

Fall 2012- GRG 396T • The Physical Geography of the Global Tropics

Instructor: Dr. Edgardo Latrubesse- Associate Professor- GRG 118- (latrubesse@austin.utexas.edu)- phone: 512-2321592

Office hours: Tuesday 4: PM-5:00 PM

Unique	Days	Time	Location	Instructor
	T	4:00PM-7:00 PM	GRG 408	Latrubesse

Course Description

The tropics are fundamental at a global scale in terms of water, mineral, biological resources and biodiversity. They are also unique in terms of landscape evolution. Because they have acted as a sort of last environmental frontier, the tropics have been suffering most dramatically with recent environmental human impacts in Earth. This course provides a fundamental but advanced understanding on the Physical Geography of the Global Tropics. The framework of the geotectonic, climatic, organization through the geologic times of the tropical landscapes (mountains, rivers, forests and savannas, etc) across the world will be provided. Additionally we will discuss the effect of Quaternary climatic changes and their consequences on biodiversity and bio-geographic patterns. Considering that the major equatorial forest is located in South America, some emphasis will be provided on the Amazon and other South American tropical areas.

The role of the tropics in terms of erosion, production, and the transference of sediments and nutrients to the ocean and related human impacts will also be addressed. The geoenvironmental impacts produced by human activities (land use impact, loss of biodiversity, water resources impacts, etc) will be analyzed.

Term Paper

Graduate students will complete an in-depth (3,000 - 4,000 words) term paper on an approved topic. The paper is due Thursday, December 2th. The paper must adhere to a journal format, and include appropriate references, tables, and figures. The paper should involve original research and data analysis, but not

necessarily field work. Importantly, the paper must include an in-depth literature review and the identification of a specific problem on tropical physical geography. This may include thesis or dissertation topics if relevant to the course content.

Course management

Course materials and grade will be posted on Blackboard. Students are required to consult this website frequently. Selected materials from different textbooks, articles from specialized journals and pdf versions of power points presentations will be provided through Blackboard.

Policies

a) Attendance

This course is intensive, overlaps a variety of disciplines and is relatively complex. This is due, primarily, to the amount of topics and material to be covered during the semester. You are required to attend all classes and arrive on time. It is, therefore, my philosophy that your success in this course will surely vary directly with your class attendance. Be aware of the fact that attendance will be taken on a daily basis and this information can be used in the computation of your final class grade (see Grading policy below). Do not routinely arrive 5 minutes late to class with the excuse that parking was a problem (the obvious solution is to routinely depart 5 minutes earlier).

Laptops are allowed but with prior permission by the professor.

b) Academic Integrity

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility.

Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code (see University guidelines on Academic Dishonesty (section 11-802). In this class, there is zero tolerance for students who violate university rules on scholastic dishonesty with all suspected cases turned over to the University's Dean of Students office. Penalties for scholastic include possibility of failure of course and dismissal from the University. Since dishonesty harms the individual, fellow students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be STRICTLY ENFORCED in this class. Any work submitted by a

student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. Using other person's work without appropriate citation is plagiarism.

Disabilities

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641. <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

Grading Policy

Undergrads: Grades will be assigned on the plus and minus scale (A-, B+ and so forth). The students will present, orally, two individual seminars in front of the class (30%each). Additionally a 30% will be assigned to the term paper. The professor will provide a 10% of the total grade taking into consideration the level of participation and commitment of the student with the course.

Examination Absence Policy

If you miss any seminar, and you have a valid written excuse, you will be given an opportunity to make up a similar seminar but with different questions or approach that previously applied. In order to be allowed to makeup the seminar you will need to present to Prof. Latrubesse a copy of a valid written excuse. If you miss more than one seminar due to valid written excuses, you may be asked to take an incomplete and to complete the course requirements the following semester.

If you do not have a valid excuse, you will receive a zero for that seminar.

► *All notes must be on letterhead, signed, include a contact name and phone number.*

Texts

Course readings will include the text, as well as readings and figures. Selected materials from different textbooks , specialized peer reviewed journals and pdf versions of power points presentations will be provided through

Blackboard. It is my philosophy that an experienced professor with a strong background on research does not necessarily follow and uses a textbook but contributes to student education transmitting his own experience to the students and discussing a variety of sources from the specialized literature. It is essential that you read prior to coming to class so that you may contribute to class discussions.

Recommended books (but not exclusive textbooks)

Adams, W., Goudie, A. and Orme, A. 1999. The Physical Geography of Africa. Oxford University Press, 429p.

Gupta, A. 2005. The Physical Geography of Southeast Asia, Oxford University Press, 898p.

Veblen, T. Young, K., Orme, A. The Physical Geography of South America, Oxford University Press, 361p.

UT POLICY ON EMAIL NOTIFICATION

Instructor to student email is a recognized and accepted form of official communication here at the University of Texas. For the University policy, read this. It is critically important that (1) you make sure to have your current and most frequently checked email address on file in UT Direct and (2) you check it on a daily basis. I will send class email frequently during the semester and you'll be given updates and notices in references to lectures as well as exams.

Religious Holidays

By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day in special if it is coincident with the date of a test.

Office Hours

My office hours this semester are Tuesdays 4:00PM-5:00PM. You may also arrange to meet with me at another time by e-mailing me to set up an appointment.