

Course Information

Course Number: GEOG 305
Course Title: **Geography of Texas**
Section: 500
Time: MWF 10:20-11:10
Location: O&M 112 (Aggiemap bldg.# 0443)
Credit Hours: 3

Instructor Details

Instructor: **Erik Prout** (Instructional Associate Professor)
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Office Hours: M 12:30-1:30, W 9-10 (other times by appointment)

Course Description

Geography 305 is an introductory course in regional geography that examines the cultural and physical geography of Texas. Geography as a discipline inquires about the fundamental relationships between people, places, and environments. The purpose of this course is to explore the diverse geographies of Texas as well as introduce some important geographical concepts such as region and landscape. As you are aware, Texas has a strong regional personality—maybe more identifiable than any other American region—therefore it is important to discuss how "Texas" is represented and interpreted by the world at large.

The successful outcome of this course, which is my goal, is to (1) facilitate your understanding of the various cultural and ecological contexts found in Texas, (2) increase your knowledge and proficiency in Texan place-names and regions including their relative locations, (3) develop a dialogue of Texas in regards to landscape & representation, and (4) convey the importance of intellectual pursuits that construct geographical places, regions, and ideas.

Course Prerequisites

None

There are no prerequisites for this course, so there is no presumption of prior geographical study. I assume all university students are capable and willing to learn. You must take responsibility for your learning by watching lectures, interacting with other students, completing assignments, reading textbooks, and above all else evaluating your own learning and trying to improve.

Special Course Designation

GEOG 305 is a core curriculum (CORE) in the Foundational component area: Language, Philosophy, and Culture, and there are activities that support the designation.

Language, Philosophy & Culture

Courses in this category focus on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience. Courses involve the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures. Students will produce a Landscape Project that depicts their hometowns or a cross sectional exploration of various places in Texas.

1. Critical Thinking: creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
 1. In addition to exams, students will conduct self-directed photography and design a portfolio about their hometowns or exploration route.
2. Communication: effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.
 1. Students will produce an individual visual and textual portfolio,
 2. An oral and visual presentation, and
 3. A recorded discussion with peer groups.
3. Social Responsibility: intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.
 1. Students will be prompted to write and describe the collective responsibility for continuity and change of the important social components of their communities,
 2. Students will be assessed if they reflect on the communal aspects of preservation of place.
4. Personal Responsibility: ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision- making.
 1. Students will be prompted to write and discuss their individual responsibility towards preserving and evolving hometowns.
 2. Students will be assessed if they reflect on individual action and possible biases towards hometowns.

Course Learning Outcomes

Learning Objectives: (1) Students will be able to identify the significant geographic features and patterns of Texas, as indicated on a variety of contemporary and historic maps. (2) Students will be able to explain the causes and consequences of these features and patterns in terms of cultural, economic, political, and physical processes. (3) Students will be able to interpret the cultural significance of selected landscapes and landscape representations. (4) Students will be able to delineate the culture regions of Texas and describe their origin and character.

Textbook and/or Resource Materials

The following resources will be **REQUIRED** to successfully pass this course.

1. **Geography of Texas: People / Places / Patterns**. Erik Prout. Kendall/Hunt Publishers, 2012. {ISBN# 978-0-7575-9741-1}.
Textbook access is built-in to registration (details to be announced in class)
 Integrated components of course are part of the textbook.
 Also available as a hardcopy; publisher sells e-textbooks (non-registered)
 Hardcopy Reserve: <https://catalog.library.tamu.edu/Record/in00003389090>
2. **Texas Almanac**, Recent edition is the 2024-2025. {ISBN# 978-1-62511-075-6}.
(much of the Almanac is online; there may be access fees for complete access)
official e-text version of Almanac {ISBN# 978-1-62511-076-3}
3. **Access to internet/web:**
Canvas (for official announcements & evaluation results; outside readings)
4. Soft lead pencil for in person exams; personal computing device for remote exams.
5. Maps of Texas (acquire on your own from websites, readings, etc.).
6. Equipment and supplies associated with project and portfolio materials.

Grading Policy

I use a total point scheme for grading. Every evaluation (examination and exercise) has a set value of points, and the final grade is determined from the total number of points accumulated. The primary sources of points are from the exams— 75% of the possible 1000 points: the three midterm exams are worth 200 points (best two out of three) and the final exam is worth 350 points. The remaining 25% or 250 points consists of a landscape project with photography, cinematic, or alternative term paper options (more details about this graded activity can be found on course website). Landscape project deliverables include a portfolio (visual—200 points), recorded presentation (oral—25 points), and recorded group discussion (discourse—25 points).

The midterm exams will be in class with scantrons. The final exam is in person and requires a usable scantron. More details will be clarified beforehand, and measures will conform to new student guidelines to have technology.

The final grade is based on the total points and ranking of your points, not the percentage of points. There is no rounding up of points. For a large class section, 900/800/700/600 of the possible 1000 points can be used as an approximate guide for A/B/C/D thresholds. I reserve the right to modify the thresholds downward after evaluating the entire class and the point distribution. Until then, assume the following:

- A 90% (900-1000 points) work that is excellent
- B 80% (800-899 pts) work is above average / above the Mean
- C 70% (700-799 pts) work that is average performance
- D 60% (600-699 pts) work is below average (still a pass)
- F <60% (0-599 points) work that does not merit credit
- *Pass/Fail is not a grading option for this course*
- *Incompletes are by department policy for students with only 1 major component missing*

Late Work Policy

- Excused absences are by university policy! Any examination date or due-date missed is a tentative zero (see schedule). Exam day emergencies require immediate notification (a phone call or email to me, the Department of Geography, or an appropriate university official) and written verification of emergency promptly to my office. Alternative evaluations may be essay oriented at my discretion.
- The Course Projects can be turned in early, so any late submission will be deducted by 10% per day.
- Late work policies adhere to [Student Rule 7](#), including the use of protocols for isolation and quarantine as excused absences. *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 of deductions; this must be agreed and delivered within 30 days.*

Syllabus Statement Regarding Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is a cornerstone of the University. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning.¹ Each faculty member is entitled to full freedom in the classroom discussing the subject which the faculty member teaches.² Texas A&M will not penalize or discipline members of the faculty because of their exercise of academic freedom.

Along with this freedom comes responsibility. It is the responsibility of faculty members to ensure that topics discussed are related to the classroom subject. Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.³ It is not the proper role of the university or any outside agency to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive.⁴ Engaging with new ideas and perspectives helps students grow intellectually and is beneficial to the educational process.

Course Schedule

PART ONE – Introduction to the Geography of Texas

Week 1

- *First day of class, (M 1/13 Howdy)*
- Defining Texas
- Geo-ideas and Texas

Week 2

- *M 1/20 (MLK); no class*
- Regional Geography & Maps
- Hometown Survey (F 1/24)*

PART TWO – Historical and Cultural Geography of Texas

Columbian Exchange

Week 3

- Culture History;
- Historical Geography of Texas: Native, Spanish, Mexican, and Republic of Texas
- Practice Quiz (F 1/31)*

Week 4

Cultural Geography: Language and Religion;

Week 5

- Cultural Landscape: Ranching, Courthouse Squares, and Cemeteries
- Landscape Projects intents (F 2/14)*

Week 6

• **MIDTERM EXAM I, (W 2/19)** **200**

PART THREE – Physical Geography of Texas

Physical Geography of Texas

Week 7

- Physiography / Physical Regions
- Climate and the Gulf;

Week 8

- Vegetation and Wildlife
- Hydrology, Energy, Agriculture

Week 9 – Spring Break

Week 10

Environmental Resources / Hazards

• **MIDTERM EXAM II, (F 3/21)** **200**

Week 11

PART FOUR – Modern Human Geography of Texas

Demography and Population growth;

Week 12

Urban systems and cities

Week 13

Texas Society: Political and Economic Geographies

Week 14

Leisure Geographies: tourism

• **Landscape Projects Due, (W 4/16)** **250**

- *F 4/18 no class (reading day)*

Week 15

MIDTERM EXAM III, (W 4/23)
(200)
PART FIVE – Conclusion to the Geography of Texas

Popular regions

Week 16

Future geographies; conclusion

 — *last class T 4/29 (redefined Friday)*
Week 17 (final exam schedule)
• FINAL EXAM
350
Monday, May 5 (8:00–10:00)

University Policies

Faculty Senate established the wording of these 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 [Links to an external site.](#)

College and Department Policies

College of Arts and Sciences and Geography Department currently do not have any additional policies and minimum syllabus requirements. The Geography Department is on the 8th floor of the O&M Building; the Geoscience Career Center, Geography Academic Advisor, and Environmental Programs Academic Advisor are on the first floor of the O&M Building. College of Arts and Sciences and its advisors, helpers, etc. are in the Academic Building.

Optional Course Information Items

Technology Support – Use university support services for Canvas, Howdy, Zoom, and mediasite issues. *Open Access Labs, main Help Desk, etc.*

Textbook Support – Use the Kendall Hunt for electronic textbook issues.