

**GEOG 510**  
**Geography of New England**  
**Spring 2009**

TR 9:40-11, 103 Morrill Hall  
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Office hours: TR 11:30-12:30, W 1-2

Purpose of the course

This course is intended to introduce you to the physical and human geography of New England, including landforms, climate and vegetation, population and settlement, culture and identity, political geography, urban patterns, natural resources, and economic development.

Learning approach

Although the purpose of this course is conventional, the approach is not. There will be no lectures or exams. There is no textbook or collection of articles by experts that you will be required to read. Instead, this course seeks to make you an active learner. You will learn by doing.

The class as a whole will create a Geography of New England website, which will be the main learning tool for the course. The class will make most decisions about the website collaboratively. Each student will contribute articles to the site. All students will read drafts of articles by their fellow students and provide criticism and suggestions for improvement. In the process, you should acquire an understanding of the geography of the region.

In creating a Geography of New England website, the class will produce a resource that will have value beyond the course and the university. Students will receive credit on the website for any articles they write and their participation in the project. You will also acquire valuable experience in working as part of a group to produce a resource for public use.

Course website

The course website will be publically accessible at <http://www.unh.edu/geography-of-new-england/>. It will be organized thematically and include sections on the eight subject areas identified above. Each section will include one or more overview articles, along with articles about more specialized topics. Additional sections may be added as needed. The website will be revised and expanded every time this course is offered. Some content may be replaced with new material over time.

Each page on the website will be created in Microsoft Word in order to make the process for posting and updating articles as easy as possible. All pages will have a common design, simple in approach. The emphasis will be on content. Maps, photographs, charts, and other supplementary materials will be included, as the class decides is desirable.

Each student will contribute two articles for possible inclusion on the website. The instructor will have final say over which articles will be included and may exclude articles that are unsatisfactory. The instructor will also act as webmaster for the course. Students are not expected to have any knowledge about web design or other computer expertise.

## Articles

Each student will be required to write two articles approximately 2,000 words in length (approximately six double-spaced pages) for inclusion on the website. Students will choose their topics from a list of possible subjects produced by the instructor with input from the class.

Each article should be written in the style of an encyclopedia entry — concise, objective, following a logical organization, and understandable to readers at a variety of educational levels who have no previous knowledge of the subject. Articles should begin by summarizing the nature and significance of the subject. Keep paragraphs short (generally no longer than 6-7 sentences) and begin most with a topic sentence. Avoid lengthy or complex sentences. Insert brief subheadings to break the material into logical sections. Limit quotations.

Articles should be researched in depth, show that students examined a variety of sources and source types (not just the web; not just a book or two), and demonstrate an ability to synthesize information and draw conclusions from available evidence. Articles should situate a topic within its larger context. They should emphasize geographic themes — where (and why) and how New England differs from other places and regions — but should also succinctly summarize the subject. Articles should incorporate a historical perspective because to comprehend contemporary geographic patterns it is first necessary to understand the historical processes that shaped them.

There is no minimum number of sources. You should consult however many sources are necessary to write knowledgably about your subject. No more than 20 percent of your sources can be sources only available on the world wide web. Be careful about the sources you use. Scrutinize all potential sources, particularly web sources, for accuracy and bias. Use only information from sources that seem reliable and are produced by individuals or organizations that can be trusted. Sources should be cited in the text using the author-date system (Gumprecht 2008, 243). Complete citations for each source should be placed at the end of the article in a section entitled “Works Consulted.” A guide showing how to format common source types will be provided. Text references will be removed from the final version of each article to be posted on the website.

All articles must be formatted the same way to make the posting of articles to the website as simple as possible. Set margins 1 inch from the edge of the paper on all sides. Text should be typeset in 12 point Times New Roman and double-spaced. Number all pages except page 1. Center the title of the article at the top of the first page in boldface type. Leave a blank line below the title, then center your name, and leave a blank line below it. If you use subheadings, they should be boldfaced, aligned to the left margin, and only the first word should be capitalized. Leave a blank line before and after each subheading. Format the “Works Consulted” heading in the same way. Citations should be single-spaced, flush left; leave a blank line between each one. A sample showing how articles should be formatted will be provided.

## Research and writing

This course has a subsidiary goal of helping students improve their research and writing skills. Class time will be devoted to research and writing issues. In addition, you are required to produce for each article the following documents intended to replicate stages in the typical research and writing process:

1. a list of themes you wish to cover
2. a preliminary bibliography of sources you intend to consult
3. an outline for the article
4. a draft of the article
5. the final, revised version of the article

Some of these documents will be submitted to the instructor for comments. Others will be shared with the entire class for discussion and suggestions. Your work should show that you considered the input of the instructor and your classmates, though you are not expected to do everything they say. Due dates for each document will vary from person to person in order to spread work out over the semester, but the burden should be equitable over time.

You are also required to have a draft of each article reviewed by a writing assistant at the Connors Writing Center in a writing conference (see <http://www.unh.edu/writing/connors.html> for more information). The writing conference must be completed at least one week before you submit the draft to the class. Ask the writing assistant to send the instructor a note to verify your participation; it will also summarize what was discussed. The draft you submit to the class should show that you paid attention to the writing assistant's suggestions. Students who fail to complete a writing conference will have their article grades lowered.

Your final article should be a significant revision of the draft you submitted to the class. It should reflect comments and suggestions made by the instructor and your classmates. It should be clean; free of grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors; and ready to be posted to the web. All text citations should be removed from the final article, but all sources should be included in the "Works Consulted" section. Only your final article will be graded. However, any student who fails to turn in any of the preliminary documents, or submits work that shows poor effort, will have their final article grade lowered. Your article will be graded on the thoroughness of your research, the depth of your analysis, how well you explain your subject, and the quality of your writing.

### Illustrations

All students are encouraged to seek maps, photographs, charts, and other illustrations that could enhance the quality of their articles. However, because illustrations are to be used on the website, you should only consider for inclusion illustrations that are high in quality and add significantly to your article. Moreover, because articles are to be publicly available, you must obtain permission from the creator of any illustrations before they can be used. We will discuss the process for acquiring illustrations and permissions in class. Students are also encouraged to take photographs or create illustrations themselves. The instructor will have final authority over which illustrations will be included on the website.

### Decision-making

Producing the website will be a collaborative process, with the instructor and students involved at every step of the way. It will be comparable to editing a book or a magazine issue. In that sense, the instructor will act as editor-in-chief and each student will serve as a contributing editor.

Most decisions about the website will be made as a group, although the authors of individual articles will be given reasonable freedom to shape their articles as they choose, subject to the oversight of the instructor and the rest of the class. In his role as editor-in-chief, the instructor will make some decisions by himself, when he judges that is best for the website, or when the class as a whole cannot reach consensus about an issue.

### Classroom activity

What we will do in the classroom every Tuesday and Thursday will vary greatly and will not follow a predetermined schedule. Class meetings will, in essence, be editorial meetings at which the class makes decisions about the website, considers website content, and discusses the work of individual students.

We may not meet if the class as a whole doesn't have anything to do. If that happens, students are expected to use that time to work on their articles.

We will begin by deciding what topics we may want to include. We will choose which of those topics are essential for the website. Individual students will choose the topics they wish to write articles about. The class will discuss what should be included in each article. Once drafts of articles are produced, the class as a whole will read those drafts and we will discuss them in class, offering criticism and suggestions. The class will also make decisions about the design of the website, supplementary materials to include, and other issues that arise.

All students are expected to contribute to what we do in the classroom and will be graded on the degree to which they participate and the quality of their contributions. Students are expected to come to class prepared to do whatever work is planned for that day. Students will be assigned work to do outside of class, such as reading drafts of student articles. It is imperative that students do whatever work is assigned before the class in which it is to be considered. The quality of this class will depend greatly on how actively students become involved.

### Grading

Student grades will be based entirely on written assignments and participation in classroom activities. The two articles will each be worth 35 percent of your course grade. Classroom participation will be worth 30 percent. No extra credit is available.

Grades will be assigned based on the traditional scale in which an A represents work of exceptional quality, a B is considered good, a C is satisfactory, a D is poor, and an F is unsatisfactory. Grading in a course such as this is subjective. Students should keep in mind that grading is an assessment of quality not a measure of effort. The instructor strives to be as fair as possible to all students. If you have questions about how your work is evaluated, please ask.

Students are required to complete a personal information card and turn it in by January 27. Any student who fails to turn in a card by that date will have their grade lowered one-tenth of a point (on a 4.0 scale).

### Attendance and tardiness

Because of the nature of this course, attendance is essential. Your participation grade will suffer if you miss class because you will not be there to contribute. The instructor may also lower the semester grade of students who are absent frequently. Students should obtain notes from classmates for any classes missed and are responsible for any information provided during class periods from which they are absent, including assignments.

Assignments are due on the dates given. Lateness will be excused only when circumstances beyond a student's control prevent them from submitting an assignment on time. If you think you have a legitimate excuse, you must notify the instructor by e-mail or telephone *before the class period in which the assignment is due*, or, when that is logistically impossible, very soon afterwards on the same day. You must also be able to prove your excuse in writing. Conflicts with jobs, other classes, and your personal life are not satisfactory excuses. Although many assignments in this course will be ungraded, the instructor may lower the semester grade of any student who turns in assignments late.

### Academic honesty

Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated and will be severely punished when discovered. The instructor will review the university's academic honesty policy in class and provide examples of behavior that would be considered violations of that policy. If you have questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, ask me or see UNH's *Students Rights, Rules and Responsibilities* handbook, available at <http://www.unh.edu/student/rights/srrr0809.pdf>

### Blackboard

The university's Blackboard computer system (<http://blackboard.unh.edu/>) will serve as an archive for course materials, will provide students access to their grades, and may be used as a method for distributing information between class meetings. It will be assumed that the e-mail address linked to your Blackboard account is your primary e-mail address and that you check it regularly.

### Warning

This class is an experiment. This is the first time it has been taught this way. As such, there is no guarantee that everything we try will work. Problems will inevitably occur. Everything is subject to change. We will deal with all of this as best we can.