Introduction to Physical Geography
Spring 2012

Montana State University
Department of Earth Sciences

GPHY 111 CS
1100 – 1215 TR
Lecture Classroom: Leon Johnson 339
Lab Classroom: Gaines Hall 145
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Office Hours: TR 1230 – 1345, or by appointment

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Office: Trap 212
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Course Description:

GPHY 111 is a topical introduction to the field of Physical Geography, which is the spatial analysis of the physical elements and processes that make up the environment in which we live. These include energy, air, water, weather, climate, landforms, soils, animals, plants, microorganisms, and Earth itself. We add to this the oldest theme in the geographic tradition, that of human activity, i.e., how humans impact the physical environment and how the physical environment influences human behavior. We will also learn how physical geographers employ the scientific method to analyze spatial relationships between various aspects of the physical environment. As a Core 2.0 “Contemporary Issues in Science” course, Physical Geography will focus on scientific analysis of Earth’s Four “Spheres” – Atmosphere, Hydrosphere, Lithosphere, and Biosphere.

Objectives:

Students who successfully complete GPHY 111 will have a basic understanding of:

• The Energy-Atmosphere System
• Water, Weather and Climate Systems
• Earth’s Changing Landscape Systems
• Biogeography Systems

Students will also understand basics of: location and time on earth; maps, scales, and projections; and remote sensing and geographic information systems (GIS).

Texts and Other Reading Assignments:


Desire2Learn:

You will need to utilize D2L; we will save reams of paper by doing so. This syllabus and course schedule and other pertinent information will be viewable and downloadable from D2L. Lecture notes will be posted on D2L after the class session, as long as in-class attendance remains high. However, don’t use D2L email to communicate with me -- use one of the email addresses found at the top of this syllabus to email me.

i-Clicker:

The i-Clicker system will be used regularly in class. 5% of your final grade will be based on i-Clicker participation. Clickers are available for purchase in the Bookstore. Please bring yours to every class; you cannot get points for showing up without your clicker. Register your clicker online at https://www3.montana.edu/iclicker or by going to www.montana.edu>current students>iClicker Registration.

Several suggestions regarding iClickers: One, write your name on your iClicker and cover it with a piece of clear tape, to reduce the likelihood of it being lost or mistakenly grabbed by a roommate. Second, make sure your batteries are charged and change them as needed. Finally, please note that bringing a friend’s clicker to get him/her points, or sending your clicker with someone else to get points for you, is an academic conduct code violation.

Course Requirements:

1. Come to class. A portion of your grade is based on attendance (see below). Also, you will be tested on information presented during lectures not necessarily covered in the text.
2. Attend the labs and complete the lab assignments.
3. Do the reading. Have the readings completed by the dates indicated on the class schedule.
4. Complete three in-class exams and the final exam. The final exam will be cumulative, with an emphasis on material covered over the last quarter of the course. Test make-ups will only be given under exceptional circumstances, and contact must be made with me before the exam to arrange a make-up.

Course Grade:

Grading will be based on three one-hour in-class exams, a final exam, lab exercises, and class participation in lectures via I-Clicker.

- First In-Class Exam 15% of grade
- Second In-Class Exam 15%
- Third In-Class Exam 15%
- Final Exam 20%
- Lab Exercises 30%
- i-Clicker 5%

Total: 100%

The full MSU grade distribution (A, A-, B+, B, B-, etc.) will be used to assign final grades.
Disability Accommodations:

MSU and the Department of Earth Sciences are committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented physical or learning disabilities. University policy states that it is the responsibility of students with documented disabilities to contact instructors during the first week of each semester to discuss appropriate accommodation to ensure equity in grading, classroom experiences, and outside assignments.

Course Policies:

All course policies regarding In-Class Expectations, Absences, Assignment Due Dates, and Academic Dishonesty (including plagiarism) are found at www2.montana.edu/policy/ and are applicable to GPHY 111.