

## Duties and Expectations of Instructor(s) and Teaching Assistants

ESS/GR 210 – Professor Wei Gao

August 2025

### Course Description

Brief description of the course content, assessment tasks and actual enrollment for past three years.

This is a course about the processes that shape our planet. The students will study the Earth's climate, water cycle, landforms, and environment and learn about how these aspects of the planet interact with each other. Throughout the course, we will also consider how human activities affect these Earth processes. By the end of this course, students should be able to understand and analyze the basic features of the physical environment from local to global scale. Assessment tasks include quizzes, assignments, a final report, exams, and attendance and class participation. For the past three years the course always had more than 100 students enrolled.

### Required skills and subject matter expertise for Teaching Assistants

1) E.g., Required: Proficient with software or familiarity with specific equipment.

Familiarity with operation of the in-class technology assigned for the students/class. Strong proficiency working within Canvas, Outlook, Office 365. Familiar with Google Earth. Knowledge of additional geophysical software will be a plus.

2) E.g., Desired: Content-specific knowledge (if needed for TA duties).

It is desired that the TA has taken similar college geography courses. Possesses excellent written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills. Able to work independently and efficiently, and work with and respond to the Professor and students in a timely manner.

### Desired skills and subject matter expertise for Teaching Assistants

1) If any beyond those required above...

Understanding of key concepts in assigned Physical Geography textbook. Ability to understand class concepts, and to synthesize and communicate these ideas clearly to students.

If the TA expresses an interest to teach a class chapter and gain teaching experience I will work with them to examine their work and help them pursue this interest.

### Instructor Responsibilities

1) E.g., Lead on developing, presenting, and organizing class content.

I teach classes in person, and work diligently to prepare course materials, lecture notes, quizzes, assignments, final projects, exams, and a syllabus. I develop lecture presentations chapter by chapter based on the selected textbook, and reference related scientific books, articles, and other sources. While I stay focused on class content (as rigorous as it is), I also organize and present many new developments on related topics. I include figures, tables, and videos in the presentations prepared. Each class starts with a discussion where students can provide input and then goes into a lecture that relates to the discussion. At the end of each class there are outlines of important concepts and a summary of the topics presented. Specific topic seminars are organized during the semester to extend student's knowledge and provide additional introduction of scientific advancement in the topic taught in the class. I effectively use Canvas to prepare and provide the necessary class materials (including all lecture notes) and links for students to access/utilize. Lecture notes are all provided on Canvas before class time. All classes are taught as scheduled, which allows for direct communication with students during classes. After each class I am available for further discussions.

I use Zoom or in-person for *weekly office hours*, and email to communicate with students. I answer questions about class content in a timely manner, and address student concerns early so they can adjust to the class structure, expectations, in class learning and testing. I work to reasonably accommodate student requests and adjust and

manage different time lines for students to complete their assignments, projects, and exams based on each individual case.

2) E.g., Develop and implement fair grading methods (e.g., rubrics) and other assessment practices including grading keys and expectations.

The ESS GR 210 Class syllabus is posted on Canvas. I review it in detail with students and discuss the class expectations, required text, attendance and class participation, academic integrity, quizzes, assignments, final report, and exams. The quiz and exam methods include multiple choice, true or false, and short answers, which is introduced to students up front. I prepare the keys for the TA to grade quizzes, exams, and assignments. I emphasize the importance of attending class, and that students should regularly log into Canvas for important class information and updates.

3) E.g., Serve as the “final say” on course content, grading and other course policy decisions.

I work on course content throughout the year to update sessions with new developments and advancements in fields related to the textbook content. Posted grades will stand and any class-wide adjustments to final course scores are at the discretion of the instructor. The standard plus/minus system is used: A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, D, F. Stated in class syllabus.

4) Graduate Teaching Assistant Job Duties

| Duties (examples provided – please edit)   | Time Expectation (per week on avg) |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Attend lectures, as requested. If needed take notes that can be shared with students with student accommodations.                    | 2.5                                |
| Possibly teach one or two chapters depending on TA’s interest and instructor’s examination. Including time to prepare lecture notes. | 1                                  |
| Lead on grading 3 written exams, 5 quizzes, 4 assignments, and final report based on grading rubrics provided by Instructor.         | 14                                 |
| Oversee regular functioning of the course gradebook and other assignments on Canvas. Prepare quizzes on Canvas.                      | 0.5                                |
| Take the lead on instruction for X lab sections (provide days and times)   | NA                                 |
| Provide office hours for students  | 2                                  |
| ...  |                                    |

**Instructor Narrative to Review Committee:**

Please describe how you have designed the TA roll to enhance this course. and how you have streamlined TA resources in the past. Also, please describe if there is any flexibility in this role and what the.

I work to establish a very good working relationship with my ESS/GR210 Teaching Assistant. This is a large class (over 100 students) and having a TA is essential to keep up with the students’ involvement. At the beginning of each Fall Semester we meet weekly in person and by email to review the Syllabus. As the semester progresses, we discuss and monitor each students’ progress, assist students who need more attention and direction for learning and testing, and provide feedback as necessary. While I develop the 5 quizzes, 4 assignments, final report, and 3 exams, the TA is essential to provide consistent grading of these tasks, which in a class of this size can be overwhelming at times, and thus I need to work with my TA to finish these tasks in a timely manner. I need to be involved after grading to assure consistency in grading and adherence to University policies and practices. In addition, both myself and the TA maintain office hours and social media accessibility to discuss any problems or issues the students have to expeditiously provide feedback, answer questions and resolve misunderstandings. I will provide guidance to the TA should they wish to teach one or more chapters to develop their own teaching experience.