



SYLLABUS: GLY 4700 – GEOMORPHOLOGY
University of Florida, Department of Geological Sciences

Semester: Fall 2025

Credits: 3

Course Fee: none

Meeting Location: Online version: Canvas Site

Meeting Time: Asynchronous online

Canvas Site: <https://elearning.ufl.edu>

INSTRUCTORS

Lead Instructor: Dr. Peter N. Adams

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the origin/evolution of landforms and the physical processes responsible for their creation and modification. Each topic will relate to the recurring themes that we use as guiding principles for the course: laws of conservation, transport rules, and event magnitude/frequency. The course is structured to begin with the “big picture” view of geomorphology (whole-earth shape, large-scale details of the continents and ocean basins), then move on to the construction of landscapes (mountain building, tectonics, isostasy, flexure), and follow with the surface processes responsible for sculpting the landscape (weathering/erosion, transport of material through hillslope and fluvial systems, and deposition at the coastal/marine interface).

Course Goals: It is the goal of this course that, by the end, students will:

- understand the relationship between numerous Earth’s surface landforms and the processes responsible for creating and shaping them,
- develop “back of the envelope” calculation skills to estimate geomorphic rates, landform size / shape, and timing, by employing the laws of conservation (mass, momentum, etc.),
- gain an appreciation for the frequency-magnitude distributions of geomorphic events throughout Earth’s history and how those distributions influence the landscape we see.

COURSE STRUCTURE

General Comments

To succeed in this class, students should do the following:

- 1) Perform the assigned **readings** (provided as course notes and handouts), view (and re-view) the **video lectures**, and review materials as needed (taking independent notes on the **video lectures** is a great idea).
- 2) Work through the **assignments** and contribute to the **discussions**, soon after digesting the **readings** and the **lecture** material.
- 3) Be able to answer the questions in the **study guides** (if provided) in preparation for the **quizzes**.

The **readings** will make students familiar with concepts ahead of time, making it much easier to understand concepts presented in the lectures. I provide a list of reading assignments, primarily my “**course notes**” to go with the topic coverage list below. During **lectures**, I will emphasize key concepts and work through examples. Students will get extra practice integrating these concepts via **assignments**. Through group **discussions**, students will exercise critical thinking and communication skills, by demonstrating an understanding of the material in depth. Note that the **readings** should not be considered a suitable substitute for the lecture material, and conversely the **lectures** are an incomplete advertisement for the **readings**, **assignments**, and **discussions**.

Specifics of On-line Structure Including Timing of Weekly Events

This course is being offered as an asynchronous **on-line** class, with three sections that include UFO (Univ. of Florida Online degree program), WEB (online course that is part of the traditional “bricks and mortar” program degree program), and CIG (Certificate In Geosciences program). Students from all sections will have identical course requirements and expectations.

Content: For each module, students will explore content provided (3-4 hours total) that will include readings and on-line lectures (some modules will span 2 weeks). The reading assignment schedule is provided at the end of this syllabus and new module content will be made available (unlocked on the Canvas website), after completion of the previous module.

Assignments: A module assignment (either a Google Earth tour, hand-worked problems and/or short answer questions) will be made available at the beginning of each module. Homework assignments will be completed individually and will be **due at 11:59 pm on the due date** (usually Monday nights, but check each assignment as there are some schedule shifts).

Discussions: For some modules, students will participate in a group discussion online. For each discussion topic, students will be required to submit their post (typically 1 paragraph, 3-4 sentences) **by 11:59 pm on the due date**. After the initial posts have been submitted, students may be required to submit a “follow-up” post (**due at 11:59 pm two days later**), which comments on the initial post of another student. The objective of the discussion is to have students relate their thoughts, perspectives, and personal experiences to the material of the current module.

Quizzes: There will be a quiz at the end of each module to assess the students' understanding of the material. The on-line version of **the quiz will “unlock” three days prior to the completion of the module and will close at 11:59 pm** on the date that the module concludes – so usually a Friday through Monday window. Specific due dates will be confirmed as each module opens, and the responsibility of knowing the due dates is up to the student. Announcements of due dates will be provided on the module pages and reminders may be sent through Canvas messages. Honorlock (<https://honorlock.com/>) will be used to ensure that quizzes are completed with “integrity and humanity”, so students must be within view of their computer camera during the quiz.

Office Hours: For each module, both the course instructor and the TA will offer zoom-based office hours, during which students can enter the zoom room and ask questions about course material, assignments, etc. These office hours will be offered on Fridays and Mondays, pending schedules of the instructor and TA.

COURSE WEBSITE and COMMUNICATION

Course Website

The course will run via **Canvas** through the UF E-learning website (<http://lss.at.ufl.edu/>). The course site will be used to post relevant announcements, reading, lecture materials, links, assignments, and quizzes, etc. Students are responsible for checking this site for updates, announcements and to verify that your grades are recorded correctly. It is recommended that students adjust settings so that announcements are automatically sent to one's phone or email. There is information on how to do this in the 'Start Here' section of the Canvas site.

Communication

Questions and comments on course logistics (e.g. assignments, grading etc.) and on content (e.g. science or policy questions) should be posted in the Course Questions Discussion Board on the Canvas site. If you know the answer to a classmate's question, you are welcome and encouraged to answer it. Questions of a personal nature (e.g. medical emergency, legal, documented disability accommodation, etc.) should be sent to the instructor or TA via e-mail (or the Canvas messaging system) who will address the issue appropriately.

COURSE MATERIALS

Course notes for this class are derived from these textbooks. Students with an interest in more detailed presentation of the topics and concepts are welcome acquire these resources:

- 1) Anderson, R.S. and S.P. Anderson, 2010, *Mechanics and Chemistry of Landscapes*, Cambridge University Press.
- 2) Bierman, P.R. and D.R. Montgomery, 2014, *Key Concepts in Geomorphology*, Freeman and Company/Macmillan.
- 3) Allen, Philip A., 1997, *Earth Surface Processes*, Blackwell Science.

In addition, there will be selected readings posted or linked through the course Canvas site.

Optional Resources:

Below I list several other textbooks that are good references for material covered in this course:

- 1) *Tectonic Geomorphology*, by Burbank and Anderson, Blackwell Science

2) *Process Geomorphology (4th ed.)*, by Ritter Kochel and Miller, McGraw Hill

ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING

Your grade for this class will be the result of your performance on the: Assignments/Problem Sets (50%) – verified by turnitin.com, Module quizzes (30%), and Discussions (20%).

Assignments and problem sets must be turned in on time. Late assignments will be penalized by **5% per day late**. Turnitin.com will be used to verify that a student has completed the work themselves and has not plagiarized the solution. For some assignments, Google Earth will be used, so it's a good idea to gain familiarity with this useful (free) software. There are links to assist you with learning Google Earth at the 'Start Here: Course Tools & Technology' page within the Course Canvas site. There will be no extra-credit assignments.

Final Grade Scale

| | |
|---|---|
| A = ≥93%, A- = 90-92.99 | D+ = 67-69.99, D = 63-66.99, D- = 60-62.99, |
| B+ = 87-89.99, B = 83-86.99, B- = 80-82.99, | E < 60 |
| C+ = 77-79.99, C = 73-76.99, C- = 70-72.99, | |

***Note 1:** "Raw" grades will be normalized and curved to a "final" grade that will coincide with the scale above. This cannot be pre-determined, however, periodic updates of grade distributions will be announced during the semester.

***Note 2:** An earned letter grade of 'C-' grade or below does not qualify for major, minor, Gen Ed, or college basic distribution credit.

For further information on UF's Grading Policy, consult:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Attendance and Absence

This is an asynchronous online course, so an attendance policy is not applicable. Students are expected to complete all requirements (assignments, discussions, and quizzes) on the specified dates and will not be granted an alternate due date unless they have an acceptable reason (e.g., medical emergency, observance of religious holidays, military obligation) or pre-arranged consent of the instructor. These requests must be timely and accompanied by all necessary written documentation.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

Academic Honesty Policy

Students must conform to UF's academic honesty policy regarding plagiarism and other forms of cheating. This means that on all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

The university specifically prohibits cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, bribery, conspiracy, and fabrication. For more information about the definition of these terms and other aspects of the Honesty Guidelines, see <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>. All students found to have cheated, plagiarized, or otherwise violated the Honor Code in any assignment for this course will be prosecuted to the full extent of the university honor policy, including judicial action and the sanctions listed in paragraph XI of the Student Conduct Code. For serious violations, you will fail this course.

Software Use

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Please do not hesitate to ask for accommodation for a documented disability. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<https://disability.ufl.edu/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Please ask the instructor if you would like any assistance in this process. Please provide this information to your instructor within the first two weeks of the semester.

Instructor Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Drop/Add/Withdrawal

A student can drop/add during the drop add period with no penalty. After drop/add, a student who drops will receive a W until the date listed in the academic calendar. After that date, the student may be assigned an "E" (fail). Note: it is the responsibility of the STUDENT to withdraw from a course, not the instructor. Failure to participate/complete the class is NOT a drop.

Additional Resources

Students facing difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may contact the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu>, 392-1575; or the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies. Other Resources available on-campus for students include:

- a. Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling;
- b. Interpersonal Violence Counseling, Student Health Care Center, 392-1161
- c. Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Module 1: Whole Earth Shape (Aug. 21-26) Introductory Concepts and Guiding Principles; Whole Earth Shape; Global Hypsometry; **Chp. 1: pp. 2-13 and Chp. 2: pp. 16-23**

Module 2: Ocean & Continent Shapes (Aug. 26 - Sept. 2) Ocean Basins: Heat Conduction; Ocean Basin Shape: Contraction & Isostasy; Tectonic Plate Motion: Origin & Speed; **Chp. 3: pp. 26-38**

Module 3: Tectonic Geomorph I: Crustal Change & Faulting (Sept. 2-8) Crustal Thickening, Erosion, and Mantle Response; Fault-Scale Deformation; **Chp. 3: pp. 38-48, Chp. 4: pp. 60-69**

Module 4: Tectonic Geomorph II: Deformation and Flexure (Sept. 9-15) Paleoseismology; Geomorphic Evidence of Long-term Deformation; Lithospheric Flexure; **Chp. 4: pp. 69-92**

Module 5: Earth's Atmosphere (Sept. 16-22) Sun, Radiation, Weather, and Climate; Atmospheric Structure and Circulation; **Chp. 5: pp. 96-117**

Module 6: Tools of Geomorphology (Sept. 23-Sept. 29) Measuring Landforms; Absolute Dating Methods; Geothermometry and Exhumation; **Chp. 6: pp. 120-146**

Module 7: Weathering Rock to Mobile Sediment (Sept. 30- Oct. 6) Weathering, Critical Zone, Denudation; Mechanical & Chemical Processes; Carbon Cycle; Regolith; **Chp. 7: pp. 161-211**

Module 8: Hillslopes (Oct. 7-13) Hillslope Diffusion; Specific Diffusive Hillslope Processes; Saturated Granular Materials and Landslides; Debris Flows; **Chp. 10: pp. 304-335**

Module 9: Rivers I: Flows, Geometry, and Patterns (Oct. 14-Oct. 27) Open Channel Flows; Hydraulic Geometry; Flooding; River Plan Views; Longitudinal Profiles; **Chp. 12: pp. 380-414**

Module 10: Rivers II: Bedrock River Incision (Oct. 28- Nov. 10) Measuring Bedrock River Incision; Bedrock River Erosional Processes; Bedrock River Profiles and Widths; **Chp. 13: pp. 422-449**

Module 11: Rivers III: Sediment Transport (Nov. 11- Nov. 18) Grain Entrainment Mechanics; Sediment Transport Modes and "Laws"; Suspended Sediment Transport; **Chp. 14: pp. 452-473**

Module 12: Coastal Processes and Landforms (Nov. 19 – Dec. 3) Tides, Waves, Currents; Sandy, Rocky, and Icy Coasts, **Chp. 16: pp. 502-528**

*** All Chapter and page listings refer to the Anderson and Anderson textbook, from which the lecture notes were primarily derived. This textbook is not required, but it provides a much more detailed treatment of the concepts covered in the course.**