

Hunter College of the City University of New York
Department of Geography
GEOG 260/GEOG 621.51 Section 01
Course Statement - Fall 2012

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COURSE:

GEOG 260/621.51 Geography of New York State is a regional course focusing on the geographic aspects of the political area called New York State. Enrollment in GEOG 621.51 is for students in the Teacher Education Program who need credits in social studies to fulfill their degree requirements. GEOG 621.51 is **not open** to students in other master's programs. The prerequisite for both courses is GEOG 101 or an equivalent introductory geography course. This course is categorized as "W: web enhanced" because of its reliance on Internet sites to provide information. See Goals and FORMAT sections below.

GOALS:

Geography is both a physical and social science. Knowledge of the basic concepts of earth systems is important for us to better explain and analyze human interaction with them. In doing so, we explore and take examples from the past as we look at the present and analyze current conditions. Using accumulated knowledge, we then are able to make informed decisions for the future.

The goals of the course are **(1)** to learn about the geography of New York State – its physical environment, the distribution of its people and their activities, and the interrelationships between the people and the environment in the NYS - and to apply geographic principles and reasoning to a real world situation where NYS is used as an example of regional analysis; and **(2)** to explore, navigate through, and use the geographic information available on the Internet, especially the information provided by the State of New York. **(3)** For those in the education sequence, in addition to **(1)** and **(2)** above, to gather and use information about NYS within the guidelines of the *National Geography Standards* for presentation at a grade-specific level.

FORMAT:

This course will use and apply the fundamental concepts of geography presented in GEOG 101.

This is an Internet-based course. As there is no current textbook on the geography of New York State, the course depends heavily on the State of New York's government-sponsored and other appropriate non-NYS government web sites. Each student will focus on three of the state's 62 counties and these counties - which will be randomly assigned - are the basis of class work and assignments throughout the semester. The required and optional take-home exercises allow students to navigate through sources of material and mine data that can be analyzed geographically. Most of the exercises require access to a computer and printer to complete. Students will be given an account in the Geography Department's computer lab and allowed access to its high-speed workstations and printers located in North Building's Lab 1090B throughout the semester. Material and assignments will be distributed electronically and stored on the *Course Homepage* (<http://www.geo.hunter.cuny.edu/courses/cwpages.html>).

The course is divided into two sections. **Part I** deals the *physical characteristics* of NYS: paleogeography, physiographic regions, glaciation, seismic activity, mineral deposits, land reclamation, climate, air quality, soil, water resources and the coastal environment. **Part II** focuses on the *cultural landscape*: people's interaction with the elements of earth environment, settlement decisions, and the use of what is available to them. Here, we look at the state's historical geography: Native Americans in pre-European times; European exploration and settlement of NYS; the state's role in the American Revolution; its development in the post-revolutionary period (settlement pattern, the canal era; railroads, industrialization and urbanization) to the present. Then we look at the population geography of NYS (trends, the aging of NYS, health issues). We end by looking at the rural landscape (environmental history, conservation, open space, forestry and agriculture) and the urban landscape (original site location, urban functions, and economic variables).

GRADING:

Grading is based on the following requirements: two exams (14% each = 28% of the grade), twelve take-home exercises (6% ea. = 72%). There is the ability to earn extra credit through optional exercises, documented field work and a short topical research paper. Assignments have deadlines and lateness is penalized. There is a direct correlation between good attendance and good grades. The required reading assignments supplement class lectures. Attendance is taken.

OUTCOMES:

Upon the successful completion of this course, you will be able to relate the cultural landscape of NYS to its physical characteristics, make informed decisions using geographic principles and spatial concepts, navigate the Internet to find geographic information and maps of NYS and, for those in the education sequence, meld this knowledge with the National Geography Standards for presentation to students at specific grade levels.

BOOKS:

1. *Moon Handbooks: New York State, 5th edition (2010) or 4th edition (2006)*, Avalon Travel Publishing, CA, 2006. ISBN 978159880342-6 or 9781566917964

2. *Isachsen, Y.W., et al, editors. Geology of New York: A Simplified Account, 2nd ed.*, New York State Museum, NYS Geological Survey, Albany, NY, 2000. ISBN 1-55557-162-X

3. *Rand McNally. Easy to Read New York State Road Map*. ISBN 10:0-528-87848-4

4. *Stradling, David. The Nature of New York: An Environmental History of the Empire State*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2010.

SYLLABUS:

The syllabus and the course requirements for this course will be posted on the Course Home Page located at: <http://www.geo.hunter.cuny.edu/courses/cwpages.html>.