

## GEA2270: Geography of Florida

Department of Geography  
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, University of Florida

<b>Lead Instructor</b>	Christopher Williams ( <a href="mailto:williams.ch@ufl.edu">williams.ch@ufl.edu</a> )	<b>Term</b>	Fall 2025
<b>Co-Instructor/Grader</b>	Natalia Dambe ( <a href="mailto:n.dambe@ufl.edu">n.dambe@ufl.edu</a> )	<b>Class Meeting Time</b>	Online Asynchronous
<b>Email</b>	Message via Canvas Inbox tool	<b>Class Location</b>	UF Canvas
<b>Office Hours</b>	Wednesdays 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. or by appointment on Zoom	<b>Course Credits</b>	3 Credits, 6000 Words Writing Requirement

### I. Course Description

This course offers a comprehensive introduction to the Geography of Florida, emphasizing the state's physical and cultural landscapes, demographics, natural resources, and regional characteristics. We will also explore how Florida's economic and political affairs connect to a globalizing world through course material such as readings, media, and interactive exercises.

Challenging stereotypes of Florida as merely a land of beaches and Disneyworld, the course highlights the state's diverse environments and resilient communities. Students will critically examine media portrayals and contemporary issues, confronting their own assumptions to better understand modern Florida.

This course emphasizes thinking and writing like a geographer, rather than memorizing facts. Assignments are designed to build skills in writing, research, analysis, and applying geographic knowledge creatively to real-world problems.

### II. Student Learning Outcomes

Students will examine how geography influences the state's past, present, and future, with an emphasis on critical thinking, research, and communication. Students will practice effective writing strategies, including topic development, organization, and adapting style for various audiences and purposes. They will compare and critique texts, build persuasive arguments using evidence, and apply standard written English conventions to produce clear and purposeful writing. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

#### *Content*

- Demonstrate understanding of geographic concepts, terminology, and methods as they apply to Florida.
- Analyze the state's natural and human systems across multiple scales and time periods.
- Apply geographic frameworks to interpret current events and regional challenges.

#### *Critical Thinking*

- Evaluate geographic issues using evidence from multiple perspectives.
- Construct logical, well-supported arguments in writing.
- Analyze and critique texts and media for rhetorical effectiveness and clarity.

#### *Communication*

- Write clearly and effectively for academic and professional audiences.
- Adapt writing style and format for different contexts and purposes.
- Communicate geographic ideas using structured writing, supported by evidence and visual data.

### III. Materials

This course will be conducted via UF Canvas (<https://elearning.ufl.edu>). There is neither a required textbook nor a supply fee for this course.

### IV. Course Format, Basis for Evaluation, and Grading Distribution

The class will be conducted online via UF Canvas and in an asynchronous format, meaning that students should work through the modules themselves throughout the semester, paying close attention to the schedule and due dates. All lectures will be available for viewing via UF Canvas, and students will also be able to download the PowerPoint files.

#### University Writing Requirement (WR) - 6,000 words

- During the semester, students will complete a minimum of 6,000 words of graded writing assignments that meet the criteria for the WR. These assignments are designed to promote critical thinking, synthesis of course content, and clear communication.
- The WR ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.
- To receive credit for the university's WR in this course, students must complete all required writing assignments. Submitting only some of the assignments, even with a passing overall course grade, will result in no credit being awarded for the WR. Check your gradebook regularly to ensure that all writing assignments have been submitted.
- Course grades have two components. To receive WR credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

#### Instructors' Written Observations and Assessment Criteria

- All written assignments will be evaluated and graded for content, organization and coherence, effectiveness, style, grammar, and punctuation. Review the instructors' written observations to help you revise and improve your work. Students will find these comments in the submission annotations, the general assignment comment box, or in the comment boxes on the rubric.
- Students should check the course materials on Canvas for detailed written assignment rubrics.

#### Citation Guides

In all assignments, students are expected to properly cite any sources in a reference section and to consistently use a standard citation format such as APA, Harvard, or Chicago. Proper citation is essential to academic integrity and helps give credit to the original authors and sources of information. For guidance on proper citation formats, visit the UF Libraries citation guide: <https://guides.uflib.ufl.edu/libraryresearch/citingsources#s-lg-box-18406855>

#### Graded Work

Assignment Type	Percent of Final Grade
Writing Assignments (60% for Essays and 15% for Discussions)	75%
Activities	15%
Final Exam	10%

#### Writing Assignments [6000-word WR] (60% for Essays and 15% for Discussions = 75%)

This course utilizes writing as a learning tool and, as a result, requires students to write four 1,500-word essays throughout the semester. Essays will ask students to engage critically with these materials and apply course concepts to real-world examples. All essay topics will relate to major themes discussed in the class, encouraging thoughtful analysis and clear communication through writing. Discussions will offer a space for reflection, peer-to-peer exchange, and exploration of key issues.

#### Activities (15%)

Students will participate in activities designed to deepen their understanding of Florida's geography. Activities may involve creative or real-world applications that connect course concepts to students' experiences and perspectives.

**Final Exam (10%)**

The final exam will be comprehensive and will assess students' understanding of the fundamental concepts explored throughout the course. It evaluates how well students can synthesize material from readings, lectures, discussions, and activities to demonstrate their knowledge of Florida's physical, cultural, and environmental geography. The exam will be closed book and will consist of multiple-choice and true/false questions.

Grading Scale (%)	
≥ 92.5	A
< 92.5 to 89.5	A-
< 89.5 to 86.5	B+
< 86.5 to 82.5	B
< 82.5 to 79.5	B-
< 79.5 to 76.5	C+
< 76.5 to 72.5	C
< 72.5 to 69.5	C-
< 69.5 to 66.5	D+
< 66.5 to 62.5	D
< 62.5 to 59.5	D-
< 59.5	E

**V. Course and Weekly Schedule**

Note, the schedule is provisional and subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Week	Module	Class Topics	Assessments
0	0	Course Orientation & Introduction	Course Orientation Quiz <b>Activity 1:</b> Introduce Yourself
1	1	<b>Florida's Physical Geography</b> Defining Geography and Florida Florida's Physical Geography	<b>Essay 1:</b> Favorite Place in Florida [1500 words]
2	1		<b>Discussion 1:</b> Favorite Place - Tour guide [200 words] <b>Activity 2:</b> Florida's Geological History
3	2	<b>Human-Environmental Interactions</b> Florida's Geological History Florida's Weather and Climate	<b>Discussion 2:</b> Hurricane Michael [200 words]
4	2		<b>Activity 3:</b> Article Hunt
5	2		<b>Discussion 3:</b> Hurricane Discussion [200 words]
6	3	<b>Historical, Cultural, and Human Geography</b> Florida's History and First Floridians	<b>Essay 2:</b> The Cultural Landscape of Florida [1500 words]
7	3		<b>Discussion 4:</b> Ethnocentricity and Accents [200 words]
8	4	<b>Urban and Regional Development</b> Florida's Urban Geography Florida's Energy Landscape	<b>Activity 4:</b> Energy in Florida
9	4		<b>Discussion 5:</b> The Sarasota Experience [200 words]
10	5	<b>Economic and Political Geography</b> Florida's Natural Resources and Economy Florida's Political Geography	<b>Essay 3:</b> Florida Issues Report [1500 words]
11	5		<b>Discussion 6:</b> Politics in Florida [200 words]
12	6	<b>Social Geography of Florida</b> Florida's Population Modern Florida and the Future of Florida	<b>Activity 5:</b> The Florida Dream
13	Holiday		None
14	6		<b>Essay 4:</b> Famous Floridian [1500 words]
15	Exam	<b>Final Exam, Dec 2 – Comprehensive and Closed Book</b>	

## University Policies

***NOTE: This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see UF's "[Academic Policies and Resources](#)" web page.***

## Course Policies & Course Environment

### **Course Communication**

Outside of office hours, students should use the Canvas Inbox tool to message instructors if they need support or have questions. Please expect a message response within about 48 hours during weekdays (excluding evenings, holidays, or weekends). The instructor will reasonably expect similar time frames for responses to emails sent to students. As a courtesy, please check the syllabus and Canvas before reaching out; answers to many of your questions can be found there.

### **Canvas**

Important communication with the class will regularly occur through Canvas announcements, so be sure to check them for updates. To ensure that you do not miss anything, please make sure that your Canvas profile is set to receive notifications.

Students must activate their UF GatorLink account to use Canvas. If you need help learning how to perform various tasks related to this course or other courses that utilize Canvas, please consult the UF Canvas webpage. You may also contact the UF Computing Help Desk at (352) 392-HELP(4357) or [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).

### **Professional Conduct**

All course members are expected to always conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner. Please use appropriate etiquette when interacting with your peers and instructors, including on Canvas and via email. Students who behave disrespectfully or disruptively will be reported to the Dean of Students Office.

### **Accommodations**

Instructors' note: We want you to succeed in this course! To ensure your accommodations are in place when you need them, please be sure to have your DRC accommodation letter sent to us as early as possible (ideally at the beginning of the semester).

### **Submitting Assignments**

All assignments must be submitted electronically via Canvas unless otherwise noted. Emailed assignment submissions and Canvas comment box assignment submissions will not be accepted. You are responsible for ensuring that all your work is uploaded correctly and completely by the due dates (shown on syllabus and updated on Canvas). Corrupted files will be treated as missing work (= 0 grade) until they are re-uploaded correctly, and the late work policy will apply if your resubmission is past the due date. So, please always double check your files right after you upload them. If you experience technical problems when submitting your work on Canvas, contact the UF Computing Help Desk for assistance (refer to Canvas section for more details).

### **Late Work**

Managing work and due dates is key to student academic success. The assignment due date does not have to be the "do" date. In other words, it is highly encouraged to work on your assignments in advance—do not wait until right before the due date to submit your work. Last-minute computer problems or other non-emergency situations can arise and do not necessitate an emergency response from the instructors.

However, we get it—life happens. All assignments (except the final exam) have an automatic 24-hour grace period. You can submit work during this window with no grade penalty and without providing justification. Please follow the specific due dates listed in Canvas.

In addition, if multiple days are needed to complete and submit work beyond the assignment due date, students have two one-week late passes for the semester. These can be stacked on a single assignment for a two-week extension. Unused late passes neither result in a higher grade nor have extra credit value.

- *To Use a Late Pass:* Before the assignment due date, students must use the Canvas Inbox tool to message the instructors with your name, the assignment name, and if you are using one or two passes. Then within about 48 hours during weekdays (excluding evenings, holidays, or weekends), the instructors will adjust the assignment due date in Canvas. Students can then submit their late work in Canvas via the original assignment submission page before the due date extension expires. You can track your remaining passes in a non-graded entry (e.g., Number of Late Passes Available) in the Canvas gradebook.
- *Final Due Date:* All work, regardless of extensions, must be submitted by December 3rd to receive credit.

Should students encounter challenges or opportunities during the semester and want to discuss their situation and explore options, message the instructors via the Canvas Inbox tool or come to office hours; importantly, message or visit *before* the original assignment submission *due date* (or as soon as possible in an emergency). Note, the instructor may request documentation. So, plan, prioritize, proactively communicate, and use the limited number of late passes where it's helpful.

### **Extra Credit**

Extra credit assignments may be posted at the instructor's discretion only. Any other extra work submitted to raise a grade will not be accepted, and requests for additional extra credit will not be considered.

### **AI Policy**

Because this is a writing-intensive course that fulfills the 6,000-word WR, **all written work must be your own**. Students may *not* use generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, etc.) to write, rewrite, or edit essays or assignments.

However, students may use AI tools for early-stage brainstorming (e.g., generating ideas or outlining). If students do, they must add a brief end-of-assignment note that specifies:

1. The name of the tool used
2. How and why you used it

It is a violation of university policy to misrepresent work that students submit or exchange with the instructors by characterizing it as their own, such as submitting responses to assignments that do not acknowledge the use of generative AI tools. *If you're unsure about acceptable use, please ask before submitting.*

### **Academic Honesty and Misconduct**

All work submitted must be the student's own original work. Plagiarism, which is defined as presenting someone else's words, ideas, or work as your own, is a serious academic offense. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Copying or improperly paraphrasing without citation
- Reusing your own past work without permission (self-plagiarism)
- Submitting work from any source without proper attribution
- Submitting work you did not author, including work generated by AI or purchased from outside sources

Any instance of academic misconduct will be reported to the Dean of Students Office. If found responsible by the Dean of Students Office, a grade adjustment will be applied, typically resulting in a score of zero on the assignment.

### **Procedure for Conflict Resolution**

Any classroom issues, disagreements or grade disputes should be discussed first between the instructor and the student. If the problem cannot be resolved, please contact Dr. Gabriela Hamerlinck, the Geography Department Associate Chair ([ghamerlinck@ufl.edu](mailto:ghamerlinck@ufl.edu)). Be prepared to provide documentation of the problem, as well as all graded materials for the semester. Issues that cannot be resolved departmentally will be referred to the University Ombuds Office (<http://www.ombuds.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1308) or the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1261).