

# FIELD EXPLORATIONS IN GEOGRAPHY (GEOG 483/583)

New Mexico State University  
Department of Geography

## SPRING 2017

**Lecture:** Thursdays, 13:10-14:25, Breland Hall 192

**Field #1:** Saturday, 11 February 2017, 8:00-12:00, Location TBA

**Field #2:** Saturday, 11 March 2017, 8:00-17:00, Location TBA

**Field #3:** Sunday, 12 March 2017, 8:00-15:15, Location TBA

**Professor:** **Dr. Michaela Buenemann**

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✉ [elabuen@nmsu.edu](mailto:elabuen@nmsu.edu)

Office Hours: Tue, 10:15-12:00 and 13:30-15:30; Wed, 10:00-12:00 and 13:00-16:00; Thu, 10:15-10:45 and 14:30-15:15. Sign up on Dr. B.'s door to ensure her time is all yours! If the 10 office hours she is offering conflict with your schedule, please contact her to make an appointment.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

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This three-credit-hour course is designed to introduce you to the fundamentals of geographic field research and, as a result, touches on such varied topics as research ethics; research design; and collection, analysis, interpretation, representation, and presentation of various kinds of field data (vegetation, soils, social surveys, etc.). We will devote a roughly equal amount of time to an exploration of concepts, techniques, and tools pertinent to both human and physical geography; whenever possible, we will consider coupled human-environment systems. The class will meet weekly for a discussion of key concepts and/or hands-on research activities. In addition, there will be three official days of field work. During the first field day, you will train your “landscape forensics” skills (i.e., skills at identifying, describing, and explaining spatial patterns and processes). During the second and third field days, you will practice field methods for answering a range of geographic questions. The course will conclude with a presentation of the geographic field research you and your team conducted throughout the semester.

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

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Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

1. read human and natural landscapes (e.g., describe, analyze, and interpret spatio-temporal patterns and processes of vegetation, soil, landforms, land use, etc.);
2. collect, analyze, interpret, and represent geographic field data using a diversity of concepts and methods; and
3. communicate geographic field research findings.

## **COURSE STRUCTURE**

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This is a **fast-paced course with a steep learning curve**. The course introduces a variety of interrelated concepts and methods relevant to geographic field research. We will deal with new concepts and methods every week and each is treated more or less separately in the tentative course outline below. However, you can only become an excellent field geographer, if you understand all concepts and techniques discussed in this course and how they relate. It is thus crucial that you always keep up with the class materials by preparing for class, actively participating in class meetings, and reworking all class materials. **WE** will do our very best to **FACILITATE LEARNING** (i.e., to help you achieve the learning outcomes stated above)—we will always prepare and present class materials to the best of our abilities; give you tasks that will help you better understand key concepts and techniques; and encourage cooperative learning and class discussions. **YOU** are **RESPONSIBLE** for **LEARNING ITSELF**.

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

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**Website:** Course materials (e.g., lectures, labs, grades) can be found at <https://learn.nmsu.edu/>. To access course materials, simply log in to your Canvas account and click the link for this course. The website is a key element of this course and you are required to review its contents regularly. If you encounter problems related to the website, please contact us immediately.

**E-mail:** Official NMSU communication to you will come through your NMSU e-mail account. Access your NMSU e-mail frequently, or forward it to your current use address, as your success in college may ride on your ability to respond quickly. To guarantee a response to your emails, always a) begin your emails with a proper greeting that includes the name of the person/s you are emailing; b) conclude with a closing that includes your name; and c) use proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Unless we are away from the office with limited access to email, we will respond to your emails within one business day. Similarly, we expect you to respond to our emails in a timely manner.

**Textbook:** There is no required textbook for this class. However, there are some required readings, which will be made available to you via Canvas. Useful optional books for the class include:

- Gomez, B., and J. P. Jones III. 2010. *Research methods in geography: a critical introduction*. 1st ed. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Clifford, N., S. French, and G. Valentine. 2010. *Key methods in geography*. 1st ed. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.

**Materials:** There is no specific set of materials you need to bring to every class period. However, there is a range of materials you will need at one point or another during the semester, including: all-weather notebook, pencil and eraser, metric ruler and protractor, pocket calculator (or smartphone), camera (or smartphone), and field clothes and supplies. No worries: we will let you know when you will need which materials.

## **FIELD WORK**

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There will be three mandatory field trips in this course. Details regarding the field trips will be made available to you in class and on the course website. For now, just note the following: if

you are not dressed appropriately or if you do not bring the required supplies and equipment, you cannot be allowed to participate in the field work. Also, note the following miscellaneous field rules:

**Help:** We are a fact-finding research team and we must act as a team. Everyone helps out. No shirkers in this Whoville. This applies to all aspects of this field experience.

**Happy:** Be happy. You may worry all you want, however.

**Fun:** No one is allowed to have any fun. At the first sign that any course participant is having fun, we are heading back to the Fort. Okay, just kidding ...

**Whining:** No whining. Definitely no whining!

## GRADING

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Your final course grade is determined by the points you accrue out of a possible 1000 points:

<b>Reading Notes (× 10)</b>	150 points	15 %	} <b>1,000 Points</b> <b>(100 %)</b>
<b>Activities (× 12)</b>	250 points	25 %	
<b>Field Report #1</b>	50 points	5 %	
<b>Field Report #2</b>	50 points	5 %	
<b>Research Presentation</b>	500 points	50 %	

Graduate Students: Upon completion of this course, the number of points listed above for undergraduate students will be adjusted to account for only 80 % of your final grade. You will earn the remaining 20 % of your final grade through completion of a term project.

Your final course letter grade will be based on the following scale:

<b>A (4.0)</b>	95-100%	<b>B (3.0)</b>	84-86%	<b>C (2.0)</b>	74-76%	<b>D (1.0)</b>	64-66%
<b>A- (3.7)</b>	90-94%	<b>B- (2.7)</b>	80-83%	<b>C- (2.0)</b>	70-73%	<b>D- (1.0)</b>	60-63%
<b>B+ (3.3)</b>	87-89%	<b>C+ (2.3)</b>	77-79%	<b>D+ (1.0)</b>	67-69%	<b>F (0)</b>	< 60%

Individual assignments and tests will not be curved (↑ or ↓). We *may* make adjustments of the final letter grade after an assessment of the class curve at the end of the term. We consider class participation, attendance, and improvement over the term as justification for discounting a grade that is uncharacteristically lower than others.

An **I (Incomplete)** grade will be assigned only if you are unable to complete the course due to circumstances beyond your control (e.g., documented illness or documented death or crisis in your immediate family) that develop after the last day to withdraw from the course. Job-related circumstances are generally not appropriate grounds for assigning an I. An I grade will not be used to avoid assigning of D, F, U, or RR grades for marginal or failing work.

**Reading Notes:** You will have to submit ten sets of notes on the assigned readings, each worth 15 points (1.5%) of your final course grades. Collectively, the reading notes will thus determine **15%** (150 points) of your final course grade. The notes should include your responses to learning outcomes associated with the readings (See “Learning Outcomes” below.) as well as clear and muddy aspects of the readings (i.e., concepts that did and not make sense, respectively). Reading notes are credit opportunities for you to reflect on your understanding of the class materials. They should serve as an incentive for you to prepare the readings for class. At the same time, they allow your instructor to tailor each class meeting specifically to your needs, with emphasis on muddy points and no or only short discussions of clear points. Reading notes are due via Canvas by the beginning of class and are individual efforts (For specific due dates, refer to the “Tentative Course Outline” below.).

**Activities:** There will be twelve team-based in-class activities; the first eleven of these will account for 20 points (2%) each and the last one for 30 points (3%). Collectively, the activities will thus determine **25%** (250 points) of your final course grade. Activities are designed to help you acquire specific class learning outcomes (See “Learning Outcomes” below.) and are due at the end of class via email to Dr. B. (For specific due dates, refer to the “Tentative Course Outline” below.).

**Field Reports:** You will have to submit two field reports, one after each field trip. Both reports, while based on class expeditions, have to be written by you as an individual. Each report will contribute 50 points (5%) toward your final course grade; collectively, the two reports will determine **10%** (100 points) of your final course grade. Field reports are due via Canvas approximately two weeks after each field excursion (For specific due dates, refer to the “Tentative Course Outline” below.).

**Research Presentation:** In collaboration with your team members, you will have to prepare and present a scientific research presentation based on the field data you collected, analyzed, and interpreted. The research presentation will be broken down into several manageable tasks; collectively, the presentation tasks will account for **50 %** (500 points) of your final course grade. All presentation tasks are to be submitted via email to Dr. B..

**Teams & Peer Evaluations:** Collaboration is an important component of most jobs and tends to be very rewarding. We thus encourage collaboration throughout the semester. To facilitate the process, you will be divided into teams, each comprised of about four students. Each team will be made up of a diversity of individuals, but different teams will be comparable to each other (e.g., each team will be composed of roughly the same number of geography and non-geography majors). Members of every individual team will complete Activities and the Research Presentation as just that—a team. However, while each team member will initially receive the same grades as all other team members, adjustments of each team member’s grades (upward or downward) will be made based on peer evaluations that assess an individual’s contribution to the success of the team (e.g., preparedness, reliability, participation in discussions, ability to compromise). It is thus in your own best interest to always be prepared and contribute as much as possible to teamwork and discussions.

**Learning Outcomes (LOs):** Many LOs (i.e., descriptions of things you should be able to do) could be formulated for each topic, but some are particularly crucial to help you acquire the three big LOs of this course (p. 1). To help you stay focused on the important issues, we will provide you with a set of crucial LOs for each topic. Consider these LOs as your study guide.

**Term Project (Grad Students Only!):** Grad students will be required to submit a term project as part of their course work (20% of final grade). Guidelines for the term project are described in a separate document. If you are a graduate student, please contact me ASAP for details.

**Further details regarding each of the above grade components will be provided to you in class, lab, and/or on the course website.**

## **POLICIES, CODES, ETC.**

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**Students with Disabilities.** Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) covers issues relating to disability and accommodations. If you have questions or need an accommodation in the classroom (all medical

information is treated confidentially), contact: Trudy Luken, Director; Student Accessibility Services (SAS) - Corbett Center, Rm. 208; Phone: (575) 646-6840 E-mail: [sas@nmsu.edu](mailto:sas@nmsu.edu); Website: <http://sas.nmsu.edu/>

**Non-Discrimination.** NMSU policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, retaliation, serious medical condition, sex, sexual orientation, spousal affiliation, and protected veterans status. Furthermore, Title IX prohibits sex discrimination to include sexual misconduct: sexual violence (sexual assault, rape), sexual harassment and retaliation. For more information on discrimination issues, Title IX, Campus SaVE Act, NMSU Policy Chapter 3.25, NMSU's complaint process, or to file a complaint contact: Lauri Millot, Title IX Coordinator; Agustin Diaz, Title IX Deputy Coordinator; Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) - O'Loughlin House, 1130 University Avenue; Phone: (575) 646-3635 E-mail: [equity@nmsu.edu](mailto:equity@nmsu.edu); Website: <http://www.nmsu.edu/~eoo/>

**Other NMSU Resources.** NMSU Police Department: (575) 646-3311, [www.nmsupolice.com](http://www.nmsupolice.com); NMSU Police Victim Services: (575) 646-3424; NMSU Counseling Center: (575) 646-2731; NMSU Dean of Students: (575) 646-1722; For Any On-Campus Emergencies: 911

**Code of Academic Integrity.** Enrollment in this course and acceptance of this syllabus is your **contract** constituting acceptance of all University policies regarding academic integrity, including but not limited to cheating and plagiarism. You are expected to comply fully with the NMSU Honor Code as presented in the Student Handbook (<http://studenthandbook.nmsu.edu/>). Students who are judged to be guilty of academic dishonesty (<http://studenthandbook.nmsu.edu/student-code-of-conduct/academic-misconduct/>) on any graded class component will receive no points for that component, and we reserve the right to consider more severe penalties such as failure of the course and referral to the Dean and Student Judicial Affairs.

**Absence Policy.** Absences due to University-sanctioned activities, work-related events, holidays or special events observed by organized religions, or illness will be excused, if you provide us with official written documentation explaining your absence. We don't really have any additional absence policies. Just keep the following in mind: learning is your responsibility and, if you miss a lecture or lab, you will have to figure out how to "make it up;" your peers will evaluate you in terms of your contributions to the success of your team and the class and these evaluations will be used to convert team grades to individual grades.

**Withdrawal.** Withdrawal from this course is solely your responsibility; we will not drop you from this class under any circumstances. If you no longer wish to be enrolled in this course, you must withdraw from it. If you are still on the class roll at the end of the semester, you will receive a grade based on the work submitted.

**What you can expect from us.** We will be available in class, during office hours and scheduled appointments, and via email to respond to any questions or concerns you may have. Don't be shy and contact us as soon as ambiguities, problems, or concerns arise! We will take all of your concerns seriously and respond to you as soon and as specific as possible. We will address any issues that are of importance to all students in class and on Canvas. We will do our very best to always be prepared for class, grade assignments fairly, and return your work promptly (within one week). We reserve the right to change scheduled lectures, exams, and assignments. Any changes made will not adversely affect your workload or grade.

**What we expect from you:** Enrollment in this course and acceptance of this syllabus is your **contract** constituting acceptance of ALL New Mexico State University policies and codes as well as ALL specific policies outlined in this syllabus. We expect you to be on time for all class-related activities, submit all tasks as instructed, and always show “good” behavior toward both your instructor and peers. **HAVE FUN!**

## TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

Date & Time	Topic : (Due At Home   Due In Class)
Thu, 01/19/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Welcome &amp; Getting Started</b>
Thu, 01/26/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Theory, Practice, Ethics, and The Field</b> ✓ Reading Notes #1 (Clifford, French, and Valentine 2010; Jones III and Gomez 2010; Smith 2010) ✓ Activity #1
Thu, 02/02/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Field Work in Physical Geography</b> ✓ Reading Notes #2 (Crozier, Hardenbicker, and Gomez 2010; Gillespie and MacDonald 2010; Winkler 2010) ✓ Activity #2
Thu, 02/09/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Field Work in Human Geography</b> ✓ Reading Notes #3 (Allsop et al. 2010; Schein 2010; Secor 2010) ✓ Activity #3
Sat, 02/11/2017, 8:00-12:00	<b>Field Trip #1: Landscape Forensics</b> ✓ Reading Notes #4 (TBD)
Thu, 02/16/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Field Work in Human-Environment Studies</b> ✓ Reading Notes #5 (Robbins 2010) ✓ Activity #4
Thu, 02/23/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Field Work in GIS&amp;T</b> ✓ Reading Notes #6 (Goodchild 2010; St Martin and Pavlovskaya 2010; Stow 2010) ✓ Field Report #1 ✓ Activity #5
Thu, 03/02/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Sampling</b> ✓ Reading Notes #7 (Jensen and Shumway 2010; Rice 2010) ✓ Activity #6
Thu, 03/09/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Field Work Preparation</b> ✓ Activity #7
Saturday, 03/11/2017, 8:00-17:00	<b>Field Trip #2: Data Collection in Physical Geography</b> ✓ Reading Notes #8 (Bullard 2010)

Sunday, 12 March 2017, 8:00-15:15	<b>Field Trip #3: Data Collection in Human Geography</b>
Thu, 03/16/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Field Work Follow-Up</b> ✓ Activity #8
Thu, 03/23/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Spring Break (20-24 March 2017)</b>
Thu, 03/30/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Representation of Geographic Data: Maps, Tables, Graphs, Etc.</b> ✓ Reading Notes #9 (Field 2010) ✓ Field Report #2 ✓ Activity #9
Thu, 04/06/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Quantitative Data Analysis</b> ✓ Activity #10
Thu, 04/13/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Qualitative Data Analysis</b> ✓ Activity #11
Thu, 04/20/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Creating Presentations &amp; Writing Reports</b> ✓ Reading Notes #10 (DeLyser 2010) ✓ Activity #12
Thu, 04/27/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Field Data Analysis and Representation</b>
Thu, 05/04/2017, 13:10-14:25	<b>Draft Presentations</b>
Thu, 05/09/2017, 13:00-15:00	<b>Final Presentations</b>

## READINGS

- Allsop, D., H. Allen, H. Clare, I. Cook, H. Raxter, C. Upton, and A. Williams. 2010. Ethnography and participant observation. In *Research methods in geography: a critical introduction*, eds. B. Gomez and J. P. Jones III, 206-221. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Bullard, J. 2010. Health and safety in the field. In *Key methods in geography*, eds. N. Clifford, S. French and G. Valentine, 49-58. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Clifford, N., S. French, and G. Valentine. 2010. Getting started in geographical research: how this book can help. In *Key methods in geography*, eds. N. Clifford, S. French and G. Valentine, 3-15. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Crozier, M. J., U. Hardenbicker, and B. Gomez. 2010. Physical landscapes. In *Research methods in geography: a critical introduction*, eds. B. Gomez and J. P. Jones III, 94-115. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- DeLyser, D. 2010. Writing it up. In *Research methods in geography: a critical introduction*, eds. B. Gomez and J. P. Jones III, 424-436. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

- Field, R. 2010. Data handling and representation. In *Key methods in geography*, eds. N. Clifford, S. French and G. Valentine, 317-349. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Gillespie, T. W., and G. MacDonald. 2010. Vegetation. In *Research methods in geography: a critical introduction*, eds. B. Gomez and J. P. Jones III, 137-154. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Goodchild, M. F. 2010. Geographic information systems. In *Research methods in geography: a critical introduction*, eds. B. Gomez and J. P. Jones III, 376-391. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Jensen, R. R., and J. M. Shumway. 2010. Sampling our world. In *Research methods in geography: a critical introduction*, eds. B. Gomez and J. P. Jones III, 77-90. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Jones III, J. P., and B. Gomez. 2010. Introduction. In *Research methods in geography: a critical introduction*, eds. B. Gomez and J. P. Jones III, 1-5. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Rice, S. 2010. Sampling in geography. In *Key methods in geography*, eds. N. Clifford, S. French and G. Valentine, 230-252. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Robbins, P. F. 2010. Human-environment field study. In *Research methods in geography: a critical introduction*, eds. B. Gomez and J. P. Jones III, 241-256. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Schein, R. H. 2010. Cultural landscapes. In *Research methods in geography: a critical introduction*, eds. B. Gomez and J. P. Jones III, 222-240. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Secor, A. J. 2010. Social surveys, interviews, and focus groups. In *Research methods in geography: a critical introduction*, eds. B. Gomez and J. P. Jones III, 194-205. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Smith, D. M. 2010. The politics and ethics of research. In *Research methods in geography: a critical introduction*, eds. B. Gomez and J. P. Jones III, 411-423. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- St Martin, K., and M. Pavlovskaya. 2010. Secondary data. In *Research methods in geography: a critical introduction*, eds. B. Gomez and J. P. Jones III, 173-193. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Stow, D. A. 2010. Remote sensing. In *Research methods in geography: a critical introduction*, eds. B. Gomez and J. P. Jones III, 155-172. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Winkler, J. A. 2010. Climates. In *Research methods in geography: a critical introduction*, eds. B. Gomez and J. P. Jones III, 116-136. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.