

Hunter College  
**Introduction to Environmental Geosciences**  
Geology 10500  
Fall 2019

Hunter West W511 Wednesdays, 10:10 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**Instructor** Gisselle Mejía  
**Email** gm824@hunter.cuny.edu

### Email policy

I encourage you to email me with any questions about the class. In order for me to respond in a timely fashion, it is important for you to identify yourself in the subject line of emails as follows:

LAST NAME, FIRST NAME, GEOL 10500

Emails sent with this format will be answered within 48 hours of receipt. Emails sent without this format may take longer to answer.

### Course Description

This course explores important environmental issues facing society today and investigates the science behind those issues. We will study earth's physical systems to understand global climate change, pollution, the use of natural resources, alternative energies and sustainable agriculture. We will study the fundamentals of evolution and population ecology to understand biodiversity, conservation and the impacts of human activities on habitat. We will also examine the connections between the biological and physical sciences and environmental politics, environmental economics and environmental ethics and how they each figure in solving environmental problems. (3 credits; satisfies GER 2E, non-laboratory science; Flexible Core-Scientific World)



### Course Learning Objectives

You can expect to finish the course with a basic understanding of:

- The fundamental principles of the physical and biological sciences that govern ecosystems
- The production and uses of energy, mineral and agricultural resources and their related issues of sustainability
- The main sources of environmental pollution and their local and global implications for human and nonhuman life
- The promises and limitations of science and technology for addressing environmental problems
- The complex relationship between science, technology, politics, economics and ethics regarding environmental issues and their potential solutions

### Additional Learning Objectives

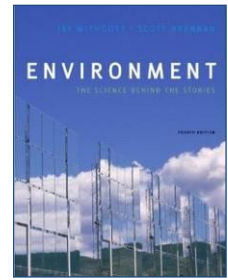
GEOL 10500 is designed as a first-year, non-lab science course. As such, in addition to learning the basic concepts of environmental geosciences, you will learn:

- How science works
- Quantitative and qualitative reasoning skills
- How to interpret graphs and tables
- Critical thinking skills
- How to locate and read scientific materials

## Required Text:

Jay Withgott and Scott Brennan (2017) *Environment, The Science Behind the Stories*, San Francisco: Benjamin Cummings. ISBN-13: 9780321712738.

Although lectures are based on the current (6<sup>th</sup>) edition of this text, you may wish to buy an older edition because used copies can be very inexpensive. The basic concepts do not change from edition to edition.



**Blackboard** will be used as a communication tool for this course. Any announcements will be posted regularly and important documents, including the syllabus and assignment instructions, will be posted and available for your reference. It is your responsibility to ensure that they have access to the course Blackboard site and to check it regularly for notifications and announcements.



## Course Policies

### Participation

Proactive engagement with the required readings, daily preparation, and participation in class discussions will correlate with your quality of learning and personal growth from this course. We will cover a lot of material over the course of the semester, and the only way we will be productive as a class is if each individual completes the work expected of him or her. This means you should complete the assigned readings and assignments **PRIOR** to the class for which they are due.

At times we may discuss topics that have strong political or ethical views attached to them. A comfortable and respectful environment is to be maintained in our classroom. Individuals should feel free to express their viewpoints on topics, and we will each respect the views expressed by others. Offensive speech and inflammatory comments will not be tolerated. Keep in mind that while many opinions and solutions may exist for the topics we discuss, we will primarily be concerned with those that can be backed up with information and data obtained through use of the scientific method.

### Group Project-Synthesizing a Scientific Article

You will work with a small group (2-4 people) to prepare an oral presentation on a scientific article relevant to the syllabus. Each presentation will be approximately 12 minutes long. In addition, each group will submit a written summary of its work. Further details will be provided after the semester begins.

### Attendance

I take attendance at every class meeting. You should arrive in class **on time**. If you have a legitimate reason for missing a session, you should let me know as soon as possible. In addition, you should ask a classmate or check Blackboard immediately for missed information so that you do not fall behind. We will be moving quickly in this course, and it is your responsibility to keep up.

### Extra Credit

I **do not** offer extra credit. By participating fully and thoughtfully in in-class discussions, by having completed the assigned readings, and by consistently attending lectures, you can expect to see positive outcomes both in your overall learning in this course as well as in your final course grade.

### Classroom Electronics Use

Laptops, phones and tablets are not to be used in the classroom. Exceptions will be made only for those with learning disabilities who can document their need for electronic devices in the class. **Phones** should be turned off or set to silent before entering the classroom. Absolutely no texting or calling is allowed during class. If you are alerted to a personal

matter that requires your attention during class, you must leave the classroom to use an electronic device. **ABSOLUTELY NO ELECTRONIC DEVICES OF ANY KIND ARE PERMITTED DURING EXAMS.** Violation of this rule will result in an automatic grade of zero (0) for the exam, and the possibility of further disciplinary action.



## Grading Policies

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Participation .....	10% of your total grade
Scientific article projects .....	20% of your total grade
Chapter quizzes (on Blackboard) .....	10% of your total grade
Midterm Exam .....	30% of your total grade
Final Exam .....	30% of your total grade

### **Credit/No Credit Grading Option:**

Students who satisfy all of the course requirements (participation, quizzes, group project, exams) may be eligible to request to be graded under the Credit/No Credit system. I will accept the Credit/No Credit form up until 15 minutes **before** the scheduled start of the final exam. No forms will be accepted after the final exam begins. This option requires a signed agreement between student and instructor that must be submitted prior to the day of the final exam. The college policy on credit/no credit grading may be reviewed at [http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/onestop/repository/files/registrar/creditnocredit\\_reg.pdf](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/onestop/repository/files/registrar/creditnocredit_reg.pdf).

### **Quizzes and Exams:**

The quizzes will be completed on Google forms. Links to the quizzes will be posted on Blackboard. The quizzes will consist of multiple-choice questions from the assigned readings and class presentations. Quizzes must be submitted between the time the material is presented in class and the midnight before the next class. Late submissions will receive a 10% reduction in score for each day past the due date.

Exams will be multiple choice questions selected from the quizzes. Some material we cover in class may not be covered in the textbook. Anything that is discussed in-class is fair game for the quizzes and exams; therefore, your attendance, attentiveness, and participation at in-class lectures will be extremely important to your success in the course.

If, for a valid medical emergency, you do miss an exam or assignment, you must contact me within 48 hours of the missed exam and present acceptable documentary evidence for your absence.

### **Incompletes**

I do not give incompletes (IN) except under the most extraordinary and documented medical emergencies. No late assignments (including examinations) will be accepted. Without a valid medical excuse, students will receive a grade of zero (0) on any test not taken or assignment missed. The Hunter College policy on Incomplete as a grade can be found at <http://catalog.hunter.cuny.edu/content.php?catoid=32&navoid=7753&hl=incomplete&returnto=search..>

### **Hunter College Policy on Academic Integrity**

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

## ADA Policy


In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational access and accommodations for its registered students. Hunter College students with disabilities and medical conditions are encouraged to register with the Office of AccessABILITY, located in Room E1214B, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call: (212) 772- 4857 or (212) 650-3231.

## Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct

In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College affirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

- a. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (212-267-7273) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444)
- b. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) of Colleen Barry ([colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu) or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.

CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link: <http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf>

	<h3>Schedule*</h3> <p>*This schedule is tentative and subject to change by the Instructor. Any changes will be announced in advance.</p>
8/29	<b>Course Introduction, (Text Ch. 1); Earth's Physical Systems: Matter, Energy and Geology (Text Ch. 2)</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Textbook, Ch. 1; Textbook, Ch. 2; Wackernagel et al., 1999, National natural capital accounting with the ecological footprint concept.
9/12	<b>Evolution, Biodiversity and Population Ecology (Text Ch. 3)</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Textbook, Ch. 3; Steffen et al. 2007, The Anthropocene
9/26	<b>Species Interactions and Community Ecology (Text Ch. 4)</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Textbook, Ch. 4; Pace et al., 2010, Recovery of native zooplankton associated with increased mortality of an invasive mussel
10/3	<b>Environmental Systems and Ecosystem Ecology (Text Ch. 5)</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Textbook, Ch. 5; Vitousek et al., 1997, Human alteration of the global nitrogen cycle

10/10	<p><b>Ethics, Economics and Sustainable Development (Text ch. 6); Environmental Policy-Making (Text Ch. 7)</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Textbook, Ch. 6; Textbook Ch. 7; Cobb et al., 1995, If the GDP is up, why is America down?</p>
10/17	<p><b>Human Population (Text Ch. 8)</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Textbook, Ch. 8; Hooke et al., 2012, Land Transformations by Humans</p>
10/24	<p><b>Midterm Exam (45 mins)</b></p> <p><b>Soil and Agriculture (Text Ch. 9)</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Textbook, Ch. 9; Montgomery, 2007, Soil Erosion and Sustainability</p>
10/31	<p><b>Biotechnology and the future of food (Text Ch. 10); Biodiversity and Conservation Biology (Text Ch. 11)</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Textbook Ch.10 and Ch. 11</p>
11/7	<p><b>Forests and Forest Management (Text Ch. 12); Freshwater Systems and Resources (Text Ch. 15)</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Textbook Ch.12 and 15</p>
11/14	<p><b>Marine and Coastal Systems and Resources (Text Ch. 16);</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Textbook Ch. 16</p>
11/21	<p><b>Atmospheric Science (Text Ch. 17)</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Textbook Ch. 17</p>
11/28	<p><b>Global Climate Change (Text Ch. 18)</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Textbook, Ch. 18; Rignott, 2014, Widespread, rapid grounding line retreat...(of West Antarctic glaciers)</p>
12/5	<p><b>Applied Environmental Geoscience Assignment Presentations</b></p>
12/12	<p><b>Applied Environmental Geoscience Assignment Presentations</b></p>
12/19	<p><b>Final Exam</b></p>