

National Parks: America's Best Idea
GEOG 1000 – Spring 2026 Course Syllabus¹
CURY 104: MW 12:30-1:50 PM

Instructor: David Ferring

Office: ENV 320H

Email: david.ferring@unt.edu (**Always refer to this syllabus before you send an email)

Office hours: T 1-2 PM, W 11 AM-12 PM, 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	50%
Mini-Projects (2)	15%
Final Project	25%

- 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 projects that highlight several different concepts: Take Only Memories, America's Places, and the Final Project. 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. To paraphrase bell hooks, 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 must 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.

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, and will be absent or miss an assignment you must let me know by e-mail **in advance** of the due date. If you do not tell me until after 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).

Accommodations: The University of North Texas 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 you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You 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 Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940-565-4323.

Academic Dishonesty & Acceptable Student Behavior: 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.