

# Course Information

Course Number: GEOG 380

Course Title: Workshop in Environmental Studies

Section: 299

Location: Online

Credit Hours: 3

## Instructor Details

Instructor: Dr. Shobha Yadav

Office: OMB 814C

Phone: 979-458-2587

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Office Hours: Fridays, 11:00 am - 12:00 pm via Zoom (link will be shared on request)

## Course Description

This workshop explores key concepts in human-environment geography, emphasizing the dynamic interactions between human activities and natural systems. Students will examine how processes such as urbanization, agriculture, infrastructure development, deforestation, and resource extraction transform physical landscapes. Through interactive assessment and real-world case studies, students will investigate changes in landforms and ecosystems while cultivating spatial awareness and critical thinking. Additionally, the workshop will support the development of essential scientific writing skills, with a focus on clarity, organization, and evidence-based analysis. GEOG 380 is designed as an upper-level undergraduate course.

An online class allows you to learn **independently** at your own pace, from anywhere and at any time. Still, to achieve your academic goals, it is important to remain engaged with the class. To do so, I recommend **logging on many times per day** to see who has posted in course forums, checking for updates, and keeping informed of upcoming deadlines. Use your virtual classroom visits to **contribute to ongoing discussions** (take advantage of anonymity), check your progress in the course, stay on track, and ask any questions you might have. Also, you can work and study with a classmate – take the time to locate someone and **buddy up, either virtually or in real life!** Lastly, **set deadlines for your work and stick to them.** One week of missed work can be difficult to make up. If necessary, schedule a set number of hours per week that you devote to the class.

## Course Prerequisites

GEOG 330

## Special Course Designation

None.

## Course Learning Outcomes

At the end of this workshop, students will be able to:

- a. Identify case studies of environmental change influenced by human behavior.
- b. Evaluate the role of scale, place, and context in human-environment relationships.
- c. Practice scientific writing skills: summarizing literature, developing a research question, and organizing evidence.
- d. Communicate findings using maps, visuals, and reflective responses.

General learning outcomes: (1) Critical Thinking Skills – creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information; (2) Communication Skills – effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication; (3) Empirical and Quantitative Skills – the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions; (4) Personal Responsibility – the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making, and (5) Social Responsibility – intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

## Readings and Multimedia

Required readings and supplemental materials will be assigned throughout the semester. These will be made available as PDF files or links on Canvas.

## Course Requirements and Assignments

The course is split into **5 themes (a new topic every week)**, and each topic is split into **many topics/lectures**. All teaching materials (lectures, videos, texts, and exercises) will be displayed in Canvas. This course is completely online, and you are expected to work at your own pace through the 5 main modules.

**Course start-up items** | To get a sense of who you will be learning with in this course, I have a discussion board for you to post a little about yourself. Please note that these start-up course items also serve to certify your attendance. This assignment is graded and worth 5% of your grade (25 points).

**Weekly Activity** | Weeks 2-5: Working individually, you will work on activities related to course lectures and readings. It is worth 30% of your grade. (150 points in total) The activities will be drawn from peer-reviewed literature and popular media. There will be one activity each week. You are expected to read deeply, think critically, and take careful notes. You are required to submit a short-written reflection to assess your engagement with the material. Weekly activity will be provided through the Weekly Activity modules on Canvas. Late assignments ARE NOT ACCEPTED—firm deadline.

**Final Mini-Research Paper** | Each student will independently research a topic related to human-induced environmental change. You will analyze a specific case of landscape transformation (e.g.,

deforestation, urbanization, agriculture, or resource extraction), use geospatial tools to visualize it, and write a 5–7-page paper that integrates scholarly sources, data analysis, and critical thinking. Students are expected to clearly articulate how human activities alter natural systems and to communicate these insights using scientific writing conventions. The Mini Research Paper is the academic core of this course, worth 45% of your final grade (225 points). It is a scaffolded research and writing assignment that builds your ability to conduct a literature-based inquiry into a human-environment issue of your choice. Through a structured sequence of components, this assignment will guide you from topic selection to a final research paper that reflects critical thinking, scholarly engagement, and clear scientific communication. The details can be found on Canvas.

**Quizzes** | There will be two online quizzes during the semester, each worth 45 points, contributing a total of 90 points (18%) toward the final grade. The quizzes will consist of multiple-choice and true/false questions based on assigned readings, lecture materials, and weekly activities. Each quiz will be administered online through the course's learning management system and will be available for completion anytime over 24 hours. Students may log in and take the quiz at any point during that day, but once they begin, they will need to complete it within a fixed time limit (e.g., 45 minutes). The first quiz, scheduled around Week 4, will cover content from the first half of the course, while the second quiz, around Week 6 (last week), will focus on the second half of the course. These quizzes are designed to reinforce key concepts, encourage consistent review, and assess students' understanding in a flexible, accessible format. More information will be provided later through Canvas.

**Zoom Meeting** | You are required to schedule and attend a **one-on-one Zoom meeting** with the instructor during the third week. You will be provided with several options to choose a **day and time that works best for you**. This meeting is an opportunity to ask questions and receive **individualized feedback on your paper draft**. Please come prepared with specific questions or concerns you'd like to discuss. The feedback you receive should be carefully incorporated into your final paper. It is **your responsibility to email the instructor** to schedule this meeting. This activity is **worth 10 points**, accounting for **2% of your final grade**, and is a required component of the course.

## Grading Policy

This 3-credit course uses a 500-point grading system. The structure emphasizes research, sustained engagement, and scientific communication.

Items	Points	Percentage
Course start-up “Self-Introduction”	25	5%
Weekly activity (4 activities)	150	30%
Mini Research Paper	225	45%
Quiz (2x45points)	90	18%
Zoom Meeting (2%)	10	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Grading scale

The grading scale follows the Texas A&M University grading system:

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

## Late Work Policy

No late assignments will be accepted. 10% of the total possible points will be deducted for each day the work is late unless you have an excused absence that adheres to Student Rule 7. See <https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07/>

Students seeking an excused absence for an exam must notify me in writing at least three days ahead of time. In cases where advance notification is not feasible, you must provide notification as soon as possible, and by the end of the second working day after the absence at the latest. If the absence is considered excused by the university (<http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07>), you will be able to make up the missed exam. ***Computer issues are not a valid excuse for not completing the assigned task on time.***

## Communications Policy

My office hours are the best way to get answers to your questions. You are officially invited and encouraged to come to office hours to discuss any aspect of this course. If you can't make office hours, email me to set up a separate appointment.

I use discussion boards to address frequently asked questions about upcoming assignments. Students should post to these discussion boards, come to office hours, or set up appointments rather than emailing me with specific questions. This approach allows frequently asked questions to receive a quick, consistent response. I will respond to all posts within one business day. If you have a question, it's likely others do, too. Ask away!

This course has the following policies regarding emails to the instructor:

- ***Please include “GEOG 380” in the subject heading of your email.*** I use filters to sort the large volume of emails I receive. Using this subject heading will ensure your email is sorted correctly so that I can respond promptly.
- Provided you use the required subject heading, you can expect a response to your email within one business day.
- Students who email questions about assignments will be invited to come to office hours, arrange a Zoom appointment, or post on the appropriate Q&A discussion board.

## Internet Etiquette Expectations (“netiquette”)

In an online class, you will be strictly communicating through writing both to fellow students and to your instructors. It is imperative to communicate well, professionally, and with respect at all times. In other words, ***think before you write!***

## University Writing Center (UWC)

The University Writing Center (UWC) has trained peer consultants available to work with you on any kind of writing or speaking project, including research papers, lab reports, application essays, or creative writing, and at any stage of your process, whether you're deciding on a topic or reviewing your final draft. You can also get help with public speaking, presentations, and group projects. They can work with you in person at our Evans or BLCC locations or via Zoom or email. To schedule an appointment or to view our handouts, videos, or interactive learning modules, visit [writingcenter.tamu.edu](http://writingcenter.tamu.edu). If you have questions, need help making an appointment, or encounter difficulty accessing our services, call 979-458-1455 or email [uwc@tamu.edu](mailto:uwc@tamu.edu).

## Generative Artificial Intelligence Statement

With the increasing availability of generative AI tools, it's important that students use these technologies ethically and responsibly. In this course, you may use AI tools for idea exploration or drafting assistance, but all submitted work must be your own, original writing. Below are the rules and a template for proper documentation.

### Permitted Uses of AI Tools

- Brainstorming ideas or outlines
- Grammar or spelling suggestions
- Exploring alternative perspectives
- Generating visual aids (e.g., figures, maps, diagrams) for inspiration only

### Not Permitted

- Submitting AI-generated content without revision or attribution
- Using AI to write full paragraphs or essays
- Misrepresenting AI-generated content as your own original work

Violations may be considered academic misconduct under **Texas A&M University Student Rule 20**.

### How to Document AI Use in Assignments

Include the following information at the end of your assignment under a clearly labeled heading such as:

## "AI Use Statement"

**Template:**

**AI Tool Used:**

(e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly, DALL·E)

**Purpose of Use:**

(e.g., brainstormed initial ideas, checked for grammar, explored counterarguments)

**How It Contributed to Your Work:**

(e.g., I used ChatGPT to generate sample outlines. I paraphrased and revised all content myself.)

**What I Wrote Myself:**

(e.g., The final submission is entirely in my own words, informed by AI suggestions but written independently.)

## Citation Example (APA Format)

OpenAI. (2023). ChatGPT (May 3 version) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com/>

**In-text citation:** (OpenAI, 2023)

## Course Schedule

Major tasks with due dates and a list of module topics are provided below. All items are due at 11:59 pm CST on the due date. As an instructor, I reserve the right to change the course schedule or content as needed, depending on the pace of the class. You will be notified of any changes to the syllabus through an announcement on Canvas. **You are expected to check Canvas frequently to stay on top of deadlines and announcements.**

### Course Topics and Tentative Schedule: Summer Term II 2025

Week	Date	Expectation from Instructor	Expectations from Students
Week 1	July 2nd	➤ Introduction and discussion of the syllabus and instructions on the “Self-Introduction Assignment”. ➤ Instructions on the expectation for “Paper Topic Selection”	July 5 <sup>th</sup> - “Self-Introduction Assignment” is due. Check Canvas for the instructions.
	July 3rd		

<b>Week 2</b>	July 7 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Lecture on “How to write a scientific paper- Part I”</li> <li>➤ Lecture on “Paper outline &amp; in-text citation &amp; bibliography”</li> <li>➤ Lecture on “Environmental Problems and Their Cause?”</li> <li>➤ Lecture on “Lecture on “Sustainability”</li> <li>➤ Feedback and discussion on topic selection</li> </ul>	July 7 <sup>th</sup> - “Paper Topic Selection” Assignment due. Check Canvas for the instructions.
	July 8 <sup>th</sup>		July 11 <sup>th</sup> - Visualizing Change – Before & After Mapping assignment due. Check Canvas for the instructions.
	July 9 <sup>th</sup>		
	July 10 <sup>th</sup>		
	July 11 <sup>th</sup>		
<b>Week 3</b>	July 14 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Lecture on “Lecture on Writing Tips”</li> <li>➤ Meeting with students on “Paper Draft Write-up” through Zoom</li> <li>➤ You will meet with your instructor through Zoom once this week. This is a one-on-one meeting. You will be given options to choose the day and time convenient for you to meet. You should prepare your set of questions to ask the instructor face-to-face. The instructor will give you feedback on your paper draft. You should incorporate this feedback into your final paper. It is your responsibility to email the instructor and set a time for a Zoom meeting</li> </ul>	July 14 <sup>th</sup> - “Paper Outline Assignment” is due. Check Canvas for the instructions.
	July 15 <sup>th</sup>		
	July 16 <sup>th</sup>		
	July 17 <sup>th</sup>		
	July 18 <sup>th</sup>		July 18 <sup>th</sup> Discussion Prompt due on Canvas. Check Canvas for the instructions.
<b>Week 4</b>	July 21 <sup>st</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Lecture on “System Complexity”</li> <li>➤ Lecture on “Trees”</li> <li>➤ Lecture on “Wildfire”</li> <li>➤ Lecture on “Land Use and Land Cover Change”</li> <li>➤ Feedback and discussion on the</li> </ul>	July 21 <sup>st</sup> - “Paper Draft Assignment” is due. Check Canvas for the instructions.
	July 22 <sup>nd</sup>		
	July 23 <sup>rd</sup>		
	July 24 <sup>th</sup>		
	July 25 <sup>th</sup>		July 25 <sup>th</sup> - “Environmental Podcast Response Assignment” is due. Check Canvas for the instructions.

		Paper Draft	
<b>QUIZ I on 23rd July</b>			
<b>Week 5</b>	July 28 <sup>th</sup> July 29 <sup>th</sup> July 30 <sup>th</sup> July 31 <sup>st</sup> Aug 1 <sup>st</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Lecture on “How to write a scientific paper- Part II: Data analysis and Results”</li> <li>➤ Lecture on “Impact of Land Use and Land Cover Change on Weather and Climate”</li> <li>➤ Lecture on “Research Communication”</li> <li>➤ Lecture on “Tools and Methods Used in Environmental Study”</li> <li>➤ Lecture on “Evaluating the Role of Scale, Place, and Context in Human-Environment Relationships”</li> </ul>	August 1 <sup>st</sup> - Reflective Writing Prompt on Readings Assignment due. See the details on Canvas.
<b>QUIZ II on 6<sup>th</sup> August</b>			
<b>Week 6</b>	August 4 <sup>th</sup> August 5 <sup>th</sup> August 6 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Work on your Final Paper and Quiz II</li> </ul>	August 4 <sup>th</sup> - Final paper due. See the details on Canvas.

\*Note: This outline is only a guide. You should expect departures from this outline.

## Copyright

The materials provided in this course are protected by copyright. As such, you are not permitted to upload your class notes or any other course materials to note-sharing or tutoring websites. Doing so violates both copyright law and the Aggie Honor Code.

## University Policies

This section outlines the university-level policies. The TAMU 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](#)).

### **Texas A&M at College Station**

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

### **Texas A&M at College Station**

*Disability Resources is located in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit [disability.tamu.edu](http://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.

### **Texas A&M at College Station**

*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.

## Campus-Specific Policies

### Statement on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records by limiting access to these records, to establish the right of students to inspect and review their educational records and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through informal and formal hearings. Currently enrolled students wishing to withhold any or all directory information items may do so by going to [howdy.tamu.edu](http://howdy.tamu.edu) and clicking on the "Directory Hold Information" link in the Student Records channel on the MyRecord tab. The complete [\*\*FERPA Notice to Students\*\*](#) and the student records policy are available on the Office of the Registrar webpage.

Items that can never be identified as public information are a student's social security number, citizenship, gender, grades, GPR or class schedule. All efforts will be made in this class to protect your privacy and to ensure confidential treatment of information associated with or generated by your participation in the class.

Directory items include name, UIN, local address, permanent address, email address, local telephone number, permanent telephone number, dates of attendance, program of study (college, major, campus), classification, previous institutions attended, degrees honors and awards received, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, medical residence location and medical residence specialization.