, students **MUST** actively participate by completing an academic assignment by the official census date. Students who do not do so, will be dropped from the course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course introduces students to the processes that drive Earth's physical systems. Students will explore the relationships among these physical systems, with emphasis on weather and climate, water, ecosystems, geologic processes and landform development, and human interactions with the physical environment.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of scientific investigation as they apply to Earth's physical systems and processes.
- Describe and explain the processes of Earth's physical systems: weather and climate, water, ecosystems, geologic processes and landform development.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the interactions among the Earth's physical systems.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the modifications humans make to the environment through interactions with Earth's physical systems.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS:

Will be current. Students should contact their instructor prior to purchasing the text and supplies to confirm required course materials.

STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND CLASS POLICIES:

Participation: Attendance is not the same as participation (see note on attendance, however). You can enhance your participation grade in class by making positive contributions to class discussion. This would include, *expressing your opinion, calling attention to an overlooked detail, bringing in relevant information, adding to someone's argument, and sharing relevant personal experiences*. Behavior to avoid would include, *belittling the ideas or opinions of others, taking honest criticism personally, interrupting a classmate, or any actions that are disruptive to class*.

Cell Phones: Keep them on silent and do not use except as part of a class activity or in case of emergency. Please, **NO** texting in class! If I see you texting in class, I will take points off your participation grade.

Classroom Etiquette and Civility: Apart from cell phone use, one of the biggest etiquette issues in classrooms is talking while the professor or another student is speaking to the class. If I or another student is talking to the class, please do not talk or whisper. You'd be surprised how well sound travels in a classroom. Talking over (or under) someone is not only disruptive, but it is rude. It will also result in a deduction from your participation grade.

Attendance and Punctuality: Attendance and punctuality in this course, like in any college course, is vital. Students are expected to regularly attend class, be on-time, and actively participate. **A significant portion of your grade consists of participation, so absence from class will adversely influence your grade average.** Students should attend the entire class period, thus late arrival or early departure from class will influence participation grade.

It is the student's responsibility to notify me if an unavoidable absence occurs. If you participate in College sponsored activities (e.g. intercollegiate sports) you must provide appropriate documentation before you are absent.

Academic Integrity: Effective learning rarely occurs in isolation. Talking to classmates about assignments, working in study groups, and participating in other forms of legitimate collaborative learning is encouraged. However, you are expected to do your own work. I do not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty. This includes cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, collusion, and any other activity that facilitates academic dishonesty. Consequences for academic dishonesty will be dire. Disciplinary options include, but are not limited to, a 'F' for the course, suspension, and possible dismissal from MC. (See the *Midland College Student Handbook* for a complete explanation of college policy). Simply put, cheating is not worth it.

Course Reading: In this course, we will use a conventional textbook, as well as other resources, including internet-based materials. It is very important you read all assigned material carefully and thoughtfully. This not only includes text readings, but also assignment instructions, announcements, and [this syllabus](#). As the semester progresses, you will likely have questions. Ask away! But make sure that you have checked the syllabus, course announcements, assignment instructions, etc. before sending that email or making that call. There's a good chance the answer is there. BUT, if it is not, do not hesitate to contact me. Your instructor is one of your most important resources.

Some reading advice: Do not read a textbook the same way you read a novel. Yes, you are expected to read the textbook, but not memorize it. You are expected to consider the material in the textbook in a contemplative way, not as absolute truth, but rather as a perspective. You are expected to gain a *perspective* on the substance of this course that you can build upon as time goes on.

Late Work: It is very important that you are mindful of all the posted due dates. One of this course's most important success factors is turning your work in on time. Failure to do so will have a severe impact on your grades. Any late work (i.e. assignments, quizzes, exams, discussions, etc.) turned in after the posted due date will be assessed a **20 point penalty for each day it is late**. Five (5) days after the posted due date, each assignment will be closed for the remainder of the semester and cannot be made up. Under certain circumstances I will make exceptions to this policy (e.g. having a baby, unlawfully imprisoned by a foreign power), but I will exercise the right to grant or deny exemptions. Should your computer or network fail at the last minute and you do not make a submission deadline, does not constitute a reasonable excuse. There is lead-time to work on each assignment so do not wait until the last minute to do your work!

Honors Program: If you wish to take this course for honors credit, please contact me. Refer to the Midland College catalog for more information on the honors program.

Dropping the Course: Check the MC College Calendar for the last day to withdraw from the course and receive a "W." Please talk to me before you withdraw.

EVALUATION OF STUDENTS:

HOMEWORK: There are several homework assignments ranging in difficulty from relatively easy (Level I) to more challenging (Level II), to most challenging (Level III). Level III assignments are weighted highest and typically require more research and thoughtful planning than other assignments. Level II assignments are weighted less than Level III, but still require a good deal of research and effort. Level I assignments are weighted the least, but still require your sincere effort and attention.

Unless otherwise stated, you will submit homework assignment through *Canvas*. Instructions for submitting homework are included with the first couple assignments.

EXAMS AND QUIZZES: There are **10 exams**. Each exam consists of 40+ multiple choice and or fill-in-the-blank questions that are derived from the chapter readings, homework assignments, discussions, and galleries from applicable chapters/modules. They are open book, but have a 2 hour time limit. Note: the timer will continue to run even if you close the exam. Exams should only be opened once, so do not access an exam until you are ready to take and complete it. The final exam also includes an essay assignment.

Map Quizzes: One of the basic aspects of geography is location. To enhance your understanding of where important features are located in the world, you will identify and locate places within the regions we study via **5 map quizzes**. Each map quiz consists of up to 25 matching questions that are derived from the chapter readings and the galleries from the chapters each quiz covers. You may also use outside sources, such as an atlas or the internet to assist you in taking these quizzes. Like exams, they are open book, but only have a 45 minute time limit. Note: the timer will continue to run even if you close the quiz. Quizzes should only be opened once, so do not access a quiz until you are ready to take and complete it.

There is a practice quiz (not-graded) to help orient you to the matching format.

Note: As a general rule, I will make map quizzes and exams available two weeks before the posted due date and close them three days after the due date. Once you take a quiz or exam, the correct answers will not be posted immediately. They will appear, however, three days after the due date. The correct answers will be available for three days.

COURSE PROJECT: The latter 1/3 of this course is devoted to a course project. This project is designed to have you explore the physical geography of a particular place of your choosing through independent research. **30% of your course grade** is based on this assignment (far more than any other single assignment, so give it some serious consideration and effort).

This project consists of:

- 1) An 8-10 page research paper
- 2) A power point presentation of your findings
- 3) Annotated Bibliography
- 4) Comments on two classmate's presentations
- 5) Project map
- 6) Project photograph

There are detailed instructions for this project in the Course Project module in *Canvas*. You should read this document as soon as possible. Be sure to read and follow ALL directions or you run the risk of losing points. Please, consult this document before asking me questions. If you are unsure about any part of the assignment AFTER reading these instructions, by all means contact me!

DISCUSSIONS: During the duration of the course, you will be asked to respond to several topics pertinent to our study of geography using the *Discussions* feature of *Canvas*. These activities are designed to give you the opportunity to reflect on, discuss, and share your thoughts on these topics with your classmates. You are expected to post one **original** comment and one **original** reaction to another student's post (or my post) for each assigned topic. Please use proper etiquette. Spelling and grammar count! This is an open forum, so remember that everyone in the class will read your posts.

Please contribute and cooperate with civility, but do not be afraid to speak your mind!

(Additional information on Midland College's Student Conduct policy is available at: <http://www.midland.edu/policy/section3/03-04-01.pdf>)

Your responses should address every question in the assigned topic and be comprised primarily of your own words and thoughts (rather than something you found on the internet). It is certainly ok to reference other sources, but I want to know that you understand the issue or concept. Be thorough... **(300 word minimum)**.

In your reaction to another post, you can agree or disagree with someone, but you need to elaborate and explain why. Please do not just say, "Good Post" or "I agree with you". Explain in detail, why. Failure to post a response results in an automatic 15 point deduction.

GRADING: All graded assignments, exams, quizzes, etc. are graded on a 0 – 100 scale. *Map quizzes and exams are graded automatically by Canvas immediately upon submission. I will personally grade the discussion, homework, and project assignments. Barring an unforeseen circumstance, I will post these grades within 72 hours of the due date.* Assignments are grouped and weighted as follows:

| Group | Description | % of Final Grade | Total Group Weight |
|-----------------------|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Exams | Includes 10 exams | 3.00 % ea. | 30% |
| Map Quizzes | Includes 5 map quizzes | 2.00 % ea. | 10% |
| Level III Assignments | Includes 3 discussion, homework, and/or project assignments | 6.66 % ea. | 20% |
| Level II Assignments | Includes 5 discussion and/or homework assignments | 3.00 % ea. | 15% |
| Level I Assignments | Includes 6 discussion, homework, and/or project assignments | 1.66 % ea. | 10% |
| Project Paper | Includes the paper from the course project | 15.00 % ea. | 15% |
| | | | 100% |

All graded assignments 'count' towards your final grade, thus no grades will be dropped. Unless, I specify otherwise, there are no 'do-overs'. I typically do not authorize incompletes 'I', so make every effort to complete the course on time.

To determine final grades, I use the standard conversion matrix:

90 – 100% = A
80 – 89% = B
70 – 79% = C
60 – 69% = D
59.9% or less = F

If you have a question about a grade, do not hesitate to contact me. I am happy to discuss, clarify and answer any questions you might have.

Note: I do not ‘curve’ grades. For example, if a student’s final average is 89.9, they earned a ‘B’. To ensure you do not find yourself in this type of situation, make sure you always know where you stand grade-wise in this course by checking your grade book regularly. The only way to ensure you make the grade you want is by earning that grade, so please...***no end-of-the-semester grade-grubbing!***

Non-Discrimination Statement:

Midland College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs and activities. The following individual has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies:

Tana Baker
Title IX Coordinator/Compliance Officer
3600 N. Garfield, SSC 131
Midland, Texas 79705
(432) 685-4781
tbaker@midland.edu

For further information on notice of non-discrimination, visit the ED.gov Office of Civil Rights website, or call 1 (800) 421-3481.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement:

Midland College provides services for students with disabilities through Student Services. In order to receive accommodations, students must visit www.midland.edu/accommodation and complete the Application for Accommodation Services located under the Apply for Accommodations tab. Services or accommodations are not automatic, each student must apply and be approved to receive them. All documentation submitted will be reviewed and a “Notice of Accommodations” letter will be sent to instructors outlining any reasonable accommodations.

Division Information: *Social & Behavioral Sciences; MHAB 176; 685-6829*