

San José State University
College of Social Sciences/Urban Planning/Geography Program
Geography 001, Physical Geography
Sections 1 & 2
Spring 2025

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Maureen A. Kelley, PhD
Office Location:	Washington Square Hall 111A
Telephone:	(408) 924-5486
Email:	maureen.kelley@sjsu.edu & Canvas email (preferred method of contact)
Office Hours:	Tuesdays 1400 to 1500 & by appointment
Class Days/Time:	Section 1: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1030 to 1145 Section 2: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1200 to 1315
Classroom:	Washington Square Hall 113 (WSQ113)
Prerequisites:	none
GE/SJSU Studies Category:	Area B1: Physical Science

Course Description

Atmospheric, biologic, and geologic processes that create the natural environments of the world. Discovery of local, regional, and global patterns in the location and distribution of environmental phenomena and the human modifications of natural environments.

This is a core Geography Program and general education course instructing students on the fundamentals of physical geography and landscape interpretation. Readings, lectures, short videos, exercises, Question of the Days (participation), and a final project/presentation are all used to gain a better understanding of our world. Students will develop their ability to think critically, independently, relationally, and contextually. Students will also be able to communicate their views effectively textually and visually.

Course Format

Technology Intensive, Hybrid, and Online Courses

Course materials are on the [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](http://sjsu.instructure.com) at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through Canvas or MySJSU on [Spartan App Portal](http://one.sjsu.edu) <http://one.sjsu.edu> to learn of any updates.

Computer Internet access is essential for accessing materials and uploading assignments on Canvas. All written assignments must be submitted and uploaded to Canvas in Adobe portable document format (.pdf) or Microsoft

Word Document format (.doc) only. The Canvas SpeedGrader cannot parse Apple pages (.pages) format; however, SpeedGrader has been known to read OpenOffice (.odt) format.

GE Learning Outcomes (GELO)

Readings, videos, activities, and assignments designed to match or conform to GE learning outcomes are listed in the course schedule at the end of this document on pages 11 to 13. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

GELO 1: use the methods of science and knowledge derived from current scientific inquiry in life or physical science to question existing explanations.

GELO2: demonstrate ways in which science influences and is influenced by complex societies, including political and moral issues.

GELO3: recognize methods of science, in which quantitative, analytical reasoning techniques are used.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

All activities and assignments are designed to match or conform to course learning outcomes and are listed in the course schedule at the end of this document on pages 11 to 13. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

CLO1: gain an understanding of physical geographic processes, landforms and ecosystems, and the role of the physical environment on human populations.

CLO2: apply the concepts of physical geography and explain the natural and human processes for specific locations and regions on Earth.

CLO3: describe spatial patterns from maps and remotely sensed images and explain the physical processes that created them.

CLO4: present completed research, including an explanation of methodology and scholarly discussion, orally and in written and visual form and, wherever possible, utilize cartographic tools and other visual formats.

Required Texts/Readings

Required Readings & Textbook

Check on the Canvas Learning Management system under Modules>Weekly Topic Readings or Pages>Weekly Topic Readings for supplemental readings and webpages.

Ritter, M. E. (2020). *The physical environment: An introduction to physical geography*. OER Geography textbook. <https://www.thephysicalenvironment.com/>

Be sure to watch the accompanied videos in the textbook. Also, every chapter has a review section for physical geography terms, review questions, and self-assessment quizzes. Get in the habit of utilizing the materials.

Other technology requirements / equipment / materials

- Any web-browser and Internet access that allow you to connect for class sessions and using online geographic information systems (GIS) software, WSQ 113 Lab has both.
- Microsoft Office or other office suite for text documents and presentation software.

- Adobe Creative Suite utilizing Acrobat Reader (available as Adobe Creative Cloud for students on SJSU eCampus webpage).
- Arc GIS Online (AGOL) Account – AGOL will be accessed for some exercises. Go to <https://sjsugis.maps.arcgis.com/> and click Sign In on the upper right corner and then SJSU Okta. This will automatically create your account.
- Knowledge of compressing and uncompressing files and folders.

Given the fluid nature of the real world, if the course meets online then interaction will be conducted through the Canvas Learning Management System. We may utilize the Zoom video conferencing plugin module for meetings in Canvas; therefore, be sure to download the latest version of Zoom. When we meet on campus, then we conduct class in person and utilize the Canvas Learning Management System.

All students are required to submit written assignments via a word processing application that has the capabilities of outputting text documents in either MicroSoft Word file format (.doc), Adobe portable document file format (.pdf), or OpenOffice document file format (.odt). The Canvas Learning Management System's Speed Grader cannot read the Apple .pages file formats nor Google Docs at this time.

You do not want me to convert your files from .pages to .doc or .odt hoping there will be a one-to-one conversion; you are responsible for submitting assignments in the proper file format. If you do accidentally submit in a file format other than what is accepted, then you will get an initial request to resubmit in the proper file format. If you do not resubmit, then your assignment in that Apple operating system format that Canvas cannot parse will be graded as 50% credit.

Course Structure

The course is thematically organized into four modules: Introduction to Geography, Atmosphere & Hydrosphere, Biosphere, Lithosphere. Refer to the course schedule at the end of this document for each week's topic. There will be one exercise for Modules 1 (Introduction) and 3 (Biosphere) and three each for Modules 2 (Atmosphere & Hydrosphere) & 4 (Lithosphere). There will be eight exercises, one midterm, an article review and on-line discussion, daily Question of the Days as participation, and a final project and presentation.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Exercises

There will be eight exercises covering the previous weeks' topics. These assignments are designed to elicit objective responses from the readings, lectures, and videos. Each exercise is worth 25 points for a total of 200 points, 40% of the final grade. Detailed instructions for writing the exercises are provided on Canvas and the Writing Guidelines document located at Files>Writing Guidelines.

Assignment	Points
1: Geography Basics & Map Reading	25
2: Earth Basics & Seasonality	25
3: Weather & Climate	25
4: Hydrosphere	25
5: Biosphere	25
6: Endogenic Processes & Tectonics	25
7: Exogenic Processes	25
8: Landform Interpretation	25

Midterm

There will be one 20-question on-line midterm consisting of 17 multiple choice and three short essay answers worth 50 points, 10% of the final grade, covering topics up to Week 9. One week prior to the midterm, there will be a study guide available. You will have a choice of answering three of five selected essay questions. The tests will be timed and you will have two tries with the average score retained. There will be no makeup examinations unless for serious and compelling reasons.

Article Review & Online Discussion

Students will research a topic and read an article highlighting a real-world physical geography topic that should be related to their final project and presentation. Ideas can come from newspaper articles or academic journals. The article review must be formatted as an [annotated bibliography](#) and a maximum two pages highlighting:

- Topic as relates to physical geography
- Why important in general and important to your final project
- Takeaways & future endeavors

The essay should be in standard essay format conforming to academic standards and is worth 50 points, 10% of the total grade. Week 14 will have students present a brief report of their findings to the class for on-line discussion worth five points of the Participation grade.

Class Participation

Plan to set aside time for each week's topic. Active participation is a vital element of the course. This not only makes the class more interesting and enjoyable, but you are responsible for material discussed during class and you cannot earn an "A" without participating. Your class participation grade will include posting a response to the question of the day posted on the days we meet and contributing to the brainstorming-discussion pages posted on the asynchronous days we do not meet.

Quality participation refers to being an active participant on Canvas: answering the Tuesday/Thursday Question of the Day in a timely fashion as well as actively participating in online discussion forums.

The questions will be posted on the Canvas website under the Modules section. Those questions will be seen on the Assignments and/or Discussions web pages. You have two weeks to respond to those questions for potential full credit. Class participation is worth 100 points or 20% of your final grade, where 10 points out of the 100 points will be calculated based on your Canvas activities bi-weekly (Canvas interaction score).

The Canvas interaction score (maximum 10 points) will be weighted based on the median score of all students in the class:

Weekly Weighted Score = Page Views + Participation + (Submissions + On-time Submissions – Late Submissions – Missing Submissions)

Final Paper/Project & Presentation

Your final project (proposal submission, final report, and presentation) is worth 100 points, 20% of the total grade; therefore, it is vital that you start your project earlier in the semester rather than later. The final project is designed such that all General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs) and Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) are met.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the final project is to demonstrate:

1. appropriate knowledge of physical geography concepts.
2. appropriate means of explaining and describing a specific physical geography concept or process.
3. appropriate explanation why the physical geography concept or process is important.

Final Project Proposal

Before the proposal due date, students will participate in project idea discussion forum on Canvas and consult their final project topic with the instructor. Students will present their project proposal, explaining briefly what they want to do for approval.

Submission Proposal Presentation and One-Page Proposal (10 points)

After receiving comments on the proposal idea, students will have to finalize their project proposals for submission. Students will need to combine and submit a one-page proposal. Please note that the purpose of proposal is to give a generic idea and a direction. You can maneuver and change afterward as needed. The one-page proposal should include:

- Title and Topic/Focus
- Purpose of project
- Process or concept
- Specific location or region
- Why important

Final Project Report (65 points) & Presentation (25 points)

Students are required to write a short report (1000-4500 words) that explains the project's contribution to general physical geography knowledge. The report should include:

1. Context of the project, problem, goals and objectives, inspiring precedents, and so forth.
2. Brief literature review (three reliable sources).
3. Description of concept or process with graphic explanation(s).
4. Example of specific location or region that explains why we see that concept or process on Earth.
5. Why important.

Students are required to give a five-minute presentation that briefly explains the above concepts on the day of the final.

University Policies

Please review University policies regarding syllabi at:

- [University Syllabus Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>.
- Office of Undergraduate Education's [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

“Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.”

Final Examination or Evaluation

Per University guidelines, “Faculty members are required to have a culminating activity for their courses, which can include a final examination, a final research paper or project, a final creative work or performance, a final portfolio of work, or other appropriate assignment.”

Students’ culminating experience is to present their project on the day of the final via slides, a video, or other method of presentation.

Grading Information

Determination of Grades

A strong performance in all areas of assessment is necessary to achieve the highest grade in this course. You will not be graded on attendance. However, it is not possible to do well if you are not present in class to join in discussions and to complete assignments and exercises.

You are responsible for informing me in advance if you know you must miss classes for a valid reason. Excused absences refer to illness, family responsibilities, and similar necessities. Exceptions to these policies will be made only in the case of officially documented emergencies. Contact me regarding emergencies as soon as possible—before an assignment is due rather than after it is already late—so special arrangements may be made.

Grade Breakdown

Assignments	Points	Percent
Exercises (8)	200	40
Midterm	50	10
Participation	100	20
Article Review	50	10
Final Project & Presentation	100	20
Total	500	100

Penalty for Late or Missed Work

Assignments not submitted on the due date and assigned time will be marked down. There will be a 2% reduction in grade for each calendar day that your assignment is late. Any assignment that is overdue by two weeks (four class meetings, 14 calendar days) is considered late and will receive a zero (0).

Extra Credit

There is no scheduled extra credit at this time; however, extra credit may be assigned when the instructor is in the mood for some. Extra credit will be announced in class or on the course Announcements page for online classes. All extra credit assignments will be listed in Assignments>Extra Credit on Canvas.

Letter Grades

Grade	Points	Percentages
A plus	485.0 to 500.0	97.00% to 100.00%
A	465.0 to 484.9	93.00% to 96.99%
A minus	450.0 to 464.9	90.00% to 92.99%
B plus	435.0 to 449.9	87.00% to 89.99%
B	415.0 to 434.9	83.00% to 86.99%
B minus	400.0 to 414.9	80.00% to 82.99%
C plus	385.0 to 399.9	77.00% to 79.99%
C	365.0 to 384.9	73.00% to 76.99%
C minus	350.0 to 364.9	70.00% to 72.99%
D plus	335.0 to 349.9	67.00% to 69.99%
D	315.0 to 334.9	63.00% to 66.99%
D minus	300.0 to 314.9	60.00% to 62.99%
F	0.00 to 299.9	0.00% to 59.99%

“This course must be passed with a C- or better as a CSU graduation requirement.”

Classroom Protocol

We all want to be in a positive learning environment. Course content can be challenging. I expect everyone to be respectful of opinions, other students, and the instructor. I will make every effort to be prepared for class, come to class on time, and be available during my office hours for help.

I expect my students to be prepared for class, *contribute to Canvas discussions in a timely fashion*, and turn in assignments on time. I expect all students to refrain from reading non-course-related materials during class. Computers are essential for course related work but do not abuse your computer privileges by reading, watching, or interacting with noncourse-related materials.

Zoom Classroom Protocol

Use of Cameras in Class

Please be aware that I understand if you are reluctant to show yourself and your surroundings via video conferencing. Therefore, I will be flexible requiring everyone having their webcams on.

Recording of Zoom Classes

“University [P]olicy (S12–7) at <https://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf> requires consent from all individuals who will appear in a class recording. If a student does not wish to be identified in a class recording, you might allow an “anonymous” option (e.g., student temporarily turning off identifying information from the Zoom session, including name and picture, prior to recording).”

Currently, I do not plan to record the visual portion of Zoom sessions; however, if students wish to have their sessions recorded, then there should be a plurality of students agreeing to the digital recordings. You are under no obligations whether you agree or not. If students use the text messaging portion, then I will copy and paste the session and post via Canvas.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Additional Information

Writing Policy

Correct use of English is a fundamental requirement for your assignments to be graded. If a minimum of 20 errors in spelling, syntax, grammar, or technical errors are detected, then there is an automatic 10% reduction in grade for all essays. Grading rubrics for essays and exercises are on the Canvas website.

Formal academic writing guidelines are essential for this course. Please upload your assignments as either an MSWord document (.doc) or Portable Document File (.pdf) only, unless otherwise specified. The Canvas SpeedGrader cannot accept any other file formats, and I do not download and grade assignments on my computers.

All assignments must be written using formal academic writing styles conforming to standard guidelines:

- lastname first initial _course number _assignment number (ie kelley_m_G001S1_exer1.doc)
- Times New Roman 12pt normal font
- 1.5 or 2.0 line spacing
- 1" margin all around
- APA citation method
 - reference page (anytime you cite sources)
 - page numbers
 - proper headings and enumeration styles
- DO NOT add your student name/class/date heading on your assignments because the file name and date stamp on Canvas provides me with this information
- DO NOT include questions and prompts (Your Turnitin.com scores will be artificially high and you waste space)
- No cover page or running head required!

If any of the above standards are not adhered to, then each violation of a major bullet point a reduction of 0.1 point will be assessed from your total score. Refer to the [Purdue Online Writing Laboratory General Format webpage for APA style guidelines](#).

I am your target audience. Therefore, I expect a formal tone from your essays: **no breezy style and no contractions**. Also, country names should be in a manner that is generally accepted in formal settings (ie United States or United States of America rather than America or 'Murica). If any of the previously mentioned styles are used, then they will be counted as an error of syntax and/or grammar. Refer to the [Purdue Online Writing Laboratory Levels of Formality webpage](#) for more information.

Remember, the first 20 errors will be counted and an overall 10% reduction will be assessed on your assignment. Therefore, proofread your paper before you submit!

APA Style Guidelines on the Internet

Here are some websites that can help you when it comes time to write your papers:

In the past, I had my trusty APA style guide by my side when I wrote my papers (as well as an APA automatic citation generator in LaTeX).

But there are now some very nice tools out on the Internet:

- [The APA style guide](#) website
- [Purdue Online Writing Laboratory General Overview website](#) and side bars for comprehensive listing
- [Purdue Online Writing Laboratory APA Sample Paper](#) website
- [Citation Machine](#) website for formatting citations, although naively relying on an automatic citation generator may get you into trouble—always double check

Get used to using these resources. Your instructors will be very grateful!

...and finally...

Please email me via the Canvas mail system a picture of a garter snake (for the [Year of the Snake](#)) to show that you read and understood the content of this course syllabus.

Geography 1: Physical Geography

Spring 2025 Course Schedule

The schedule is subject to change with fair notice and will be made available on the Canvas webpage and via email. Check on the Canvas Assignment pages and course calendar for due dates (all written assignments are due Friday, 11:59pm the following week unless otherwise specified).

There will be a question of the day (QoD) for each in-session class. All QoDs are due in two weeks from the published date and are closed after a total of four weeks, unless otherwise noted.

Course Schedule

Week	Week of	Topics	Readings	Activities	Due	Learning Outcomes
	01/23	Introductions to class & lab	Canvas	Introduction to the lsb Pre-exercise		
1	01/27	Introduction to Geography	Ch. 1 (Ritter)			
				Exer. 1: Geography & Map Reading Basics		GELO 1, 2 CLO 1-3
2	02/03	Earth & Solar System	Ch. 2 (Ritter)			
		Atmosphere	Ch. 3 (Ritter)		Exer. 1	
3	02/10	Energy & Radiation	Ch. 4 (Ritter)			
		Temperatures	Ch. 5 (Ritter)	Exer. 2: Earth Basics & Seasonality		GELO 1, 2 CLO 1
4	02/17	Atmosphere & Oceans	Ch. 6 (Ritter)			
	02/18	LAST DAY TO ADD/DROP			Exer. 2	
5	02/24	Moisture	Ch. 7 (Ritter)			
		Weather	Ch. 8 (Ritter)			
6	03/03	Climate	Ch. 9 (Ritter)			
				Exer. 3: Weather & Climate		GELO 1-3 CLO 1-3
7	03/10	Hydrosphere	Ch.10 (Ritter)			
		Final Project Overview Article Review		Exer. 4: Hydrosphere	Exer. 3	GELO 1-3 CLO 1-3
8	03/17	Biogeography	Ch.12 (Ritter)			
		Biomes	Ch.13 (Ritter)		Exer. 4	
9	03/24	Soils	Ch.11 (Ritter)			
		Midterm Preparation		Exer 5: Biosphere		GELO 1-3 CLO 1-3
10	03/31	SPRING RECESS				
11	04/07	Earth's Structure	Ch.14 (Ritter)	Midterm	Midterm	

Week	Week of	Topics	Readings	Activities	Due	Learning Outcomes
		Tectonics & Landforms	Ch.15 (Ritter)	Video: <i>The 1906 San Francisco Earthquake</i>		
12	04/14	Volcanics	Ch.16 (Ritter)	Exer. 6: Endogenic Processes & Tectonics		GELO 1-3 CLO 1-3
		Weathering, Erosion, & Mass Movement	Ch.17 (Ritter)		Proposal	
13	04/21	Fluvial Systems	Ch.18 (Ritter)			
		Glacial Systems	Ch.19 (Ritter)		Exer. 6	
14	04/28	Eolian Systems	Ch.20 (Ritter)		Article Review	
		Oceans & Coastal Systems	Ch.21 (Ritter)	Exer. 7: Exogenic Processes		GELO 1-3 CLO 1-3
15	05/05			Exer. 8: Landform Interpretation		GELO 1-3 CLO 1-3
					Exer. 7	
16	05/12					
Sec 2 Final	05/14	Final Presentations WSQ 113 (1045 to 1245)				
Sec 1 Final	05/19	Final Presentations WSQ 113 (1045 to 1245)				
	05/23	LAST DAY TO TURN IN FINAL PROJECT, ASSIGNMENTS & DISCUSSIONS			Exer. 8	