

# Introduction to Environmental Geography

## Geography 125 (201 - Online)

Fall 2013

3 credits

This course fulfills the Natural Science General Education Requirement (non-lab). It is not open to graduate students for credit.

Prerequisites: none.



|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Instructor:      | <b>Dr. Ryan Holifield</b>                              |
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| Office Hours:    | Tuesday and Thursday 1-3 pm <i>or by appointment</i>   |

## Introduction to the course

We all care about the Earth's environment. We also all know that there are serious environmental problems, the solutions to which are seldom easy to find. We've come to think of some of these problems—like climate change—as “global,” and others—like pollution in Lake Michigan or the Milwaukee River—as “local.” We've often heard that the best way to address environmental problems is to “think globally, act locally.”



But the geography of environmental problems and solutions is more complicated than “global vs. local.” Although a growing number of environmental issues affect all of us, they affect us in different and unequal ways, depending on where we live and how we engage with the environment that surrounds us. The causes of environmental problems are also geographically complex—and so the solutions will be as well.

Consider climate change. We think of this as a global problem, but the problem is always generated (or exacerbated) locally: emissions from particular highways or factories, clearcuts of particular forest areas, policies belonging to particular cities or countries. At the same time, people in Niger or Kiribati will be affected very differently by climate change than people in Milwaukee. (Don't know where Niger and Kiribati are? You will by the end of the semester!) The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the study of this complex geography. We will pay particular attention to the

environmental geography of Milwaukee, seeking to understand its connections with and differences from other places.

Although understanding physical and environmental processes is central to the course, Geography 125 is not *simply* a natural science course. Environmental geography concerns the interactions between humans and their non-human environments. One of the fundamental principles of this course is that environmental dynamics are inseparable from social, cultural, political, and economic processes and relations. Understanding the interrelatedness of environmental change and social/cultural processes—and specifically, issues of *urban environmental justice, inequality, and sustainability*—will be the focus of many of the assignments and discussions in the course. We will be particularly interested in how communities in and around the city of Milwaukee experience environmental problems and solutions in different and unequal ways. A primary aim of the course is to enable you to become a more aware, informed, and thoughtful environmental citizen, whether this course is the first step in an environmental career or the only geography or environmental studies course you ever take.

## **Required materials and technology**

### ***Textbook***

We will use the following **required** textbook for this class:

**Marsh, William M. and Grossa, John, Jr. *Environmental Geography: Science, Land Use, and Earth Systems*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2005.**



The textbook is available at the UWM Bookstore and through online vendors – it is also available for rental at a reasonable rate from some online vendors (such as [www.chegg.com](http://www.chegg.com)). To compare prices, check [http://www.bestwebbuys.com/Environmental\\_Geography-ISBN\\_9780471482802.html?isrc=b-search](http://www.bestwebbuys.com/Environmental_Geography-ISBN_9780471482802.html?isrc=b-search). If you order online, make sure you order the **3<sup>rd</sup> edition**. There will also be a copy of the book available on reserve in the library.

Occasionally we will read short essays and articles on environmental issues, all of which will be available through D2L. Another important component of the class will be video case studies from Annenberg Media (*The Habitable Planet, Earth Revealed, The Power of Place*), the New York Times, PBS, and other sources.

## Course learning objectives, assessments, and grading

By the end of the semester, you should be able to do the following:

| Learning Objective   | Assessment  | Percentage of Grade                       |
|--|---|---|
| <b>1. Demonstrate knowledge of basic concepts in environmental geography and related disciplines.*</b>   | 14 of 16 Online Quizzes   | 50% total                                 |
| <b>2. Explain the relationship between a set of environmental data and theoretical explanations for its geographic distribution.*</b>  | Project 1: Environmental Equity Mapping/Analysis Exercise (Quiz and Discussion)   | 10% total                                 |
| <b>3. Identify and discuss the limitations and ambiguities of a set of environmental data and the possibility of alternative interpretations.*</b>   | [See #2 above]  | [See #2 above]                            |
| <b>4. Explain how, by virtue of their distinctive and uneven geographies, different human communities and populations are related differently and unequally to the causes and effects of environmental problems.</b> | Introductory Discussion, Quiz, and Orientation Activities<br><br>5 of 6 Online Discussions ( <i>in addition to</i> Intro and Project 1 discussions) | 2.5% total<br><br>17.5% total (3.5% each) |
| <b>5. Analyze the geographic dimensions (e.g., scale, connectivity across space, etc.) of environmental problems and solutions in a particular location.</b>   | Project 2: Tracing Environmental Geographies OR Service Learning  | 20% total                                 |
| <b>6. Evaluate the limitations to solutions to environmental problems in a particular location, and suggest possible alternatives.</b>   | [See #5 above]  | [See #5 above]                            |

\* Based on required objectives for Natural Sciences GER courses (non-field/non-lab).

## ***Grading information***

1. **INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION, QUIZ, AND ORIENTATION ACTIVITIES (2.5%):** During the first few days of the course, you will (1) post to a “personal introduction” discussion forum (with a bonus point opportunity), (2) create a link to your project 2 blog (see below), and (3) take a quiz on the syllabus and a D2L site “scavenger hunt.” The 2.5% is divided equally among these three activities.
2. **DISCUSSIONS (17.5%):** *In addition to* the Mapping Exercise Discussion (see below) and the Personal Introduction Discussion, you will submit 6 discussion posts to online small group discussion forums, and you will also post responses to classmates (see the calendar below for details).
  - I will drop your lowest score from among the six regular discussions *and* the Mapping Exercise discussion (see below). So only the best six out of the seven discussion grades will count.
  - Your posts will be responses to specific discussion questions based on assigned readings, video case studies, or other online resources.
  - Your grades will be based on a rubric posted on D2L.
3. **QUIZZES (50%):** You will take 16 online D2L chapter quizzes during the semester (1 per week, except during finals week, when you’ll take two), which will include a combination of multiple choice, true/false, and matching questions.
  - The quizzes will be based primarily on the textbook readings and reading guides found on the D2L site. Some will include questions on video/Internet case studies as well.
  - I will drop your two lowest scores, so only your best fourteen scores will count.
  - You can take each quiz up to two times, and your best grade on each quiz will count. There will be different questions on the quiz each time you take it.
  - The final quiz will include a set of identifications on a world map; I will let you know ahead of time which locations you will need to identify.
4. **PROJECT 1: MAPPING EXERCISE (10%):** You will complete an online mapping and geographic analysis exercise, for which you will find detailed instructions on the D2L site. The exercise, which focuses on the topic of environmental equity and justice, consists of two components:
  - a. A D2L quiz worth 65% of the assignment grade (6.5% of your final grade). Each individual will take the quiz; you may take it as many times as you want before the deadline (so only your best score counts), but you may not take it after the deadline.
  - b. Answers to two questions for critical reflection (35% of the assignment grade, or 3.5% of the final grade). For this part, you will post your answers and respond to at least one classmate in a small group D2L discussion forum. Your grades will be based on the rubric posted on D2L.

5. **PROJECT 2: TRACING ENVIRONMENTAL GEOGRAPHIES OR SERVICE LEARNING (20%)**: For this project, for which you will find detailed instructions on the D2L site, you will submit four posts to a blog. Each of the four blog posts will be worth 5% of your grade. Your grades will be based on the rubric posted on D2L. You will choose one of the two following options – you’ll find more information about both on the D2L site:

**Option 1:** “Tracing Environmental Geographies”: this option involves researching and tracing the environmental impacts of a meal or a consumer item.

**Option 2:** “Service Learning”: this option involves completing and reflecting on 10 hours of service learning with a Milwaukee-area environmental organization.

## ***Grading Policy***

See the following site for official UWM policy on grades and grading:

<http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/policies/saap/upload/S29.htm>.

### ***Guide to grades***

|         |    |        |    |
|---------|----|--------|----|
| 93-100% | A  | 73-75% | C  |
| 90-92%  | A- | 70-72% | C- |
| 86-89%  | B+ | 66-69% | D+ |
| 83-85%  | B  | 63-65% | D  |
| 80-82%  | B- | 60-62% | D- |
| 76-79%  | C+ | 0-59%  | F  |

**I (Incomplete):** See the University policy on incompletes at the following link:

<http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S31.pdf>.

If you take the class pass-fail (S/U), you must get the equivalent of at least a “C” to earn an “S” in the course.

## Can I have an extension? A note on special consideration

Please don't ask for extensions, make-up assignments, or extra credit. Here's UWM's policy on "special consideration," which I strive to follow closely

(<http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/policies/saap/upload/S29.htm>):

**Special Consideration.** The principle of equal treatment of all students shall be a fundamental guide in responding to requests for special consideration. *No student should be given an opportunity to improve a grade that is not made available to all members of the class.* This policy is not intended to exclude reasonable accommodation of verified student disability, or the completion of work missed as the result of religious observance, verified illness, or justified absence due to circumstances beyond the student's control.

**Comments:** This policy applies to requests for special consideration both before and after a course is completed (See also Grade or Record Changes). It is usually impossible to make opportunities for grade improvement available to all students in a course after the course has ended. *Examples of unacceptable opportunities for an individual student include extra work, retaking an examination, taking an extra examination, or an extension of time on an assignment or examination. The policy on incompletes (UWM Select Policies and Procedures, S-31) explains the circumstances in which a student may be given extra time for the completion of a course.* This policy should reassure students who are not seeking special consideration and it should also protect instructors from student pressure for special consideration.

## Expectations: work load and participation in an online course

**Work load:** It's important for you to understand that even though you will not attend class in a physical classroom, the work load for an online course is just as heavy as you would expect from a conventional class. Although the amount of time spent per week will vary from student to student, as a rough estimate you can expect to spend 8 to 10 hours per week on the class.

Here's how you can expect to spend your time in a typical week:

- 2-3 hours reading and answering reading guide questions from your textbook
- 1-2 hours viewing video clips and reading 2-3 short lectures (most will be available as Word documents or PDF files)
- 1-1.5 hours preparing for and taking your online quiz
- 2-3 hours preparing and posting your short responses, project journals (including research and/or service learning, depending on your choice), mapping exercise component, and final project

You will be responsible for managing your time in order to complete your work. Since this is often a challenge for students in an online course, I'll provide occasional tips and reminders to help you. If time management and organization are major problems for you, you may wish to consider enrolling in the face to face version of this course instead.

Federal law now requires university instructors to state the amount of time an average student can expect to spend on different class components during the entire semester:

| Estimated time for course components, Fall 2013             | Hours      |
|---|------------|
| Reading textbook and answering questions                    | 45         |
| Viewing video clips and lectures                            | 30         |
| Preparing for and taking online quizzes                     | 24         |
| Completing other assignments (see above)                    | 45         |
| <b>Total for semester (@3 credits x 48 hrs/credit hour)</b> | <b>144</b> |

**Participation:** Many of you have taken courses before in which you could sit back and learn more or less passively—just listening and taking notes, for instance. In contrast, online courses *require* active participation. The discussion forums and assignments play a central role in this course, and you don't have the option of sitting quietly in the back of the room. I expect you not just to participate in each discussion, but to engage thoughtfully with your classmates, with me, and with the materials you will be reading and viewing. If you strongly prefer a passive learning style, online learning may not be for you—but if you are willing to participate fully, you may find that you are one of the many students who thrive in online settings.

In order to be successful in this class, you should

- Be able to communicate effectively in writing
- Enjoy learning independently
- Be prepared to work through technical problems and difficulties
- Establish a personal schedule to manage your time effectively
- Be prepared to work just as hard as you would in a conventional class (if not harder)
- Be able to meet deadlines
- Have strong reading skills
- Be able to use a personal computer and the Internet

For more info on online learning, check out the following site:

[http://campus.arbor.edu/ma\\_com/online\\_learner.html](http://campus.arbor.edu/ma_com/online_learner.html)

### ***Penalties for late work***

To be fair to students who turn their work in on time, **you will not receive credit for quizzes or assignments submitted late**, unless a documented medical or personal emergency arises. Please contact the instructor immediately if an emergency arises and you know you will have a problem turning your work in on time.

Please note that “the D2L site didn’t work” is not an acceptable excuse for a late assignment; you are responsible for making sure your assignment reaches the discussion forum, dropbox, etc. You should email the instructor immediately—and before the assignment is due—if you have technical difficulties submitting your assignment to the D2L site.

## ***Technological requirements***

### ***Course site:***

You will gain access to lectures, quizzes, assignments, discussions, and exams through the course D2L site: <http://d2l.uwm.edu/>. In order to reach the site, simply log in using your Panther ID and password, and then follow the instructions to find the course site. If you need help getting access to the site or to D2L, please use the UWM Help Desk (available by phone **7 a.m.–midnight, seven days a week**), which should be your first point of contact for any technical issues you encounter:

Help Desk web site: <http://www4.uwm.edu/technology/help/campus/index.cfm>

Help Desk Telephone: (414) 229-4040 (or outside the Milwaukee metro area, 1-877-381-3459)

Submit Help Request: <http://www4.uwm.edu/technology/help/campus/gettechhelp.cfm> (or email [help@uwm.edu](mailto:help@uwm.edu))

Help Desk Location: Bolton 225

New Student Checklist for technology: [http://www4.uwm.edu/technology/new\\_student.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/technology/new_student.cfm).

### ***Hardware and Internet connection:***

In order to take this class, you **must** have regular access to a computer that has a broadband connection, such as Time Warner Cable’s Roadrunner

(<http://www.timewarnercable.com/en/residential-home.html>) or AT&T’s DSL

(<http://www.att.com/shop/internet.html>), or a campus network connection to the Internet. *A dialup connection is insufficient to take this course.*

If you do not have a computer of your own, you will have to use the campus computer labs or possibly a public library. Otherwise, you can find UWM’s recommendations for personal computer specifications at the following site: <http://www4.uwm.edu/techstore/personal/hardware specifications.cfm>.

Please note that ***computer problems or lack of access to a computer with a high-speed Internet connection will not be acceptable excuses for missing due dates or failing to participate in discussion forums.*** You will need to access the course site **daily**. By taking an online course, you take on the responsibility of making sure you get prompt help from the Help Desk for all technical difficulties.

**Software:** The computer you use must have a basic word processing package such as Word for Windows, and you should know how to use it. You will also need to be able to view PowerPoint files, Adobe PDF files, Windows Media (.wmv) files, Real Player (.ram) files, and Flash Media (.swf) files. You can view all of these files using free downloads, and you’ll find links to all of these downloads on the D2L site in the “Links” section.

## Communicating with your instructor

The best way to reach me is via email ([holifiel@uwm.edu](mailto:holifiel@uwm.edu)). (**Note, though, that my last name is “Holifield,” not “Holifiel”!**) Although you shouldn’t expect a response within minutes, I generally check and respond to email frequently, and except in unusual circumstances (for instance, if I am out of town) I will answer you within 24 hours. I will let you know if I will be away from my email account for more than 24 hours.

In order to succeed in this course, you **must** check your UWM Pantherlink email account at least once daily and read all emails I send. (I will do my best not to bombard you with email, and I will never try to sell you any strange products.) You should put my email address in your address book and on your “safe senders” list.

UWM recommends that you do **not** forward your UWM email to a private email account, because private email providers sometimes block incoming UWM email. If you choose to use a private email account in spite of this recommendation, it will be your responsibility to set up the account to receive email forwarded from your Pantherlink account. I will not accept “I didn’t receive the email” as an excuse.

Here are some important guidelines for your emails to me—please observe them:

- Please put “Geog 125” in the subject header line. (continued next page)
- Please address your emails to me **by name** (most students prefer to address me as Professor Holifield or Dr. Holifield, but as long as you use my name I’m happy). Presumably many of you are preparing for professional careers, and you should compose email messages to your professors following professional conventions. I’ll think twice about responding to emails that simply say “Hey” or “Hi,” or include no salutation at all.
- Please consider the **tone** of your emails carefully. I’m happy to respond to polite questions or requests for information, but every semester I receive a small number of rude and inconsiderate emails. If you write the latter, I won’t hesitate to let you know.
- Please sign your emails by name. Otherwise I may reply to you as “rbh09478” or whatever your Panther ID happens to be.
- Here is a web site with very good suggestions for emailing professors:  
<http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>.

**Other options:** I have also set up a FAQ on the course D2L site. If you have a general question about the syllabus or course requirements, I strongly recommend that you check the FAQ first. I’m also happy to meet with you in person or talk with you on the phone (see my office hours on page 1). Please send me an email to set up an appointment to talk. If you have questions or concerns about the class, please do not hesitate to contact me.

## ***Conduct and “netiquette”***

In this class, we must work together to create a positive learning environment, and I expect you to respect the rights of other students to learn. I also expect you to acknowledge and respect the diversity of participants in the class. At times we will discuss controversial environmental issues in this course, and students in the class will not always be on the same side. Your task is not to “win” debates, and it is certainly not to dismiss some points of view, perspectives, or experiences as incorrect or irrelevant without considering them carefully and critically. On the contrary, you should seek to develop an understanding of the different positions in debates about the environment—including positions that differ from your own—and to challenge your own preconceptions. Even if you disagree with points of view expressed by your instructor, your teaching assistants, or your fellow students, as citizens of this class you are responsible for considering different points of view respectfully. The instructors will do the same.

Communicating in an online environment involves additional considerations. If you haven’t already, please take a look at the following guide to interacting with others online, known as “netiquette”:  
<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>.

## **Other university policies**

For the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s official policies on **disabilities, religious observances, active military duty, incompletes, discriminatory conduct, academic misconduct, complaint procedures, and grade appeal procedures**, please see the following web site:  
<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf>. Geography 125 adheres to all of these policies.

***Students with Disabilities:*** If you have a disability and need accommodations of any kind (e.g., a notetaker, special accommodations for tests), please see me and submit your VISA from the Student Accessibility Center ***within the first two weeks of the semester***. I’ll be happy to work with you to make any necessary arrangements. For more information, see the following:  
<http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/SACltr.pdf>.

***Religious observances:*** If you require accommodations for religious observances, I’m happy to work with you to make necessary arrangements. Please note that ***you are required to notify me within the first three weeks of the semester*** of the specific dates on which you will request relief from an examination or academic requirement: [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/acad+admin\\_policies/S1.5.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/acad+admin_policies/S1.5.htm).

***Academic misconduct:*** You are responsible for reading and following UWM guidelines on academic misconduct, including cheating and plagiarism: <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/OSL/DOS/conduct.html>. If any of the instructors suspects academic misconduct, we are required to follow the procedures described here: [http://www4.uwm.edu/acad\\_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm).

## Calendar

**Quiz, discussion, and project calendar (all quizzes and posts are due at 11:59 pm on the indicated deadline) – also see the “Printable due date calendar” on the D2L site**

| Week | Topic/assignment                      | Textbook | Quiz            | Deadline                            |
|------|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1    | Personal introduction discussion      |          |                 | Weds, Sept 4 and<br>Fri, Sept 6     |
| 1    | Create blog and post link             |          |                 | Fri, Sept 6                         |
| 1    | Introductory quiz (syllabus/D2L site) |          | Intro           | Mon, Sept 9*                        |
| 1    | Environment and sustainability        | Ch 1-2   | 1               | Mon, Sept 9                         |
| 2    | Regular discussion #1                 |          |                 | Tues, Sept 10 and<br>Thurs, Sept 12 |
| 2    | Geographic concepts                   | Ch 3     | 2               | Mon, Sept 16                        |
| 3    | Project Blog Post #1                  |          |                 | Tues, Sept 17                       |
| 3    | Global cycles and ecosystems          | Ch 4-5   | 3               | Mon, Sept 23                        |
| 4    | NO POST THIS WEEK                     |          |                 | [Tues, Sept 24]                     |
| 4    | "Frontier environments"               | Ch 6     | 4               | Mon, Sept 30                        |
| 5    | Regular discussion #2                 |          |                 | Tues, Oct 1 and<br>Thurs, Oct 3     |
| 5    | Human population                      | Ch 7     | 5               | Mon, Oct 7                          |
| 6    | Project Blog Post #2                  |          |                 | Tues, Oct 8                         |
| 6    | Agriculture, food, and hunger         | Ch 8     | 6               | Mon, Oct 14                         |
| 7    | Regular discussion #3                 |          |                 | Tues, Oct 15 and<br>Thurs, Oct 17   |
| 7    | Energy and environment                | Ch 9     | 7               | Mon, Oct 21                         |
| 8    | Regular discussion #4                 |          |                 | Tues, Oct 22 and<br>Thurs, Oct 24   |
| 8    | Atmosphere and climate                | Ch 10    | 8               | Mon, Oct 28                         |
| 9    | Mapping exercise Part I – quiz        |          | Map. Ex. Part I | Tue, Oct 29**                       |
| 9    | Mapping exercise Part II - discussion |          |                 | Tues, Oct 29 and<br>Thurs, Oct 31   |
| 9    | Air pollution                         | Ch 11    | 9               | Mon, Nov 4                          |
| 10   | Regular discussion #5                 |          |                 | Tues, Nov 5 and<br>Thurs, Nov 7     |
| 10   | Water resources                       | Ch 12    | 10              | Mon, Nov 11                         |
| 11   | Regular discussion #6                 |          |                 | Tues, Nov 12 and<br>Thurs, Nov 14   |

|    |                                 |       |    |                 |
|----|---------------------------------|-------|----|-----------------|
| 11 | Water pollution                 | Ch 13 | 11 | Mon, Nov 18     |
| 12 | Project Blog Post #3            |       |    | Tues, Nov 19    |
| 12 | Hazardous waste                 | Ch 14 | 12 | Mon, Nov 25     |
| 13 | THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO POST    |       |    | [Tues, Nov 26]  |
| 13 | Soil and land                   | Ch 15 | 13 | Mon, Dec 2      |
| 14 | Project Blog Post #4            |       |    | Tues, Dec 3     |
| 14 | Biodiversity                    | Ch 16 | 14 | Mon, Dec 9      |
| 15 | NO POST – FINALS WEEK           |       |    | [Tues, Dec 10]  |
| 15 | Open-land resources             | Ch 17 | 15 | Mon, Dec 16**** |
| 15 | Managing the global environment | Ch 18 | 16 | Mon, Dec 16**** |

**IMPORTANT:**

- \*You must take the introductory quiz in order to gain access to the Week 1 chapter quiz (Chs 1-2)!***
- \*\*You must take the mapping exercise quiz in order to gain access to the mapping exercise discussion!***
- \*\*\*Your last two quizzes are both due on the Monday of finals week.***