

# Introduction to Environmental Geography

## Geography 125 (201 - Online)

Summer 2020

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>Ryan Holifield</b>   |
| Office Location: | Bolton Hall, Room 434*  |
| Phone:           | (414) 229-4868 (via Microsoft Teams)  |
| Email:           | <a href="mailto:holifiel@uwm.edu">holifiel@uwm.edu</a> (this is the best way to reach me) |
| Office Hours:    | By appointment using Skype/Teams or other video service                                   |

*\*During Summer 2020, access to the UWM campus remains limited, and I will work from my home office.*

## 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, which means 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 specific highways or factories, clearcuts of specific forest areas, policies belonging to specific 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? This summer is a

good time to find out!) 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 *environmental justice, inequality, and sustainability*—will be the focus of some of the assignments and discussions in the course. We will be especially 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.

## **Materials and technology**

### ***Readings***

Your primary assigned readings will be the lectures found on Canvas.

The following textbook is recommended, but not required:

Hassenzahl, D. M., Hager, M. C., & Berg, L. R. (2018). *Visualizing environmental science*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Wiley.

If you choose to purchase or rent the textbook, it is available through the UWM Virtual Bookstore and other online vendors.

Occasionally we will also read short essays and articles on environmental issues, all of which will be available through Canvas. You will also find links to other articles, web sites, and online video case studies intended to supplement your assigned readings.



## Course learning objectives, assessments, and grading

By the end of the term, 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>3 of 4 Online Discussions ( <i>in addition to</i> Intro and Project 1 discussions) | 5% total<br><br>15% total (5% each) |
| <b>5. Analyze the geographic dimensions (e.g., scale, connectivity across space, etc.) of an environmental problem.</b>  | Project 2: Tracing Environmental Geographies  | 20% total                           |
| <b>6. Evaluate the limitations to possible solutions to an environmental problem, 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 (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 Canvas site “scavenger hunt.” The 5% is divided equally among these three activities.
2. **DISCUSSIONS (15%):** *In addition to* the Mapping Exercise Discussion (see below) and the Personal Introduction Discussion (above), you will submit 4 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 four weekly discussions *and* the Mapping Exercise discussion (see below). So only the best four out of the five discussion grades will count.
  - The 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 Canvas.
3. **QUIZZES (50%):** You will take 16 online Canvas quizzes during the semester (4 per week), which will include a combination of multiple choice, true/false, and matching questions.
  - The quizzes will be based primarily on the assigned lectures/readings and study guides found on the Canvas site.
  - 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 the better grade of the two 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. **MAPPING EXERCISE (10%):** You will complete an online mapping and geographic analysis exercise, for which you will find detailed instructions on the Canvas site. The exercise, which focuses on the topic of environmental equity and justice, consists of two components:
  - a. A Canvas quiz worth 5%, or half the assignment grade. 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 (5%, or half the assignment grade). For this part, you will post your answers and respond to at least one classmate in a small group Canvas discussion forum. Your grades will be based on the rubric posted on Canvas.
5. **BLOG PROJECT: TRACING ENVIRONMENTAL GEOGRAPHIES (20%):** For this project, for which you will find detailed instructions on the Canvas site, you will submit weekly posts to a blog. Blog posts 1, 3, and 4 are weighted at 100 points each, and blog post 2 is weighted at 50 points. Your grades will be based on the rubrics posted on Canvas.

## Grading Policy

See the following sites for official UWM policy on grades and grading:  
<https://uwm.edu/onestop/your-student-record/grades/> and [here](#).

### 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 College of Letters & Science policy on incompletes at [this link](#).

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.

**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:

**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: workload and participation in an online course

**Workload:** It's important for you to understand that even though you will not attend class in a physical classroom, the workload for an online course is just as heavy as you would expect from a conventional class. **This is especially important to recognize in a 4-week summer class like this one.** In a *regular* semester (usually 16 weeks, including the exam), although the amount of time spent per week will vary from student to student, a typical student might spend 4 to 6 hours per week on the class. **In order to receive equivalent credit during a 4-week summer term, then, you can expect to spend somewhere between 16 and 24 hours per week on this class.**

If you choose to divide your class work time evenly throughout the week, here's how you might expect to allocate your time in a typical **day** (also see the "sample work plan" posted on Canvas):

- 1-2 hours reading and taking notes on your textbook
- 30 minutes to 1 hour viewing video clips and reading lectures (available as PDFs), articles, etc.
- 30 minutes preparing for and taking online quizzes
- 1-2 hours preparing and posting discussion assignments and working on the projects

Federal law 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, Summer 2020                  | Hours      |
|--|------------|
| Time spent reading and reviewing course materials                  | 60         |
| Time spent preparing for and taking quizzes                        | 14         |
| Time completing discussion and blog assignments                    | 70         |
| <b><i>Total for semester (@3 credits x 48 hrs/credit hour)</i></b> | <b>144</b> |

You will be responsible for managing your time in order to complete your work. **This is often a major challenge for students in online courses.** If time management is a serious problem for you, you may wish to consider enrolling in the face to face version of this course during the regular academic year instead.

**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

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

**You will not receive credit for quizzes or discussion posts/responses submitted late**, unless a documented medical or personal emergency arises. For ***blog posts only***, I will offer **half-credit** for late submissions that **arrive before the final post is due and otherwise meet the criteria for a passing grade**. 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 Canvas 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 Canvas site.

### ***Technological requirements***

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

You will gain access to lectures, quizzes, assignments, discussions, and exams through the course Canvas site: <https://uwm.edu/canvas/home/>. In order to reach the site, simply log in using your Panther ID and password, and then click on the course in your dashboard. If you need help getting access to the site or to Canvas, please use the UWM Help Desk (available by phone **seven days a week during working hours shown on the Help Desk web site below**), which should be your first point of contact for any technical issues you encounter:

Help Desk web site: <http://uwm.edu/technology/help/> (see **Summer 2020 hours**)

Help Desk Telephone: (414) 229-4040 (or outside Milwaukee, toll-free 1-877-381-3459)

Submit Help Request: <https://uwm.cherwellondemand.com/CherwellPortal/CampusTechnology#1>

Help Desk Location for walk-in help: **(CLOSED DURING SUMMER 2020)**

Recommended computer hardware: <http://uwm.edu/techstore/hardware-specifications/>

Supported browsers for using Canvas: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/doc-10720>

**Hardware and Internet connection:**

In order to take this class, you **must** have regular access to a computer that has a high-speed broadband connection or a campus network connection to the Internet. *An older dialup connection is insufficient to take this course.*

**TO TAKE THIS CLASS DURING SUMMER 2020, YOU WILL NEED YOUR OWN PERSONAL COMPUTER OR ACCESS TO ONE.** You can find UWM's recommendations for personal computer specifications at the following site: <http://uwm.edu/techstore/hardware-specifications/>.

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:** You need an Internet browser, such as Chrome, Microsoft Edge, or Safari, and you need an app that will read Adobe PDF files (such as [Acrobat Reader](#)). I strongly recommend installing a student copy of Office365, available here: <https://uwm.edu/o365/>. You may wish to use the Canvas app for [Android](#) or [iOS](#), but be aware that some course functions may not be available in the mobile application.

## 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 check and respond to email frequently during the term, and except in unusual circumstances, 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 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. If you do not see email from me, please check your spam or junk folder.

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 UWM 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.
- 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 will set up a FAQ on the course Canvas 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 via Skype or other video apps (**no in-person appointments available during Summer 2020**). 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 or your fellow students, as citizens of this class you are responsible for considering different points of view respectfully. I'll 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://uwm.edu/secu/wp-content/uploads/sites/122/2016/12/Syllabus-Links.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., captions, special accommodations for tests), please consult with the Accessibility Resource Center **during the first week of the semester, preferably on day one or before**. I'll be happy to work with you to make any necessary arrangements. For more information, see the following: <https://uwm.edu/arc/arconnect2020/>.

***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 week of the semester** of the specific dates on which you will request relief from an examination or academic requirement. [Here is a link to the UWM policy](#).

***Academic misconduct:*** You are responsible for reading and following UWM guidelines on academic misconduct, including cheating and plagiarism: [http://uwm.edu/deanofstudents/conduct/conduct\\_procedures/academic-misconduct/](http://uwm.edu/deanofstudents/conduct/conduct_procedures/academic-misconduct/). If I suspect academic misconduct, I am required to follow the procedures described here: <http://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/facultystaff/policies/academic-misconduct/>.

**Schedule 1: Quizzes and blog posts (all quizzes and blog posts are due at 11:59 pm on the indicated deadline – also see the Due Date Calendar on the Canvas site)**

| Week | Topic                                    | Quiz / Unit    | Deadline                |
|------|--|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1    | Introductory quiz (syllabus/Canvas site) | Intro          | <b>Tues, June 23*</b>   |
|      | Environment and humanity                 | 1              | Sat, June 27            |
|      | Geography and the global context         | 2              | Sat, June 27            |
|      | Global cycles and systems                | 3              | Sat, June 27            |
|      | Population and frontier environments     | 4              | Sat, June 27            |
|      | <b>Project Blog Post #1</b>              |                | <b>Sun, June 28</b>     |
| 2    | Human population                         | 5              | <b>Sun, July 5**</b>    |
|      | Agriculture, food, and hunger            | 6              | <b>Sun, July 5</b>      |
|      | Energy and environment                   | 7              | <b>Sun, July 5</b>      |
|      | Atmosphere and climate                   | 8              | <b>Sun, July 5</b>      |
|      | Mapping exercise quiz                    | Map Ex. Part I | <b>Sun, July 5***</b>   |
|      | <b>Project Blog Post #2</b>              |                | <b>Sun, July 5</b>      |
| 3    | Air pollution                            | 9              | Sat, July 11            |
|      | Water resources                          | 10             | Sat, July 11            |
|      | Water pollution                          | 11             | Sat, July 11            |
|      | Hazardous waste                          | 12             | Sat, July 11            |
|      | <b>Project Blog Post #3</b>              |                | <b>Sun, July 12</b>     |
| 4    | Soil and land                            | 13             | Sat, July 18            |
|      | Biodiversity                             | 14             | Sat, July 18            |
|      | Open-land resources                      | 15             | Sat, July 18            |
|      | Managing the global environment          | 16             | Sat, July 18            |
|      | <b>Project Blog Post #4</b>              |                | <b>Sat, July 18****</b> |

*\* You must take the introductory quiz in order to gain access to the Week 1 quizzes!*

*\*\*Note: The due date is later than usual, so that we can avoid having a due date on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.*

*\*\*\*You must take the mapping exercise quiz in order to gain access to the mapping exercise discussion!*

*\*\*\*\*Saturday, July 18 is the last official day of the summer 4-week term.*

**See next page for discussion calendar**

**Schedule 2: Discussions** (all posts are due at 11:59 pm on the indicated deadline - also see the calendar on the Canvas site)

| Week | Topic                              | Due Date for Post    | Due Date for Responses |
|------|------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1    | <i>Personal introduction</i>       | <i>Mon, June 22</i>  | <i>Tues, June 23</i>   |
|      | <i>Link to project blog</i>        | <i>Tues, June 23</i> | <i>n/a</i>             |
|      | <b>Discussion 1</b>                | <b>Weds, June 24</b> | <b>Thurs, June 25</b>  |
| 2    | <b>Discussion 2</b>                | <b>Weds, July 1</b>  | <b>Thurs, July 2</b>   |
| 3    | <b>Mapping exercise discussion</b> | <b>Mon, July 6</b>   | <b>Tues, July 7</b>    |
|      | <b>Discussion 3</b>                | <b>Weds, July 8</b>  | <b>Thurs, July 9</b>   |
| 4    | <b>Discussion 4</b>                | <b>Weds, July 15</b> | <b>Thurs, July 16</b>  |