

Course Information

Course Number: GEOG 203
Course Title: Planet Earth
Section: 199
Time: Online
Location: Online
Credit Hours: 3

Instructor Details

Instructor: Dr. Christy Jean
Office: 203D [CSA](#)
Phone: *Phone*
E-Mail: christy.jean@tamu.edu
Online Office Hours: 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm, Tuesdays, or by appointment

Course Description

The ultimate goal of this course is to provide you with a better appreciation and understanding of planet earth. This course takes an earth systems approach to studying the planet we inhabit. All of the earth's spheres—the atmosphere (weather & climate), hydrosphere (water in all its forms), lithosphere (earth's surface), and biosphere (living organisms, plants and animals)—are examined in detail. The lectures explore the complex interactions between these spheres as well as how they affect and are affected by humans. We will cover the fundamental principles that are necessary for understanding earth systems science, also referred to as physical geography.

This is a core curriculum course that meets the definition for the Foundational Component Area (FCA) Life and Physical Sciences and addresses the core objectives required in this FCA. These objectives include: 1) critical thinking, 2) communication (written, oral, and visual), 3) empirical and quantitative skills, and 4) teamwork. For more information, see the [University Core Curriculum Catalog](#).

Course Prerequisites

None.

Course Learning Outcomes

By taking this course, you will be able to:

- Interpret the arrangement of climates, landforms, and living things over the earth's surface
- Classify and predict patterns that emerge from the interplay of multiple earth system processes and human actions
- Explain the manner in which knowledge of the earth's atmosphere, surface, and interior has been gained
- Analyze some types of data and maps that physical geographers commonly use to study the earth
- Describe geographic patterns through maps, graphs, and quantitative and written expressions.

Optional Textbook/Resource Materials

Christopherson and Birkeland, 2017: Geosystems: An Introduction to Physical Geography,
(Any) Edition, Pearson Prentice Hall

All other resource materials for the course will be uploaded into Canvas.

Grading Policy

Please remember that your exam, quiz, and course grades are not negotiable. Your grades are earned based on your performance, not given based on effort or need. Your grade reflects your performance in this course, not your potential as a student or a person. If you feel that I made a mathematical error when calculating your grade, please make an appointment or see me during my office hours. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) does not allow me to provide your grades via email. The grading scale follows the Texas A&M University grading system:

A = Excellent $\geq 90\%$
B = Good 80–89%
C = Satisfactory 70–79%
D = Passing 60–69%
F = Failing $<60\%$

Graded Items

All graded items use a point-based scale. To determine your grade, divide the total number of points you have (or expect to receive based on submitted work) by the total number of available points for the course. There will be no individual extra credit or grade bumping at the end of the semester. This would be inappropriate and unfair to the rest of the class.

Table 1. Graded Items

Item	Points	% of total per assignment
Assignments (30 x 5)	150	27.3%
Discussion (50 x 4)	200	36.4%
Quizzes (50 x 2)	100	18.1%
Final Project	100	18.1%
Total	550	

Assignments

There are a total of five assignments, each worth 30 points. This series of assignments is designed to engage students in critical analysis, visual communication, teamwork, and empirical reasoning by exploring Earth systems and human-environment interactions through a variety of formats. Students will create annotated maps, climate data analyses, and an infographic poster; participate in a group project simulating Earth processes; write a case study report on human impacts on the environment; and engage in a video-based seminar discussion. These activities integrate skills in research, data analysis, spatial reasoning, visual design, and oral communication, culminating in a deeper understanding of how Earth's systems interact and shape both natural landscapes and human societies.

Discussion

Discussion posts are an essential part of the course, designed to help students reflect on Earth system science topics, apply concepts to real-world scenarios, and engage in meaningful dialogue with classmates. There are three discussion posts worth 50 points each.

Discussions have multiple deadlines, but may not appear in your Canvas to do list. Some reminders have already been added to the calendar, but you should always check the syllabus or Canvas assignment instructions for official due dates. During the week discussions are assigned, students will respond to a prompt with an initial post (200–300 words) due by Thursday and at least two replies to peers (75–150 words each) due by Sunday.

Quizzes

The quizzes will consist of multiple choice, true/false, and/or matching questions and are not cumulative. It is important that you have a good understanding of the material that has previously been covered, and a general understanding of the concepts covered in class. Do not focus on memorizing facts. To do well on the quizzes you need to pay attention in class, take good notes, and review those notes on a regular basis. It is your responsibility to complete the questions based on their due dates. If you miss a quiz, see the missed graded activity policy below, which will be strictly enforced. The lowest quiz grade will get dropped.

Exams

There is no final exam in this class; however you will have a final project.

Final Project

For the final assignment, you will compile a digital portfolio that includes all major assignments (Activities 1–5), revised based on instructor feedback. Along with the portfolio, you will write a 1,000-word reflective essay that explains what you have learned about Earth systems, how your skills (visual, written, quantitative, and collaborative) have developed, and how course content applies to real-world situations. The portfolio must be submitted as a single PDF, containing both the reflection and the revised assignments. Support materials, including a portfolio checklist, reflection prompts, and a formatting guide, will be provided.

Late Work Policy

Late work will be accepted up to two days following the established deadline and will only be worth half credit. If you will miss or be late for a graded activity like an exam or assignment and are seeking an **excused absence**, you must notify me in writing (e-mail is acceptable) prior to the time or date of the absence if such notification is feasible. In cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g., accident or emergency) you must provide notification by the end of the second working day after the absence. This notification must include an explanation of why notice could not be sent prior to the class. If the absence is considered excused by the university ([Student Rule 7](#)), you will need to provide me with hard-copy written documentation to then be able to make up for the missed activity. Illness confirmation must be from a health care professional and must state that you had a significant medical condition causing you to miss class on the date in question (not simply that you had an appointment and/or were seen). Because of the size of our class, I cannot make individual exceptions; only situations specifically listed in student rule 7.2 will be considered excused.

Work submitted by a student as makeup work for an excused absence is not considered late work and is exempted from the late work policy ([Student Rule 7](#)).

Online Course Layout

- **Weekly Modules** released every **Monday at 12:00 AM**. (starting May 27)
 - Engage with multimedia content (videos, readings, maps, datasets)
 - Participate in discussions and complete all required assessments
- **All assignments due Sunday at 11:59 PM**. (unless noted otherwise)
 - Discussions have multiple deadlines, but may not appear in your Canvas to do list. Some reminders have already been added to the calendar, but you should always check the syllabus or Canvas assignment instructions for official due dates. On the week they are assigned:
 - Initial Posts: due Thursdays
 - Responses: due Sundays

Course Communication

Online Office Hours

Topic: 25 SUMMER GEOG 203 199: PLANET EARTH OFFICE HOURS

Time: May 28, 2025 02:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Every week on Wed, until Jul 2, 2025, 6 occurrence(s)

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system: [Calendar](#)
[Reminder \(Weekly Meeting\)](#)

[Online Office Hours \(Tuesdays @ 2 p.m.\)](#)

Meeting ID: 947 7681 0847

Passcode: 488950

Announcements

I will also occasionally be sending messages with announcements, quiz and/or exam information, exciting planet earth happenings, or mistakes I inevitably make at some point. It is your responsibility to check your official @email.tamu.edu e-mail on a regular basis for potentially important announcements. When you contact me, you must use your official @email.tamu.edu e-mail; I cannot respond to messages from personal Gmail, Yahoo, iCloud, etc. accounts.

Email

You may expect an answer to all emails within 24 hours, Monday-Saturday. Do give me at least 24 hours before emailing the same question again. If you do not receive a response from me within three days, somehow I must have missed it. Please send or post it again and I will work to get you a response within 24 hours.

Course Schedule

Table 3. Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Topic	Key Concepts	Assignments & Activities
Week 1	May 27 – June 1	Earth in Balance: Exploring the Systems That Shape Our Planet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Systems thinking - Overview of Earth's spheres: atmosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere - Human-environment interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activity 1: Spatial Interpretation of Earth Systems (Due June 1) - Discussion 1: “Reading the Landscape”
Week 2	June 2 – June 8	Sky Above: Decoding the Atmosphere & Weather Patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Energy balance - Weather systems - Climate vs. weather - Global atmospheric circulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activity 2: Data analysis: Weather map interpretation - Quiz 1: Atmospheric processes (Due June 8) - Discussion 2: “Local Weather in a Global System”
Week 3	June 9 – June 15	Water World: The Hydrosphere & Climate Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hydrologic cycle - Ocean currents & climate - Water as a resource - Extreme weather (floods, droughts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activity 3 Lab: Global water distribution (GIS or map-based) - Discussion 3 - Case Study: Human impacts on water systems - Activity 4: Written analysis of regional hydrosphere event (Due June 15)
Week 4	June 16 – June 22	Shifting Ground: Landforms, Tectonics & Earth Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plate tectonics - Weathering, erosion, deposition - Landform classification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activity 5 - Virtual lab: Landform identification using satellite imagery - Quiz 2: Lithosphere processes (Due June 22)

Week	Dates	Topic	Key Concepts	Assignments & Activities
Week 5	June 23 – June 29	Life on Earth — The Biosphere & System Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biomes & ecosystems - Biodiversity and climate - Integrated sphere interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Final Project prep</i>: Choosing a region for Earth systems case study - Discussion 4: “What Makes an Earth System ‘Healthy’?” - Final Project: Final Portfolio & Reflection (Due June 30)

Course schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. If there is a need to change dates for exams or assignments, you will receive written notification via email or through Canvas.

How to do well in GEOG 203

We are covering a lot of different topics over the semester; your commitment to the course will ensure you aren’t missing concepts. Additionally, you need to pay attention and take good notes because active engagement in terms of listening, thinking, and writing, by hand, is an essential part of learning. Although you can use a computer or tablet to take notes, it is better to write your notes by hand; simply typing/transcribing the slide contents or my words is not an effective way of taking notes. You need to consciously listen, decide what is important, and then write that information in your own words. Either after each class or before each quiz and exam, rewrite your notes, emphasizing (by bolding, highlighting, and/or color-coordinating) key concepts. Review those notes on a regular basis because repetition helps you remember. If you end up missing class, make sure you get notes from at least two classmates (make friends with your seat neighbors!). Carefully review those notes in combination with the posted slides and come to my office hours with your questions.

Other Course Information

Copyright

The materials used in this course are copyrighted. These materials include but are not limited to the syllabus, quizzes, exams, slide content, in-class materials, handouts, and/or additional problem sets. Because these materials are copyrighted, you may not upload your class notes or any other course materials (e.g., this syllabus, any contents from lecture slides, quiz and/or exam questions) to note-sharing, flashcard, practice quiz/exam, or tutoring/student services websites. Unless you have an accommodation with disability resources, you may not take pictures of the slides during class. Doing any of the above constitutes not only copyright infringement but is also a violation of the Aggie honor code.

Class Attendance

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments. Please refer to Student Rule 7 in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines. It is your responsibility to know these rules and procedures. Because our quizzes and exams will be based entirely on the classroom lectures, attendance in mind and body is essential and in your own best interest.

Distractions

Do not come to class to sleep, surf the web, or message your friends. I will not hesitate to ask you to leave if you are disruptive. I'm sure if our roles were reversed you would expect the same courtesy of me. As a courtesy to me and your classmates, please put away your phones and switch them (and/or any other electronic noise-making devices) to silent mode before class. Phones are a distraction not only to you, but to others around you. Similarly, if you plan to use a laptop or tablet for notetaking, do not use it for other activities (surfing the internet, watching non-course related videos, etc.).

University Policies

Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments. Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor. Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#)). "The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#)). Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See [Student Rule 24](#).)

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

"Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case" ([Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#)).

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You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below)

Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

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Disability Resources is located in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit disability.tamu.edu.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see [University Rule 08.01.01.M1](#)):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University's goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

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Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS).

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University's [Title IX webpage](#).

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student's academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care by utilizing available resources and services on your campus

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Students who need someone to talk to can contact Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) or call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988) or at 988lifeline.org