

EARTH, PEOPLE & ENVIRONMENT: COURSE SYLLABUS

GEOG 16100: FALL 2019

MONDAY/WEDNESDAY, 2:00-3:15, ROBINSON 306

INSTRUCTOR/CONTACT INFORMATION

Richard Federman

Lecturer, Department of Geography, Planning & Sustainability
Robinson Hall, 3rd Floor

Instructor's Email: federmanr@rowan.edu

Instructor's Cell: 215.876.5891

OFFICE HOURS

Monday/Wednesday, 12:15 to 1:45 (or by appointment)

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course aims to tell – or at least introduce - the story of the Earth, its interconnected systems, and our place within them. The class will explore Planet Earth and the major components of the Earth System, including the geosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere and biosphere. Along the way the course will trace the history of the universe from the Big Bang through the formation of our planet. It also attempts to frame the story within the context of *Big History*, an exciting new perspective on our past (and future) that highlights critical threshold moments and the interconnectedness of formative events.

The course explores the evolution of human-like ancestors and continues into the arrival of our own species, through revolutions in agriculture and industry, tracing the incredible story of our species and our planet into and including the newest geologic time period, the Anthropocene, and beyond. It also focuses on the impact of human activities on our environment, and how the decisions we make today may shape the Big History of the future. Especially important is conveying the notion that all of our students are part of this evolving story, and will have the opportunity to contribute to a more sustainable future for mankind and our fragile planet.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Through active participation in this course, including participating fully in class assignments, discussions and activities, students should acquire, develop, and/or build upon the following:

1. An appreciation for the age, scale and complexity of the universe.
2. Familiarity with the geographical perspective, the sub-fields of geography, and the components of geographic data collection and presentation.
3. A basic understanding of the components of earth science, particularly the four great Earth Systems.
4. The ability to apply the scientific method to problem solving, and a respect for evidence-based problem solving.
5. A broad perspective on how a variety of authors and researchers have helped us understand the story of our planet and species.
6. The identification of key threshold moments and events that have shaped evolution of our species and the rise of human civilization.
7. A grasp of some of the various geographically-based socioeconomic and political realities of our time.
8. An appreciation for what living in the Anthropocene means.
9. An understanding of the key environmental issues facing us today, including causes and possible outcomes/solutions.
10. A sense that you are part of the unfolding story of humanity on this planet, and can play a role in molding the Big History of the future.

COURSE MATERIALS

There are no materials that need to be purchased by the student for this class. All course materials – including readings, study guides and assignments will be provided to you by the instructor.

ONLINE COMPONENT

This course will be supplemented by a class Blackboard web page, available through: <http://blackboard.rowan.edu> (or <http://rowan.blackboard.com>). Course materials including study guides, presentations and assignments will be posted by me to the class Blackboard site. You are responsible for accessing and utilizing the class materials posted on the Blackboard site. Relevant materials from Blackboard should be read and/or accessed prior to each class meeting.

EMAIL

Your official Rowan email is an essential form of communication in this course. You are expected to check your email every day, in case of any announcements or other urgent course information. Email is my preferred form of communication for any course or topic questions, or any issues that arise during the semester. I prioritize student emails and generally aim to respond in less than one business day (<24 hours during the work week, perhaps longer on the weekend or other announced period).

Please feel free to contact me with any queries: federmanr@rowan.edu

COURSE STANDARDS

Students are expected to be attentive and respectful of others in the classroom.

Texting is discouraged during lectures or discussions. Any use of a cell phone during these activities should take place outside the classroom. Laptops should not be open during lectures or discussions except for the purpose of taking notes or other class-related activities.

Academic integrity is paramount. Academic dishonesty, in any form, will not be tolerated. According to Rowan University policy, students committing any act of academic dishonesty may fail the course, be suspended from the university, or both.

WORKING WITH CLASSMATES

There will be times during the semester when working with one or more classmates is encouraged, such as during in-class games and activities. There are also situations in which collaborating with a classmate is permissible, within certain guidelines. This includes most importantly the preparation of homework assignments. Below is a list of what you can and cannot do with respect to collaboration on a homework assignment.

Permissible

- a. helping each other research answers to questions
- b. bouncing ideas off one another for thought questions

Not Permissible

- a. handing in one assignment with multiple names on it
- b. submitting answers identical or nearly identical to a classmate, particularly for thought or opinion questions
- c. copying an electronic file from a classmate

UNIVERSITY-WIDE POLICIES

Important information regarding Rowan's academic and classroom policies is available on the Provost's web site:

http://www.rowan.edu/provost/policies/conduct_OfficeofTheProvostRowanUniversity.htm

GRADING SCALE

Grades on various course assessments and final grades for the course will adhere to Rowan's standard grading scale which is summarized below:

A (94-100%), A- (90-93%)
B+ (87- 89%), B (83- 86%), B- (80- 82%)
C+ (77- 79%), C (73- 76%), C- (70- 72%)
D+ (67- 69%), D (63- 66%), D- (60- 62%)
F (<60%)

GRADING PROCEDURE – WEIGHTS OF VARIOUS COURSE EXERCISES

Exams (3)	45%
Question Sets (3)	20%
Mini-Project	10%
TED Talk Summary	5%
Written Assessment	10%
Attendance	10%

DESCRIPTION OF VARIOUS COURSE EXERCISES

EXAMS

There will be an exam at the end of each of the three units we cover this semester. The exams will feature a variety of question types and will focus on the information and questions contained in the “Key Concepts” document that I will provide on Blackboard.

Tentative Exam Dates:

Exam #1	Exam #2	Exam #3
October 9 th	November 11 th	TBA

QUESTION SETS

Each of the three units we cover this semester will have a short set of homework questions associated with it. These questions are designed to allow students to explore course topics beyond what is discussed in lecture.

Tentative due dates for the Question Sets are listed below. Late submissions will be accepted but lowered in grade.

QS #1	QS #2	QS #3
September 23 rd	October 30 th	November 25 th

MINI-PROJECT

Each student will complete a small project, choosing from a list of possible topics that I will provide. Details on what is expected in the mini-project will be available on our Blackboard site. The mini-project will be due on October 21st.

TED TALK SUMMARY

For this assignment the student should select a TED Talk or similar online presentation, watch it, then prepare a one-page summary explaining how this talk ties in to the themes discussed in our class, and in what way this talk broadened your perspective on the topic. The TED Talk summary will be due on December 9th.

CLASS ASSESSMENT

All students taking Rowan Core classes such as Earth, People & Environment are required to complete an assessment exercise covering key topics from across the semester. Timing and parameters for the assessment will be announced in advance.

ATTENDANCE

The attendance portion of your grade will be calculated numerically based on the percentage of classes attended/missed over the course of the semester. *Students are encouraged to attend every class meeting.*

ACADEMIC SUCCESS OUTREACH

Your academic success is very important. If you have a documented disability that may have an impact upon your work in this class, please contact me. Students must provide documentation of their disability to the Academic Success Center in order to receive official University services and accommodations. The Academic Success

Center can be reached at 856-256-4234. The Center is located on the 3rd floor of Savitz Hall. The staff is available to answer questions regarding accommodations or assist you in your pursuit of accommodations.