

GEOGRAPHY 302: GEOGRAPHY OF ALASKA
Summer 2018 MTWR 2-3:50 PM 3 Credits Reichardt 203

Instructor: Benjamin Christian
Office: 330 Reichardt
Office Hours: MTWR, 4-5 PM
Email: bdchristian@alaska.edu

Course Description: This course is an issues-oriented, interdisciplinary study of Alaska. Using the methods and insights of geography, we will explore Alaska's physical environment, climate, major environmental issues, historical development, patterns of land-use and occupancy, contemporary social issues, and economic and political development, among a host of other topics. We will seek to understand how these factors interact to form the underpinnings of historic and current events in Alaska and the region(s) it is part of. The course will be structured around three main themes: 1) climate and landscape change; 2) historical and contemporary land and resource-use conflicts; 3) Alaska's role and place in the twenty-first century Arctic. Class periods will be structured around lecture, discussion, field trips, and a variety of active learning exercises.

Required Course Materials:*

Google Earth Pro: We will be using Google Earth Pro throughout the semester to explore and analyze places, regions, and geospatial data. You should download Google Earth Pro (<https://www.google.com/earth/desktop/>) to the computer you use to complete your coursework as soon as possible and begin to familiarize yourself with its features and capabilities.

Blackboard: All of the course documents, reading assignments, lecture materials, KML files, study guides, etc. will be posted to Blackboard. I will also send announcements via Blackboard. You may also be required to complete graded assignments on Blackboard. Make sure you have a Blackboard account and access to this course's page as soon as possible.

*There are no textbook requirements for this course. Reading assignments will be distributed by the instructor in class or posted as pdf files to Blackboard.

Course Objectives:

- To gain a dynamic understanding of Alaska's physical and human geography.
- To understand Alaska's role and place in the broader regions it is part of (i.e. the American West, the Circumpolar North, the Pacific Rim).
- To understand the major geographic issues affecting and influencing 21st century Alaska (e.g. climate change, Arctic geopolitics, globalization, economic development, land-use conflicts, etc.).
- To become more erudite, inquisitive, and responsible consumers of media concerning Alaska and the places, peoples, and events associated with it.

Assignments & Grading: Your grade in this course is based on participation in class activities, four reflection papers, one exam, and a research paper/presentation.

Participation and In-Class Activities: Each class period will feature a variety of active learning exercises and activities. These may include (but are not limited to) field trips, Q&A sessions with guest lecturers, case studies, discussions, debates, media analysis, and Google Earth/atlas exercises. Your **active** and **informed** participation in these exercises is required. That means you need to: 1) consistently show up to class 2) carefully read the reading assignments before class, and 3) be prepared to make intelligent, informed, and respectful contributions. **Participation points are worth 20% of your final grade.**

Reflection Essays: You will write four 1-3 page reflection essays throughout the semester. Reflection essays ask you to think critically about the topics covered during the previous week and share your thoughts on the knowledge and/or experience you have acquired. **Reflection essays are worth 25 points apiece for a total of 100, or 20% of your final grade.**

Exams: There will be one final exam. The exam will feature an in-class map-labeling and a take-home essay component. **The exam is worth 150 points, or 30% of your final grade.**

Term Paper and Final Presentation: You will write an 8-12 page term paper on a geographically-relevant topic of your choice, and then deliver a 15 minute presentation detailing the findings of your research. As part of this project, you will also need to submit a formal research proposal and short annotated bibliography. **The research proposal is worth 20 points, the term paper is worth 100 points, and the final presentation is worth 30 points, for a total of 150. This is 30% of your final grade.**

Assignment	Points	% of final grade
In-Class Activities & Participation	100	20%
Reflection Essays	100	20%
Final Exam	150	30%
Research Paper & Presentation	150	30%

Grading Scale

A+ = 98% - 100%	A = 93% - 97%	A- = 90% - 92%
B+ = 88% - 89%	B = 83% - 87%	B- = 80% - 82%
C+ = 78% - 79%	C = 73% - 77%	C- = 70% - 72%
D+ = 68% - 69%	D = 63% - 67%	D- = 60% - 62%
		F = <60%

Academic Misconduct Policy

Copying, plagiarism, and/or other academic misconduct at any time during the semester will not be tolerated. Students caught in any of these activities will be removed from the course, will receive an F, and will likely face additional punishment from the University, up to and including expulsion. The University's policy on academic misconduct can be found in the UAF catalog under "Students' Rights and Responsibilities" and at www.uaf.edu/catalog/current/academics/regs3.html.

Students with Disabilities

The staff of Disability Services, 474-5655, coordinates accommodations and services for UAF courses. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodation and have not contacted them, please do so as soon as possible. Please also see me privately in regard to this course.

A Note on Reading & Writing:

This is an upper-division college-level course with upper-division college-level expectations. You ***MUST*** be able to read and write at a college-level in order to succeed in this class. If you have any concerns about your reading comprehension and/or writing skills, you should strongly consider postponing your enrollment in this course and taking one of UAF's Developmental English courses instead. Please see me privately if you have any questions or concerns about this requirement.

Getting Help:

Geography is a challenging subject. Unfortunately, it is also a subject that is rarely taught in our primary and secondary schools. Thus, many of you are likely coming to this class with no background in even basic geography. My job is to help you understand the material, so don't hesitate to seek additional assistance if necessary. Stop by during office hours, send me an email, or schedule a meeting; I will be pleased to help you any way I can (within reason, of course). Be aware that **YOU** are ultimately responsible for mastering the material, however.