

GEOG 1503 - Physical Geography

Fall 2026 Syllabus, Section 05, CRN 41555,

Credit hours: 3

Instructor

Danielle Lewis

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Public Instructor Information

Part-time Teaching Faculty

Professional Qualifications:

B.A. in Geography, Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP)

M.S. in Sustainability Science, Chatham University

Course Description

1503. Physical Geography. An introductory analysis of selected elements of the natural habitat and their geographic distribution. Includes processes involved in weather, climates, soils, vegetation, and landforms. 3 s.h.

Course Readings

Group	Title	Author	ISBN
Optional	McKnight's Physical Geography: A Landscape Appreciation, latest Edition	Hess, Darrel, and Dennis Tasa	9780134195421

Course Materials:

-Hess, Darrel, and Dennis Tasa, McKnight's Physical Geography: A Landscape Appreciation, latest Edition, New Jersey: Prentice Hall

-laptop or computer with internet

The course readings are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, research developments, current events, and/or to ensure better learning.

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Week of	Reading(s)	Proposed Topic	Due/To Prepare for Class
8/24	Chapters 1 and 2: Introduction to Earth and Portraying Earth.	Introduction to Earth and the field of geography. Students will explore the meaning and scope of geography, geographic perspectives, and ways of representing and understanding Earth.	Complete the What Is Geography? and Introduce Yourself discussions. Complete the Citizen Science activity. Watch the assigned lectures and videos and review PowerPoints 1 and 2.
8/31	Chapters 3 and 4: Introduction to the Atmosphere and Insolation and Temperature.	Introduction to Earth's atmosphere, solar radiation, insolation, and temperature. Students will examine how solar energy interacts with Earth's atmosphere and influences temperature patterns and weather.	Complete the Heat Waves discussion and Exam 1. Complete the Layers of the Atmosphere activity. Watch the assigned lectures and videos and review PowerPoints 3 and 4.



9/7	Chapters 10 and 11: Cycles and Patterns in the Biosphere and Terrestrial Flora and Fauna.	The biosphere, ecosystems, biomes, biodiversity, and biogeochemical cycles. Students will examine relationships among living organisms, their environments, and major Earth-system cycles.	Complete the Biomes and Nitrogen Cycle discussions. Complete the Invasive Species and Biodiversity Calculations activities. Watch the assigned lectures and videos and review PowerPoints 10 and 11.
9/14	Chapters 5 and 6: Atmospheric Pressure and Wind and Atmospheric Moisture.	Atmospheric pressure, wind, moisture, clouds, and weather processes. Students will explore the physical processes that influence atmospheric conditions and weather patterns.	Complete the Acid Rain discussion and Cloud Exam. Complete the Cloud Art activity. Watch the assigned lectures and videos and review PowerPoints 5 and 6.
9/21	Chapters 12 and 13: Soils and Introduction to Landform Study.	Soil formation, soil characteristics, soil resources, and an introduction to landform processes. Students will examine the importance of soils to ecosystems, agriculture, and human societies.	Complete the Why Should We Care About Soils? discussion and the Soil Observation activity. Watch the assigned lectures and videos and review PowerPoints 12 and 13.
9/28	Chapter 7: Transient Atmospheric Flows and Disturbances.	Severe weather and atmospheric disturbances, including hurricanes and tornadoes. Students will examine the formation, characteristics, impacts, and geographic distribution of major atmospheric hazards.	Complete the Hurricanes discussion and Exam 3. Complete the Tornadoes activity. Watch the assigned lectures and videos and review PowerPoints 7 and 8.
10/5	Chapter 9: The Hydrosphere.	Earth's hydrosphere, including the distribution and movement of water on, below, and above Earth's surface. Students will examine freshwater resources, groundwater, and the hydrologic cycle.	Complete the Aquifers activity. Watch the assigned lectures and videos and review PowerPoint 9. There is no discussion this week.
10/12	Midterm Report	Midterm Report	Complete and submit the Midterm Report by Sunday, October 18 at Midnight.
10/19	Chapter 16: Fluvial Processes.	Fluvial processes, including rivers, streams, erosion, transportation, and deposition. Students will examine how flowing water shapes Earth's surface and contributes to the development of watersheds and landscapes.	Complete the Know Your Watershed! discussion and Dead Zones activity. Watch the assigned lectures and videos and review PowerPoint 16.
10/26	Chapter 20: Coastal Processes and Terrain.	Coastal processes and landforms, including erosion, deposition, barrier islands, and changing coastal environments. Students will examine how natural processes and human activities affect coastal landscapes.	Complete the Barrier Islands discussion and Sea Level Rise activity. Watch the assigned lectures and videos and review PowerPoint 20.
11/2	Chapters 14 and 15: Internal Processes and Preliminaries to Erosion.	Earth's internal processes and the physical processes responsible for weathering and erosion. Students will examine how geological processes shape Earth's surface and contribute to landscape development.	Complete Exam 4 and the Killer Landslides activity. Watch the assigned lectures and videos and review PowerPoints 14 and 15. There is no discussion this week.
11/9	Chapters 17 and 19: Solution Processes and Karst Topography and Glacial Modification of Terrain.	Karst landscapes, groundwater processes, glaciation, and glacial landforms. Students will examine how groundwater dissolution and glacial activity modify Earth's surface.	Complete the Hydrothermal Features in Yellowstone and Wisconsin Glaciation discussions. Complete the Sinkholes activity. Watch the assigned lectures and videos and review PowerPoints 17 and 19.
11/16	Chapter 8: Climate.	Earth's climate systems, climate patterns, and interactions between climate and environmental systems. Students will examine climate processes and human impacts on global environmental systems.	Complete the Rainforest Removal discussion, Exam 5, and the Drawdown activity. Watch the assigned lectures and videos and review PowerPoint 8.



11/23	No regular reading assignment due to the holiday.	No regular course instruction or assignments are scheduled during the university holiday period.	Students should use the break to catch up on coursework and review previously assigned materials as needed. The university will be closed for the holiday.
11/30	Chapter 18: The Topography of Arid Lands.	Arid environments, desert landscapes, land degradation, and desertification. Students will examine physical processes and human activities that contribute to environmental change in dryland regions.	Complete the Desertification discussion and Re-greening activity. Watch the assigned lectures and videos and review PowerPoint 18. Begin reviewing course materials in preparation for the final examination.
12/7	Review the textbook, study guide, PowerPoint presentations, videos, discussions, activities, and other course materials.	Comprehensive course review and final assessment. Students will review major concepts, processes, terminology, and applications covered throughout the semester.	Review all course materials and complete the Study Guide. Prepare for the Final Examination, which will be administered during YSU's Fall 2026 final examination period. The specific date and time will be announced according to the university's final examination schedule.

The course schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, and/or to ensure better learning.