

## GRG n401C – The Natural Environment

UNIQUE NUMBER: 80270

Summer 2023

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**Lectures and Labs:** Asynchronous and Self-paced on Canvas

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**Office Hours:** via Zoom by appointment

[Book an Appointment](#)

**Teaching Assistant:** Alex Marden

**Pronouns:** he/him

**Email:** Canvas messages preferred

**Office Hours:** by appointment

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## Course Description

### University Catalog Course Description

An introduction to the study of the Earth from a holistic perspective including geologic, atmospheric, ecological, and water sciences and its relevance to present-day environmental problems.

The Natural Environment is required coursework for both a BA in Geography and a BS in Environmental Science on the geography track. This course also fulfills the Environment and Earth Sciences requirement for a BA in Sustainability Studies. Additionally, it fulfills part of the Natural Science and Technology, Part I (Texas Core Code 030) of UT's core curriculum.

### Course Overview

Physical geography is a major subfield of geography that investigates Earth's natural systems and human's interactions with them. The Natural Environment introduces fundamental concepts of physical geography through sections focusing on Earth's atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere – simply, the air, water, rocks, and living things that make-up Earth. In this course, you will learn about the dynamic nature of these components and take a systems-based approach towards understanding the integrated nature of Earth's elements. Students engage with course material through an interactive online textbook and note-taking during online lectures. You will further delve into the topics during labs by applying geographic methodologies in hands-on activities and interpreting your results.

This is an asynchronous course. That means that lectures and labs will be delivered online via Canvas asynchronously. It is considered self-paced, but you have frequent due dates to ensure progress and assess your advancement through the course.

### Learning Outcomes

1. Understand the spatial dimensions of Earth's dynamic systems
2. Know what geography is, especially physical geography
3. Learn the fundamental processes and patterns in the natural world
4. Recognize the importance of human interactions with Earth systems
5. Develop critical thinking and spatial analysis skills
6. Appreciate the Earth in new and more meaningful ways

# Course Schedule

All instructions, assignments, readings, rubrics and essential information will be on the Canvas website at <https://utexas.instructure.com>. Check this site regularly and use it to answer questions about the course schedule.

Unit	Topic	Chapter	Quiz	Quiz Due Date	Lab	Lab Due Date	Discussion Due Dates (Post   Responses)
Intro	Introduction/Orientation						
	What Is Physical Geography?	1	1	June 5	1	June 5	June 5
Atmosphere	Solar Energy, Seasons, Atmosphere	1	2	June 12	2	June 12	June 12   June 20
	Energy in the Atmosphere	2	3	June 12	3	June 12	
	Atmospheric Pressure, Winds & Currents	3	4	June 20			
Hydrosphere	Atmospheric Water and Weather	4	5	June 20	4	June 20	
	<b>Exam 1 due Thursday, June 22</b>						
	Water Resources	5	6	June 26	5	June 26	
	Global Climate Systems	6	7	July 3	6	July 3	
	Climate Change	7	8	July 3	7	July 3	July 3   July 10
Lithosphere	Tectonics, Earthquakes, and Volcanism	8	9	July 10	8	July 10	
	Weathering, Karst, and Mass Movement	9	10	July 10			
	<b>Exam 2 due Thursday, July 13</b>						
	River Systems	10	11	July 17	9	July 17	
	Coastal Systems and Wind Processes	11	12	July 17	10	July 17	July 17   July 24
Biosphere	Ecosystems and Soils	13	13	July 24	11	July 24	
	Biomes	14	14	July 24	12	July 24	
	<b>Exam 3 due Thursday, July 27</b>						

**Changes** to the schedule may be made at the instructor’s discretion and if circumstances require. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced (although the instructor will do their best to ensure that you receive the changes with as much advanced notice as possible).

# Course Requirements

## Pre-requisites for the course

There are no pre-requisites for this course.

## Required Materials

- 1) We will be using an online textbook called *Geosystems Core* by R. W. Christopherson and others, published in 2017 by Pearson Education, NJ. We will also use the Modified MasteringGeography courseware that accompanies the textbook.

To access the book, log onto Canvas and navigate to the My Textbooks tab. Then follow the prompts to log in or create a Pearson account. You will also have access to the textbook through VitalSource. To purchase the book, pay the “What I Owe” amount after the 4<sup>th</sup> class day.

From the Co-Op: “The materials for this class are available through the Longhorn Textbook Access (LTA) program, a new initiative between UT Austin, The University Co-op and textbook publishers to significantly reduce the cost of digital course materials for students. You are automatically opted into the program but can easily opt-out (and back in) via Canvas through the 4th class day. If you remain opted-in at the end of the 4thth class day you will receive a bill through your “What I Owe” page and have until the end of the 15th class day to pay and retain access. If you do not pay by the 15th class day, you will lose access to the materials and your charge will be removed. More information about the LTA program is available at <https://www.universitycoop.com/longhorn-textbook-access>”

- 2) Google Earth Pro. We will be using this free software throughout the semester. Download here: <https://www.google.com/earth/download/gep/agree.html?hl=en-GB>
- 3) Canvas. Material and information will be provided to you on Canvas. It is your responsibility to check Canvas regularly for updates. Be sure that you receive emails and other notices sent through Canvas by the instructors.

## Technical Requirements

All students are required to have access to a **laptop** or **desktop computer**, running either Windows or MacOS operating systems. Tablets, smartphones, and Microsoft Surface devices are not supported. Your computer should meet the following requirements:

- Modern and up-to-date operating system (macOS or Windows)
- Browser: Chrome (highly recommended), Edge, Safari or Firefox.
- Internet connection speed: 5 Mbps download speed. [Check your speed here.](#)
- Zoom installed and configured

Confirm that your computer is able to stream video by visiting <https://www.laits.utexas.edu/tower/tech.php>

For the best experience:

- Close all unnecessary browser windows and tabs and programs (including music streaming platforms, social media sites, YouTube, etc.)
- Check your computer is free of viruses, malware, and spyware ([UT recommendations](#))
- Clear the browser's cache before class ([here's how.](#))

# Course Assessments

## Exams

3 exams will assess your knowledge of concepts from that part of the course. Each exam is non-cumulative, open book, and timed to 1 hour. (33% of final grade)

## Labs

Labs (12 in total) will engage you with hands-on activities to further your comprehension of geographic concepts. They are designed to be completed after reading the book chapter and watching the lecture(s) that correspond with each lab. (36% of final grade)

## Review Quizzes

Quizzes (14 in total) function as a review of important topics from the book chapter and corresponding lecture, and an assessment of comprehension. These are “open book” and “open note.” The lowest quiz grade is dropped. (13% of final grade)

## Discussion Posts

Discussion posts will reinforce and extend your engagement with class topics, and connect you with your classmates. For full credit, you will write 3 posts throughout the course and respond to your classmates’ posts for each discussion. (18% of final grade)

## Grading for this Course

The following table represents how you will demonstrate your learning and how we will assess the degree to which you have done so.

Assignments	Percent of Total Grade
1. Exams (3 exams   11% each)	33%
2. Labs (12 labs   3% each)	36%
3. Review Quizzes (13 of 14 quizzes   1% each)	13%
4. Discussion Posts (3 posts & 3 responses   3% each)	18%

Grade	Cutoff
A	>94%
A-	90-93.9%
B+	87-89.9%
B	84-86.9%
B-	80-83.9%
C+	77-79.9%
C	74-76.9%
C-	70-73.9%
D+	67-69.9%
D	64-66.9%
D-	60-63.9%
F	<60%

# Policies

## Class Communication

Communication will largely occur via Canvas Announcements, accessible via the class Canvas page. Additionally, we will be using Canvas Discussions in order to answer questions about course logistics and course content.

## Individual Questions and Concerns

Questions that pertain to you individually, urgent matters, or sensitive matters require you to contact the teaching team directly. You can either attend office hours or use our individual emails. Please allow 24 hours for email responses. We will do our best to be responsive to emails concerning urgent matters.

## General or Logistical Questions

Examples of this question type include: What's on the exam? When is the homework due? etc.

First, check the syllabus. If you can't find it in the syllabus, search Canvas announcements and discussions, where someone may have already answered your question. If it can't be found in these locations, post your question in Discussions.

## Technical Support

If you experience a technical problem, click on the "**Online Course Tech Support**" item in the left-side navigation bar. The Online Course Tech Support chatbot, called "LAITS Bot", will assist with technical problems and can escalate your question to a human if it cannot readily answer your question. If the problem persists or affects your course performance, contact the teaching team via e-mail.

## Classroom Statements and Policies

### Land Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the Indigenous lands of Turtle Island, the ancestral name for what is now called North America. Moreover, I would like to acknowledge the Alabama-Coushatta, Caddo, Carrizo & Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Comanche, Kickapoo, Lipan Apache, Tonkawa and Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas.

### Statement on Flexibility

Our responsibility to ourselves and each other is to put our humanity in the forefront of our academic pursuits. With that being said, this semester I commit to being adaptable, which is reflected in the course policies below around attendance, grading, and assignments/exams.

If you experience any hardships such as illness, accident, family crisis please know that these policies may be amended and therefore you should communicate with me as soon as you feel comfortable doing so. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing with me, please visit [Student Emergency Services](#). For additional campus resources, please visit [protect.utexas.edu](http://protect.utexas.edu).

### Late work

Late lab assignments and review quizzes will lose 10% of their potential points for each day past the due date. After 5 days, the assignment will no longer be accepted and it will receive zero credit unless a valid excuse is provided before the original due date.

### Personal Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name, unless they have added a "preferred name" with the Gender and Sexuality Center, which you can do so here: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/genderandsexuality/publications-and->

[resources/](#). I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the official roster, and by the gender pronouns you use (she/he/they/ze, etc). Please advise me of any changes early in the semester so that I may make appropriate updates to my records. For instructions on how to add your pronouns to Canvas, visit <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/profile-pronouns>.

## **Conduct**

Personal safety is central to effective learning. This course expects mutual respect between students and instructors. As the instructor, I strive to have considerate and empathetic interactions and ask the same of the teaching assistant. Likewise, you are expected to demonstrate respectful communications to other students and your instructors.

## **University Resources and Support for Students**

### **Services for Students with Disabilities**

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please refer to SSD's website for contact and more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

### **Counseling and Mental Health Center**

The [Counseling and Mental Health Center](#) serves UT's diverse campus community by providing high quality, innovative and culturally informed mental health programs and services that enhance and support students' well-being, academic and life goals. To learn more about your counseling and mental health options, call CMHC at (512) 471-3515.

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, call the CMHC Crisis Line 24/7 at (512) 471-2255.

### **The Sanger Learning Center**

Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc> or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

### **BeVocal**

BeVocal is a university-wide initiative to promote the idea that individual Longhorns have the power to prevent high-risk behavior and harm. At UT Austin all Longhorns have the power to intervene and reduce harm. To learn more about BeVocal and how you can help to build a culture of care on campus, go to: <https://wellnessnetwork.utexas.edu/BeVocal>.

### **Wellbeing Resources**

[Longhorn Wellness Center](#) resources for self-care  
[Virtual Mindfulness and Stress Reduction Activities](#)

*Undergraduate Writing Center:* <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

*Libraries:* <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/>

*ITS:* <http://www.utexas.edu/its/>

*Student Emergency Services:* <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

*UT University Health Services:* <https://healthyhorns.utexas.edu/>

### **Title IX Reporting**

Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault,

unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature occurs in our community, the university can:

1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
3. Investigate and discipline violations of the university's [relevant policies](#).

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations) must be reported. **I am a Responsible Employee and must report any Title IX related incidents** that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email [advocate@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:advocate@austin.utexas.edu). For more information about reporting options and resources, visit <http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/>, contact the Title IX Office via email at [titleix@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:titleix@austin.utexas.edu), or call 512-471-0419.

Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Senate Bill 212, they are still mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws and are required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature, including the types of conduct covered under Texas Senate Bill 212. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support survivors.

### **Emergency Evacuation Procedures**

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>

### **University Policies**

#### **Academic Integrity**

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code: "As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity." You are responsible for understanding UT's Academic Honesty and the University Honor Code which can be found at the following web address: <https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/standardsconduct.php>

**Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UT** and is subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. To learn more about what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, see the [Avoiding Plagiarism tutorial](#) developed by the UT Libraries in partnership with the Writing Flag program and Student Judicial Services. In this course, I consider copying answers from AI systems to be plagiarism.

#### **Q Drop Policy**

If you want to drop a class after the 4th class day, you'll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information about Q drops in general, see: <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop>.