

National Parks: America's Best Idea
GEOG 1000 – Fall 2026 Course Syllabus¹
ENV 110: MW 12:45-2:05 PM

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Office hours: M & W 11-noon, or by appointment via Zoom (<https://unt.zoom.us/j/83108273872>)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

America's National Parks are places that are the physical manifestations of American values and ideals. Thus, at the heart of each park is a sense of place (a core geographic concept). They each reflect or represent something of value to individuals and Americans as a whole. But the history of many national parks is associated with conflicts about the value of that place. Many of these conflicts stem from what America is supposed to represent - wilderness and nature versus manifest destiny, public versus private interests, indigenous versus national ownership, and various types of representation. This course will use the creation of national parks to explore the relationship between what we think and believe and how we act.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

- **Explain** "place" and how perceptions of "place" affect how the place is valued.
- **Describe** how the concept of place is embedded into the park system.
- **Engage** how current values affect which places become parks.
- **Evaluate** the role of individuals in maintaining the mission of the parks.
- **Analyze** the system of park development in representing the diversity of American experiences.

GRADING

Attendance	10%
Topic Assignments and Quizzes	47%
Mini-Projects (3)	21%
Final Project	22%

- Grades are calculated as follows:

A	90-100
B	80-89.4
C	70-79.4
D	60-69.4
F	<59.5

¹ The design of this course is in part derived from the existing syllabus of Dr. Lisa Nagaoka. I thank her for generously sharing her materials and advice on pedagogical practices.

Topic Assignments and Quizzes: In preparation for each lecture, students will watch videos and/or read articles or websites that provide background information. For certain lectures, students will answer short answer questions to demonstrate that they have read or watched the material. All materials for these pre-lecture assignments will be on Canvas.

For specific topics, students will be quizzed on essential terms and concepts that were in the assignments and the lecture. This will provide an opportunity to assess student comprehension of the concepts before moving on to the exercise. All quizzes will be on Canvas and topic assignments will be completed either in-class or on Canvas.

Projects: There are three mini projects (Use or Protect, Take Only Memories, America's Places), and one final project that highlight several different topics and concepts from the course. See detailed assignment description/rubric on Canvas.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

- There is no required textbook. All readings/films will be posted to Canvas in the module for each week's lecture.

CLASS POLICIES

Rule #1: Be on time and do not leave early. If there is an exceptional circumstance, let me know before or after class and make sure to close the door quietly and sit as close to the exit as possible.

Rule #2: Silence your phones when you come to class and refrain from using them during lecture. Do not sleep or whisper to neighbors during class.

Rule #3: Be courteous. The classroom remains a space of possibility, but we must take care to be thoughtful and open in our interactions with each other.

Laptops/Touch Screen Policy: Students using laptops are encouraged to sit in the last two rows of the lecture hall or at the very end of a row. Only tabs directly related to the lecture should be open during class. Students who do not follow this rule will lose their privilege to use the laptop in class. Phones and other devices should not be used in the classroom except as part of in-class activities.

Make-up Policy: If you must be absent from an assignment in class to attend a religious holiday, or due to a family obligation, please contact me **at least one (1) week in advance** of the class or due date. If you are ill, you must let me know by e-mail or phone in advance of the due date. If you do not tell me until the due date has passed, **you will lose a letter grade for each day that you are late in giving me notice.**

Extra Credit: The Geography Department **does not allow** extra credit (work not specified on this syllabus).

ADA Accommodations: UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu.

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences: According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for further penalty. Remember that you have agreed to follow the UNT Code of Student Conduct. "Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. *Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct.* The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc."

- The Code of Student Conduct can be found at: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/dean-of-students/conduct/index.html>

According to UNT's webpage on [AI, Plagiarism, and Academic Integrity](#):

- AI **should not be** used to assist in writing papers, searching for sources, or creating citations. Some citations provided by AI are not reliable.
- AI **can be** used to help students develop an outline for a paper, generate ideas, and learn a citation style.

The "Plagiarism Review" feature in Canvas will be enabled for all essays and project reports. This will automatically generate both the similarity and AI detection rate for each submission. If either the similarity or AI rate is high (above 30%), the flagged sections will be reviewed to determine whether (1) the student should be asked to rewrite and resubmit the assignment, or (2) further action is needed.

Emergency Notification & Procedures: UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to the UNT Learning Management System (LMS) for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Tentative Course Schedule**

**Lecture order is subject to change. Reading corresponds to that day's lecture.

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
M Aug 17	Introduction		
W Aug 19	Place: Concept of Place		
M Aug 24	History: Early History—Yellowstone & Yosemite	Ep. 1 Scripture of Nature	Geography of Place
W Aug 26	History: Parks as “Places”		History of the Parks
M Aug 31	History: “...the <i>value</i> of natural beauty as an asset.”	Ep. 2 Last Refuge	Ep. 1 Quiz
W Sep 2	History: A National Commons		Ep. 2 Quiz
M Sep 7	** Labor Day – NO CLASS **		
W Sep 9	History: Wilderness Conservation	Ep. 3 Empire of Grandeur	Picturing Wilderness
M Sep 14	History: Laws and the NPS		• Ep. 3 Quiz • Use or Protect, Part 1
W Sep 16	Place: Parks & Forests—Old Growth Logging and Klamath National Forest	Ep. 4 Going Home	Tree Survey
M Sep 21	StoryMap Workshop		• Ep. 4 Quiz • Use or Protect, Part 2
W Sep 23	StoryMap Workshop		
M Sep 28	StoryMap Workshop		• StoryMaps Workshop • Pick Your Parks
W Sep 30	Place: Development & BLM—Ranching	Ep. 5 Great Nature	• Brookdale BLM • Use or Protect, Part 3
M Oct 5	Place: Managing Wildlife—Wolves & Rewilding		Ep. 5 Quiz
W Oct 7	Place: International Parks—Poaching	Ep. 6 Morning of Creation	Rewilding UNT
M Oct 12	Texas State Parks		Ep. 6 Quiz
W Oct 14	Representation: Trail of Tears		
M Oct 19	Representation: Camp Nelson		Take Only Memories
W Oct 21	Representation: Chamizal		
M Oct 26	Representation: Alternative places		Propose a Texas Park
W Oct 28	Bear 399		
M Nov 2	Challenges: Intruders		Bear 399
W Nov 4	Challenges: Hazy Views		Intruders
M Nov 9	Challenges: Borderlands		America's Places
W Nov 11	StoryMap Lightning Talks		
M Nov 16	StoryMap Lightning Talks		
W Nov 18	StoryMap Lightning Talks		
Nov 23 & 25	** Thanksgiving Break – NO CLASSES **		
M Nov 30	StoryMap Lightning Talks		
W Dec 2	StoryMap Lightning Talks		
M Dec 7			Final Project