

# OUR GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

## PHYSICAL AND HUMAN DIMENSIONS

Geography 205 – Summer 2020 B-term  
Online – *no in-person meetings due to COVID19*

Course taught by:  
Rob Anderson, Department of Geography  
Email: [anderrm@uw.edu](mailto:anderrm@uw.edu)

Office Hours: *please email me to make a convenient appointment for a phone or zoom call*



### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims to increase your awareness and understanding of the earth's environmental systems, such as climate, atmosphere, water, ecosystems, and soils, as well as the roles of human beings both influenced by and acting upon these systems. We'll examine environmental systems using a geographic perspective that emphasizes spatial patterns, relationships between places, and the interconnectedness of people and the environment. The issues we'll explore vary in scale from global climate change to local forest dynamics. For all issues we'll attend to the basic physical processes underlying environmental change, the social dynamics that also shape environments, and the interactions between physical and social processes. Ultimately, a

geographic perspective on environmental systems will allow you to evaluate causes, consequences, and potential solutions to the pressing environmental issues of our time.

## **COURSE STRUCTURE**

This course will be held online, with no in-person meetings, due to COVID19. Class will be asynchronous – you can complete course work at whatever time is most convenient for you. I strongly recommend treating the class as a daily commitment, just like if we were meeting in person! You can decide what time of day to do the work, but don't put it off and then try to cram it all in at the end of the week, or month – it will be much harder that way.

The class will be laid out with daily tasks, just as if we were meeting on a daily basis (Monday through Thursday). Daily modules will be available on the course Canvas site. A typical day's work will include a combination of readings, podcasts or videos; viewing video lectures (pre-recorded by the instructor); online discussions with classmates; and (occasionally) online lab exercises. There will also be a daily quiz to make sure you're keeping up (don't worry – these should be pretty easy as long as you're doing the work).

Even with an online format – perhaps even more so than in person! – your participation is essential for a successful course. Participation includes keeping up with the course materials, listening attentively to lectures, offering thoughtful contributions to class discussions, and treating one another respectfully, thoughtfully, and inclusively.

## **REQUIRED MATERIALS**

All readings and required materials for the course will be made available online via the course Canvas page. You will need reliable internet access, and I highly recommend using a computer as opposed to trying to do your work on a smaller screen such as a smart phone. It is possible to borrow a computer from the UW via the Student Technology Loan Program – please visit <https://stlp.uw.edu/> as soon as possible.

## **APPROACH TO TEACHING & LEARNING**

My goal as an instructor is not simply to download information to you, but to inspire your excitement and interest in thinking critically about important environmental issues. You are encouraged and expected to experiment with new ideas, to take risks, to engage in spirited discussion, to listen carefully and attentively to others, and to share experiences related to course content.

Ultimately, my goal is for you to learn about the environment in a way that is both lasting and useful. Ten years from now, if you are crossing the Cascades into Central Washington on I-90,

will you be able to turn to a friend and explain how and why the forest changes so starkly from the west to the east side of the mountains? If you are in business, will you be able to intelligently discuss the rise of investment markets for ecosystem services? If you are a teacher, will you be able to explain to your students exactly why it gets dark so early in the winter and stays light so late in the summer? My hope is that you will be able to do these things and much more.

I will do as much as I can to contribute to your growth and knowledge as individuals and as a collective. You can expect me to help guide discussions, provide necessary context and background information on texts, challenge you to think differently about complex situations, and provide clarification on confusing concepts or points.

## **EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS**

1. **Course content (reading, podcasts, videos, lecture):** All students are expected to keep up with the assigned content. Please refer to the course Canvas site for the schedule.

2. **Discussions:** Students will write daily responses to the assigned course materials on the class discussion boards. You will be organized into a small group of peers, with the expectation that you are not only *writing* on these boards, but also *reading* what others write, and responding in conversation.

At a minimum, you should write a daily post approximately 100-300 words in length. Prompts will be provided to give you a stepping-off point. Try to stay more-or-less on topic with the prompt -- but if you are thinking about something in the reading or lecture that you really want to discuss (that isn't necessarily in the prompt) that's okay - we want to hear what's on your mind.

Feel free to respond to your classmates' posts as well. (A reply can count as your daily post, as long as it still meets the other requirements here.) You're encouraged to have conversations, ask each other questions, dig into the ideas (with respect and professionalism, of course).

Your posts should demonstrate critical thinking about the course material. Don't just repeat or summarize what you've read or heard - tell us what you think about it!

3. **Exercises** – Several class sessions will include “lab” exercises, in which you will typically use an online tool or simulator to work through a series of exercises. You will be graded on these, as well as asked to discuss your results with your group in the online discussion boards on these days.

4. **Quizzes** – There will be daily quizzes on course material, which you need to complete before moving on to the next day's content. The goal here is to make sure you're keeping up with all the content (see #1 above). Don't stress about the quizzes – they're not trying to be tricky, just to make sure you are doing the work.

5. **Opinion piece** – in lieu of a final exam or term paper, you will write a short opinion piece offering a position on an important environmental issue of our times. An opinion essay is typically only 600-1200 words – but please don't take the short length requirement to mean it's not going to take significant time and energy. It takes more work to write effectively and *concisely* than it does to ramble on at length. More details about this assignment will be provided in the early days of the class.

## **GRADING**

Participation on discussion boards: 35%

Quizzes: 25%

Exercises: 25%

Opinion piece: 15%

## **LATE WORK POLICY**

Because summer term is so short – just 4 weeks! – it's very important to stay on track and keep up with deadlines. Any work submitted late, without prior communication with the instructor, will have grades reduced by 10% per day late. That said, I am willing to work with you in the event of unusual circumstance that may affect your ability to complete work on time. Contact me *in advance* if you anticipate being unable to complete an assignment on time.

## **ACCESS AND ACCOMMODATIONS**

I welcome the opportunity to work with all students to ensure equal access to the course. It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you experience barriers to access due to a temporary health condition or permanent disability (conditions include but not limited to; mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), and require accommodations, please contact Disability Resources for Students (DRS) at <https://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/>, in person at 011 Mary Gates Hall, or at 206-543-8924. DRS offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s), and DRS. If you have already established accommodations with DRS, please communicate your approved accommodations to me as soon as possible so we can discuss your needs in this course.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

I require that you know and uphold the university's high standards for student conduct and academic honesty. Take the time to read them:

UW Student Conduct Code <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=478-121>

According to this section of the conduct code, academic misconduct includes cheating —such as “unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes,” and plagiarism which includes “[t]he use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment.” (WAC 478-121)

As described in these documents, the consequences of potential violations can be serious. Do not plagiarize! Do not present others' words or ideas as your own. Do not assist anyone else in doing this. Suspected violations will be referred to the appropriate offices of the university. Anytime you are unsure of your practices, talk to me, or to a writing studio tutor, librarian, or other knowledgeable authority.

## **EMAIL POLICY & OFFICE HOURS**

I am available by phone or video call to discuss anything related to the class with you. You don't need to have a specific question in mind; I am always happy to chat with you about the course, assignments, the field of geography, post-graduation plans, etc. Please email me to set up a time to talk!

In email communication, I will always strive to respond to messages within 24 hours during the week. Although I check occasionally, please do not expect an immediate response on weekends or holidays.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Much of the organization of this class, readings, and assignments have been handed down from Dr. Christine Biermann, whom I thank profusely. I also thank the many students who consistently inspire me and help me improve my teaching skills.