

**G&ES 250 SYLLABUS**  
**WIP: WRITING IN GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES**

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Office Hours: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Venue: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is a writing intensive experience, offering students the opportunity to develop written communication skills by utilizing basic concepts, theories, and techniques in Geography and Environmental Studies. Topics and exercises include note taking, outlines, drafts, styles, bibliography and references, essays, reviews, policy statements and reports of varying length. Sources including library, internet services, and direct observation will be explored. Students will incorporate maps, graphs, and other visual aids.

This course has been approved as a Writing Intensive course as part of the Writing Intensive Program (WIP). Successful completion of this course fulfills the Writing Intensive graduation requirement for Geography and Environmental Studies majors who entered the university in Fall 2008 or later. Speak to your advisor or visit <http://www.neiu.edu/~wip> for more information.

PREREQUISITE: English 101

**REQUIRED TEXT AND OTHER MATERIALS**

1. Northey, Margot and David B. Knight. 2005(updated 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Oxford University Press, Canada. Making Sense: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing (Geography and Environmental Sciences). ISBN: 978-0-19-5412099
2. Hacker, Diana. Rules for Writers. Sixth edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009
3. de Blij, H, et al 2009. The World Today. John Wiley & Sons [or another acceptable introductory text]
4. Veregin, Howard (Editor). 21th Edition.(paperback) Goode's World Atlas. Rand McNally [Note: Instructors may choose to use a different atlas or none at all]
5. A ringed binder to use as portfolio.
6. Additional hard copy and blackboard material will be made available throughout the course. Also, in addition to an extensive supplementary reading list, you will be provided with a list of highly recommended books which you are encouraged to obtain online from a discount bookseller.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES

All learning outcomes and objectives in this writing intensive course relate to the complimentary foci of Geography which uses space as a central unifying concept and Environmental Studies which centers on the idea of environmental protection.

Students acquire a deeper knowledge of concepts, theories, approaches, and techniques in Geography and Environmental Studies (hereafter referred to as G&ES) by developing various forms of formal and informal writing skills. The link between clear thinking and clear writing will enhance the students' enduring understanding of how changing conditions and relationships in the interactive human and physical environment can be more fully appreciated by using techniques of spatial analysis, and how solutions to environmental problems must be informed by sound scientific knowledge and often community awareness and activism, policy and legislation, economic incentive and technological change.

It is expected that students will

1. think and express themselves in spatial terms with a clear awareness of the environment and the interrelationships within and among natural and social systems in decision-making: what is where, why is it there, and why should we care?
2. be able to comprehend, initiate thinking and write how links between the human and physical systems operate in the landscape.
3. describe the causes of environmental deterioration and suggest solutions to environmental problems within historical and contemporary contexts.
4. provide written explanations of phenomena and concepts expressed in maps, graphs, tables, aerial photos, satellite images, and other visual representations. Be able to provide proper titles, explanations, etc. to different types of visual presentations.
5. provide written explanations of fieldwork, survey, map analysis, remote sensing techniques and results.
6. analyze, describe and summarize in writing large data sets from census, GIS and other sources.
7. undertake literary research: produce bibliographies, notes and summaries of books, articles, policy statements and other material.
8. monitor and analyze landscape components and environmental issues from different perspectives and be able to produce alternative strategies and comprehensive recommendations.
9. acquire a habit of thinking and writing in a balanced, objective and clear manner.
10. be able to identify and write an essay, proposal and hypothesis-based papers at the appropriate level and in different venues.

## STUDENT TASKS/REQUIREMENTS

The course is divided into two parts. The first part involves six sections (roughly six weeks) with shorter assignments and focusing upon developing the writing skills required to communicate knowledge in G&ES. In the second part you are asked to incorporate these skills into longer papers. All sections have both informal and formal components. Each graded assignment will be preceded by ungraded free-style writing exercises and/or drafts. You will have at least one ungraded assignment per week. There will be a minimum of 18 pages of graded work in the course. At least 4 pages of graded work in the first 6 weeks, and a minimum of three 4-page

papers of graded work in the remainder of the course. The Portfolio will include a Table of Contents and Introductory page, which will also be graded. All graded work will be preceded by ungraded drafts.

You may assume that your classmates are at about the same level of knowledge in G&ES and writing skills. Your formal and informal writing and oral presentation exercises should be regarded as an opportunity to share your knowledge with your “colleagues” in the class. You are encouraged to help one another. Your formal and informal writing exercises must be included in the Portfolio to be turned in during the penultimate week of the course. Below you are given examples of the formal and informal assignments.

### *A Example of Formal, Graded Assignment*

“Essay on G&ES Topic” (example from the second part of the course).

#### Task

Based on the conceptual framework provided to you in the introductory lecture to this generic assignment on spatial analysis and environmental policy, you are to write a research paper on a topic which highlights a locational or policy problem. Imagine that you are preparing this paper for the annual Research Symposium here at Northeastern Illinois University or a similar conference. You may assume that the audience is generally well-educated but not expert in G&ES. You will initially present your drafts and final paper to your fellow students in this class for feedback before you “take it on the road.”

#### Format

Write an essay-style paper using a problem-thesis structure and the AAG format (as provided in style sheet and Chapter 5 in Northey and Knight).

Due Dates N.B. You must respect all dates.

Due date 1: Topic selection and tentative title \_\_\_\_\_

Due date 2: Outline of Paper (including bibliography) \_\_\_\_\_

Due date 3: Opening Paragraph \_\_\_\_\_

Due date 4: Draft 1 (including maps, graphs, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Peer and Instructor Feedback

Due date 5: Draft 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Peer and Instructor feedback

Due date 6: Final Version and Presentation \_\_\_\_\_

#### Evaluation

Only the final draft of your paper will be evaluated by your instructor for a grade. Any earlier work will be informally evaluated by your fellow students and/or your instructor. All responses to your work will be based on the extent to which you satisfactorily address a series of questions that you also may use to check your own work before submission (see Northey and Knight, pp. 65-66). For your convenience these questions are presented in three categories which ask if your written assignment is well organized, well documented and well expressed. The formal grading of papers by your instructor assigns a value of 33.3% to each of these three categories. The questions are present below. I will explain each of these questions---and give you examples---in class.

Checklist: The grade will be assigned according to the overall evaluation. Each of the categories below does not necessarily carry the same weight. The checklist insures that every student will get specific feedback.

*Well Organized*

Yes / No Are the purpose and approach of this essay evident from the beginning?

Yes / No Are all sections of the paper relevant to the topic?

Yes / No Will the subheadings be meaningful to the reader? Do they clearly identify the various sections in my paper?

Yes / No Do my paragraph divisions give coherence to my ideas? Do I use them to cluster similar ideas and signal changes of ideas?

Yes / No Do any parts of the essay seem disjointed? Should I add more transitional words or logical indicators to make the sequence of ideas easier to follow?

Yes / No Are my illustrations, graphs and tables useful? Do they present the data in the clearest, most effective way, or would a different form make a better presentation? Is my discussion of each clear and complete?

Yes / No Do my conclusions accurately reflect my arguments in the body of my work?

*Well Documented*

Yes / No Have I been accurate and fair in my representation of what my sources state?

Yes / No Have I cited all the sources I have used? Is the style of the in-text citations consistent?

Yes / No Are all my illustrations and tables correctly numbered? Have I identified them in the text?

Yes / No Are all the tables complete and correct, with the source(s) noted?

Yes / No Is my reference list (or bibliography, whatever is appropriate) accurate and complete in all publication detail?

Yes / No Are all the ideas sufficiently developed? Is there enough evidence?

Yes / No In presenting my argument, do I take into account opposing arguments or evidence, explanation and illustrations? Is my discussion balanced and objective?

Yes / No Are all contents of my appendices useful? Are they complete and accurate?

### *Well Expressed*

Yes / No Is the organization logical?

Yes / No Have I checked my sentence structure, diction, punctuation, spelling and style?

Yes / No Is my title imaginative, informative and precise?

Yes / No Have I identified my weak areas---for example, irrelevant evidence, faulty logic or run-on-sentences?

Yes / No Would an educated person who hasn't read the primary material understand everything I'm saying?

### *B. Example of Informal, Ungraded Assignment*

Each week you will undertake at least one informal (ungraded) writing exercise. Usually each section of the course---including sessions devoted to longer papers--- will begin with a form of free-style writing. Most techniques used in Geography and Environmental Studies will be introduced with some form of informal as well as formal writing. You are taught and encouraged throughout the course to diagram, draw and label, outline and model your thoughts. Note: all drafts are also ungraded.

#### Task

You are given two maps of the world showing pressure systems in July and January.  
You must do the following:

- Step 1: Jot down your first impressions of the maps. What are they telling you?
- Step 2: Try to write a brief explanation of what is happening in the mid-Atlantic Ocean and why. Also, why is this important?
- Step 3: Listen to short lecture by instructor. Now, re-write Step 2 as if you were explaining it to a friend.
- Step 4: Write a brief memo to yourself of what you have learned from this exercise.
- Step 5: Share your experience with a fellow student.
- Step 6: Participate with instructor and your fellow students in summarizing the exercise.

## Evaluation

The evaluation of this ungraded exercise will occur by the class and instructor discussing the stages, merits and problems encountered doing the exercise. The instructor will place the rationale of the exercise into a wider framework and explain to you why it is important to be able to link what you see on a map and other visual representations to broader ideas in G&ES. In this way, all that you see and do become part a meaningful whole, not unconnected bits and pieces. All your written work---including the informal writing in this exercise--- is to be given a title, dated, and saved in the Portfolio.

## GRADING POLICIES AND FORMULAE

The grading in the course shall be as follows:

*Attendance (200 points)	20%
Tests (3 short test = 67 pts; Comprehensive final = 133 pts.)	20%
**Portfolio (graded- 50 points)	5%
Short papers (graded- 150 points)	15%
Long papers (graded- 400 points)	40%

\*50 points will be deducted for each day/hour absent and/or for each late/or missing assignments. There are no make-ups.

\*\* the portfolio will contain all the written work of the semester, including introductory statement and a table of contents. Grading is based on neatness and completeness.

## COURSE POLICY

Attend all lectures, meet all deadlines/due dates and conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times.

Cheating, plagiarism and other infractions will be handled in accordance with university policy. It is your responsibility to acquaint yourself with the current university policy and regulations.

If you will be absent for religious observations during the semester you must inform me during the first week of the semester.

Illness will usually require documentation for an excused absence.

I reserve the right to change any of the above requirements, regulations and course policies with sufficient notice.

It is important to be aware of the last date in a semester to officially drop a course.

If you have any questions, at any time, feel free to ask me.

## **Weekly Schedule for “Writing in G&ES”**

### **Week 1: Structure and Process**

OUTCOMES: At the end of the first week you should be able to explain:

- 1) the main themes and divisions in Geography, and the type of knowledge required to understand the causes for environmental deterioration and the role of conservation within the historical and contemporary context, and
- 2) the scope of the written communication skills needed to convey information in G&ES.

ACTIVITIES (Note: Every week will begin with an introductory lecture/commentary by your instructor)

1. Take an ungraded diagnostic test in the basic concepts and terminology used in G&ES. Then look up the answers to the questions and cite where you found the answers. A graded re-test will be given at the end of the second week.
2. Read summaries and outlines of the essence of Geography and Environmental Studies to be provided by your instructor. Your instructor will also explain how your textbooks and other reading material will be used in this course.
3. Read the course syllabus, G&ES handbook, selective sections of G&ES textbook(s). Write in free-style form what you see as the links between the essence of the G&ES provided in the handouts and material found in your G&ES textbook(s). Share your writing with a classmate----do you agree on the main points? If not, why not? Listen to your instructor’s summary of the material and take notes. Compare with your previous free-style notes. Write down what you have learned from this exercise.
4. Begin to organize your portfolio. Your instructor will explain how the portfolio will be used throughout the course, and how it will be evaluated at the end of the course.

### READINGS

1. Northey & Knight, Chapters 1, 14-18
  2. Bedford, esp. pps. xix-xiv; xv-xl.
  3. Goode’s Atlas. Preface.
  4. De Blij, Preface, Chapter 1 (and/or other suitable general textbook)
  5. Handouts on essence of G&ES. G&ES Department Handbook
- N.B. Hereafter in this weekly schedule only specific chapters in Northey & Knight are given. Details of other readings will be presented in written handouts in class.

### **Week 2: Resources in G&ES: Getting Started**

#### OUTCOMES

Learn what resources are needed to facilitate research, writing and presentation in G&ES at NEIU and beyond.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Divide up into teams of three. Go to the library to become acquainted with the NEIU library facilities and the location of G&ES resources. Ask the librarian to show you where to find the various resources, such as bibliographies, guides to literature, on-line sources (including data bases), CDs, dictionaries, directories, encyclopedias, atlases, gazetteers, handbooks, maps and other G&ES reference material. Note: this week may also include a trip to the library by the entire class to meet a librarian.
2. Take notes while visiting the library. Before you start your tour ask the librarian if there is a floor map of the library's holdings; if not, draw a sketch map noting the location of the various G&ES material (books, periodicals, maps, etc.).
3. Make a list (with notes) of other places on campus where you may go to find maps, atlases, air photos and other resources which are useful to undertake G&ES research (e.g., Departments of Earth Science, Anthropology, History, etc.).

Also find out what other libraries may be particularly useful to G&ES students; e.g., Newberry Library, Herkovitz Library at Northwestern. Write a brief summary of each. Don't forget addresses, hours, phone, accessibility, contacts, etc.

4. At the end of the week, write a one page summary of your activities, share it with your fellow students for comment/corrections and turn it in to your instructor for formal evaluation

## READINGS (Also see notation in week one)

1. Northey & Knight, Chapter 2. esp. pps. 23-39

SHORT TEST: At the end of last meeting of Week 2, will cover readings from Weeks 1 & 2.

## **Week 3 and 4: Taking notes and writing reports from lectures and readings**

### OUTCOMES

Demonstrate the ability to take notes from lectures and G&ES reading material.

### ACTIVITIES

1. a) Listen to lecture and take notes. Use notes to answer a number of set questions on brief informal test. Compare your notes and your answers with those of another student.  
b) Listen to a lecture by your instructor on how to take notes and repeat the exercise in a). Write a brief statement on what you have learned from this exercise.
2. During the term, attend at least one lecture outside of the classroom environment, such as the public lecture series at NEIU or some other lecture at a different venue, and write a one page report on the lecture. During the Spring semester, the Annual Student Research Symposium is a good venue. Whenever you complete your exercise, you must share it with a classmate and your lecturer.
3. a) You will be given samples from G&ES books, professional journals, abstracts and other types of publications. Write notes on what you read. Repeat the directions given in #1

above. You must pay particular attention to the guidelines found on pps. 40-41, 48-49 in Northey & Knight.

- b) Listen to a lecture by your instructor on different types (and components parts) of academic publications and how to take notes from readings. Make corrections---if any---to your notes, share your notes with a fellow student, and add a brief statement on what you have learned from the exercise. Turn it in to your instructor to be formally evaluated on the basis of the checklist given in this syllabus: is it well organized, well documented and well expressed.

## READINGS

- 1) Northey & Knight, Chapters 3 and 4
- 2) Selected readings, provided by the instructor, drawn from textbooks, professional journal and other G&ES material, as provided by the instructor, representative of major areas and concepts in G&ES.

SHORT TEST: Last day of Week 4, mainly on material covered in N & K.

## **Weeks 5 & 6: Interpreting/illustrating/captioning visuals, and writing lab and field reports**

### OUTCOMES

Provide a written explanation of phenomena and concepts expressed in maps, graphs, tables, aerial photographs, satellite images and other visual representations. Properly caption/label visual material. Be able to provide accurate written explanations of laboratory, field study, survey, map analysis and remote sensing techniques and results.

### ACTIVITIES

1. The first exercise has two parts.  
  
Part 1: Step 1: Write a summary of information found on maps, graphs, and tables given to you in class. Step 2: Share your work with a fellow student and your instructor. Step 3: re-write summary. Step 4: Submit your paper  
Part II: Fill-in the proper caption/data on maps, graphs and tables which you are given in class. Repeat the steps in Part 1. Both papers submitted at end of week five. In both cases, you must use exact G&ES terminology and you must pay attention to the artistic quality of your work.
2. Produce a sketch map of a local area (e.g., the shops on Bryn Mawr Avenue), and write in free-style a brief explanation for the location of three shops. In a brief paper re-write the same topic following a formal guideline, for example: title, introduction, research method, data gathered, data analysis, discussion and conclusion. Share your re-write with a fellow student. Finally, note what you have learned from this exercise.
3. Using a completed laboratory exercise which will be given to you in class, do the following: 1) identify and look up any scientific terms which you may not understand; 2) write a brief paper explaining the format of the lab report you have read in terms of the rubric given

on pp. 68-69 in Northey & Knight; 3) share your paper with a fellow student; 4) re-write the paper and turn it in to your instructor for formal evaluation.

## READINGS

Northey and Knight, Chapters 6-8

SHORT TEST: Test at the end of Week 6 based mainly on material in Northey and Knight

## **Weeks 7-15, Part II: Longer Papers**

### OUTCOMES

In the second part of the course the communication skills you have learned to present information in G&ES are now brought together in longer papers (4 pages of text and illustration, references, etc.). This part is divided into three, 3-week segments. The structure and requirements for each segment are similar. The first segment focuses on designing a proposal. The second segment deals with a descriptive paper, and in the third segment you will learn how to produce a hypothesis-based paper. You will be given an explanation and examples of each of these types of papers and you will be directed to specific readings in Northey and Knight and other sources.

### ACTIVITIES

In each three-week segment there are six due dates. The first five sections in each segment will afford you the opportunity for drafts, re-writes and sharing your work with fellow students and the instructor. Also your instructor will highlight the importance and techniques associated with each section in this part of the course.

For the proposal paper the six dates are:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Due date 1: Statement of Problem and Definition of Study Area
- \_\_\_\_\_ Due date 2: Approach or Viewpoint and the Literature
- \_\_\_\_\_ Due date 3: Limitations and Data Acquisition
- \_\_\_\_\_ Due date 4: Analysis, Anticipated results and Timetable
- \_\_\_\_\_ Due date 5: Tentative chapter outline and Bibliography
- \_\_\_\_\_ Due date 6: Final Version and Presentation

For the 1) descriptive paper and 2) the hypothesis-based paper the due date structure is essentially the same and are combined here. These papers must build upon the skills developed in the proposal segment as well as those in Part One of the course.

### Descriptive Hypothesis

- \_\_\_\_\_ Due date 1: Topic selection and tentative title
- \_\_\_\_\_ Due date 2: Proposal and outline of paper (and bibliography)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Due date 3: Opening Paragraph
- \_\_\_\_\_ Due date 4: Draft 1 (including maps, graphs, tables, etc)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Due date 5: Draft 2
- \_\_\_\_\_ Due date 6: Final Draft and Presentation

## READINGS

Northey and Knight, Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 10

Portfolio due at the end of penultimate week in the course.

## **Week 16: Final Week---Epilogue**

Summary and review of course by your instructor (include discussion on how to make the course better)

FINAL TEST: a comprehensive final based on key ideas and techniques in the course, and especially on material in Northey and Knight