GEO 296: Introduction to Geographic Field Research
Fall 2014  -  Field Dates: September 18-25  -   3 Credits

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"The principal of training the geographer should come, whenever possible, by doing fieldwork."

Course Description
Field-based research is an integral aspect of geographic inquiry. This course is designed to provide undergraduate geography majors with an introduction to research question formulation and some of the different methods and approaches (ways of collecting and analyzing data) used in the discipline to answer questions. The field component of the course will be split between the Hatfield Marine Science Center on the Oregon Coast, the H. J. Andrews Experimental Forest in the Oregon Cascades, and the OSU Cascades campus in Bend--allowing students to experience different landscapes, research problems, types of data, and methods first-hand.

Students will be encouraged to observe the world around them while identifying research objects, events or issues of interest, developing questions about them, and discovering ways to answer their questions. We will carry out field exercises and students will develop their own questions and present results orally and in written form. The overall objective of the course is to help students understand what theory based geographic data collection and research design involves, enabling them to assess the research of others and develop their own research projects.

Course topics and issues will include:
- linkages between theory, research design, and methodology
- guidelines for asking researchable questions
- methods for collecting specific types of data about physical and cultural landscapes
- strategies for representing and analyzing different types of data
- ethical obligations associated with research
- options for disseminating research findings

Resources:

- Several additional readings, including some optional selections, will be made available on the course blackboard site. Pay close attention to the due dates for these readings as
they apply to our daily schedule. Two to three readings will be required to be read by the start of the course.

Learning Outcomes
Upon completing this course, students will be able to:
- Develop researchable questions related to geography
- Identify and describe basic research methods for collecting data regarding physical landscapes, vegetation, climate, water quantity and quality, cultural landscapes, hazards and human-environment relations
- Acquire and demonstrate an understanding of specialized language relevant to geographic field methods
- Synthesize and describe key concepts associated with field methods
- Communicate verbally, and through oral presentation and writing, key concepts, techniques and theoretical motivations associated with different geographic field research methods
- Construct and articulate a summary of knowledge acquired from assigned readings and lectures used to analyze and solve problems in field exercises
- Identify a specific field method of interest and assess the necessary steps in the research process from creation, application and evaluation in an academic article using that method.
- Evaluate the relative merits of different field research methods

Logistics and Schedule
This course will take place during the week of Sept 17-25, with a follow-up sessions during Fall term. Our schedule and plan will be discussed at our first meeting at 9am Wednesday, September 17th.

Course Fee
A course fee of $180 is required to pay for the cost of transportation, lodging and supplies during the 7 day field component of the course. You will be responsible for your own meals.* We will shop as a group and collaborate on cooking and cleaning duties.

Prerequisites
The course is available to all undergraduate students of good standing that have completed the introductory-level Earth Science sequence (GEO 201 and 202 or equivalents).

Grades and Assessment*
Methods Presentation: 20 pts
Field Assignments: 30 pts
Research Proposal (presentation: 10pts; final draft: 20pts): 30 pts
Participation: 20 pts
Total: 100 pts

*More about these assignments and responsibilities at the first course meeting

**Special Notes**
You must have health insurance to be able to attend this course! Proof of insurance will be necessary before the course begins or on the first day (9/17).

If you have a conflict between religious observances and field days, please let us know in advance so these can be made up.

Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, who have any emergency medical information the instructor should be aware of, or who need special arrangements in the event of evacuation, should make an appointment with the instructor as early as possible, and no later than two weeks before the course begins. Class materials will be made available in accessible format upon request. Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Disability Access Services (DAS). Students with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 737-4098.

Please review the OSU policies on classroom conduct and academic honesty at http://oregonstate.edu/admin/stucon/achon.htm.