

# GEO 270 Rural Geography

## Geographies of Fire



### DETAILS

Fall 2023

Tuesday & Thursday | On-demand learning between 8:30 & 20:30

Sig Langegger PhD

[slangegger@aiu.ac.jp](mailto:slangegger@aiu.ac.jp) | [slangegger.com](http://slangegger.com)

Zoom Room (ZR)

A Zoom Room is a customizable zoom meeting. Individual students or groups of students need only contact me to arrange one. I am generally available seven days a week between 10:00am and 6:00pm California time.

The best way to contact me is to email me.

Title your email GEO 270.

### DESCRIPTION

Translated from Greek, geography means writing about the earth, or simply earth writing. In less poetic terms, geography is an academic field that includes the study of the spatial patterns of both human and physical phenomena. By bridging both social and environmental sciences, geographers are uniquely suited to provide insight into complex spatial interactions that manifest as cultural complexes, climate change, and patterns of land use.

This course pivots on fire. As it happens, so does terrestrial life. The geologic production of inorganic compounds is too slow to maintain life on Earth. Fire is a violent form of decomposition that aides in the maintenance of Earth's biochemical equilibrium. Homo Sapiens is the only species to learn to control fire. Fire and humanity's biological and cultural evolutions are in fact inseparable. Fire enabled hominids to become keystone predators in every ecosystem they entered. Fire sparked the agricultural revolution. It fueled the industrial revolution. Industry and agriculture and the land use systems that give them spatial form root in philosophies of territorial fixity. Yet Earth is a dynamic place. Geologic events, continual erosion, and periodic wildfire misalign with socially produced regimes of cultural and legal permanence. We come to understand this misalignment when we see a wildfire engulf a rural neighborhood, a coastal city submerge under floodwaters, or a landslide scatter the remains of a hilltop village.

Fire destroys. Fire renews. Necessary and destructive, wildfire can be unpredictable. Organized society requires and produces a high degree of certainty. Property lines, municipal boundaries, and national borders are inflexible concepts laid over an ever-changing physical and ecological landscape. This course will help students understand how humans have dealt with unstable fire regimes in the past and how we must (re)learn to live with ecologic and geologic instability in the future.

This class is only accessible through time-independent modules on AIMS. Each module will require approximately one hour and fifteen minutes of student engagement through recorded lectures, quizzes, and lecture forums. This course is uncoupled from the space of a classroom, and it is uncoupled from the time of a class period. Quizzes and exams must be taken during a 12 hour window (8:30am to 8:30pm) of each class day. However lecture slides and recorded lectures will be made available to students one week before the day of each class. Lecture forum posts and homework assignments may be completed in advance; however they must be submitted before the due date/time. Because they are propelled by prime mover executive summaries, webinars must be engaged with and posted to between 8:30am and 8:30pm the day of the webinar.

## OBJECTIVES

---

Upon completion of this course students will:

1. Have learned fundamental geographical concepts and theories.
2. Have improved their reading comprehension skills.
3. Be comfortable using geographical terminology in written and verbal discourse.
4. Be able to think, write, and argue critically about wildfire and rural land use.
5. Have learned to recognize longstanding spatial impacts of fire and property on forest ecologies.
6. Have gained insight into the philosophies undergirding environmental preservation and resource conservation.

## AILA ELEMENTS

---

Like applied international liberal arts, the academic field of geography pivots on interconnectivity. Geography foregrounds spatial specificity within a wider understanding of physical, biological, cultural, and economic connectivity. My geography courses emerge from my anthropological research methods, my sociological reasoning, the pragmatism I gained in studying urban planning, in operating an award winning restaurant, and in real estate development.

This course roots in the geographical term teleconnection. In physical geography teleconnection refers to the complex relationships between oceanic and atmospheric anomalies over great distances. In human geography teleconnection is about complex relationships between time, space, people, and events.

Finally, I foreground a pedagogy called *writing to learn*. This is a reading and writing rich course. Therefore, it will aid and abet students in developing the core communication skills necessary to prepare for and produce their capstone research project.

## AILA ACTIVITIES & PROJECTS

---

This is an intellectually challenging course. Unlike in-person classes that occur in lecture halls and during class periods, this course places multiple time-management and self-motivational demands on students. The high levels of self-reliance and self-efficacy required to succeed in this course will stand students in good stead as their academic and professional careers unfold and consequently the guiding hands of mentors and peers lose their reassuring presence.

The project upon which this course turns is the amalgamation of an academic book (in its entirety) with the sophisticated geographical theory presented my lectures. The linchpin to this coalescence is effective communication. My underpinning pedagogy is writing-to-learn, a pedagogy that generates skills in effective communication. Writing-to-learn develops and nurtures critical reading skills and effective writing skills.

## READING

---

### Required Book

Hanson, Heather (2018) *Wildfire: On the front lines with station 8*

### Suggested Books

Anderson, M. Kat (2005) *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources*

Egan, Timothy (2009) *The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire That Saved America*

Ferguson, Gary (2017) *Land on Fire*

Lewis, Ronald (1998) *Transforming the Appalachian Countryside*

Pyne, Stephen J. (1982) *Fire in America: A Cultural History of Wildland and Rural Fire*

Pyne, Stephen J. (2012) *Fire: Nature and Culture*

Struzik, Edward (2017) *Firestorm: How Fire Will Shape Our Future*

## ASSESSMENT

---

Reading Quizzes	25
Executive Summary	15
Webinar Participation	15
Lecture Participation	15
Midterm Exam	15
Final Exam	15
Total Points Possible	100

### Reading/Multimedia Quizzes

In order to encourage a collective and deep engagement with reading/multimedia assignments throughout the semester and to facilitate robust forums, I will post a study guide on AIMS each week. Each week I will administer a quiz that will assess student comprehension of reading/multimedia assignments as well as allow students to critically analyze this material. Reading/multimedia quizzes comprise nearly one-third of a student's final grade; therefore keeping current with reading/multimedia assignments is essential to earning high marks in this class.

### Executive Summary

In the realms of public policy, governance, and corporate management, executive summaries are used to quickly acquaint readers with the main points of a larger paper, proposal, or project. For the purposes of this course, executive summaries consist of a *summary* of the section of the reading assigned to a particular student, an *argument* (a thesis statement informed by the RAFT I sent do each prime mover, and a brief yet structured argument), and *discussion questions*.

Remember, all students in this class are responsible for reading all the reading materials. Therefore, executive summaries should be written in such a way as to refresh classmates' memories of the assigned text. In other words, assume your audience is familiar with the reading.

At the end of their executive summaries prime movers must pose two discussion questions. Discussion questions must relate to your thesis, the central argument presented in the reading, or to larger issues related to the reading/lecture materials.

Executive summaries are to be posted directly to AIMS under the appropriate webinar. In total executive summaries should comprise between 500 - 750 words. They must be structurally sound, conceptually accurate, and logically coherent. I grade executive summaries against a rubric.

### Webinars

In posting executive summaries and discussion questions, prime movers initiate, propel, and give cohesion to webinar forums. Webinar forums constitute asynchronous discussions revolving around specific tasks that I will have given each prime mover as part of their RAFT.

On GEO 220, GEO 240, GEO 260, GEO 270, and GEO 300 AIMS pages you will find a topic field titled *webinars*. Under webinars you will find links to each webinar under the day it will be held. Under each webinar link you will find executive summaries and discussion questions posted by each webinar's prime movers.

Prime movers are required to post their executive summaries and at least one discussion question. All other students are required to post an answer to at least one prime movers' executive summary. Webinar posts should comprise between 150 and 300 words. Each student is also required to comment on other student's answer to prime mover's questions. Prime movers must comment on at least two posts to their threads.

I am in California, which is approximately a day and a half behind Japan. On the day of the webinar (California time) I will grade each webinar forum thread. In so doing I will check each student's post for intellectual merit, tone, and objectivity. Performance in webinar forums constitutes 100% of students' webinar participation grade.

Webinar forums comprise an asynchronous element of this class. Nevertheless, time matters for prime movers, who must post their executive summaries and their discussion questions by 8:30 on the day (Japan time) of their webinar. All other students must post their answers to prime mover questions and comments to other students' answers by 20:30 (Japan time) on the day of each webinar.

### **Webinar Participation**

Consistent and engaged participation of each student is essential to the success of webinars. Webinar posts should comprise between 150 and 300 words. I will maintain a log detailing each student's engagement in each webinar forum. Webinar participation grades will be based entirely on this log.

### **Lecture Participation**

Whether real time or recorded, my lectures will be interspersed with lecture forum questions. Because this course pivots on a *writing to learn* pedagogy, students will write out their answers to these questions. With recorded lectures students will be directed to appropriate lecture forums on AIMS. With live lectures, students will be given time to write out their answers. Lecture forum posts should comprise between 75 and 150 words. I will maintain a log detailing each student's engagement in each lecture forum. Lecture participation grades will be based entirely on this log.

### **Midterm Exam**

The midterm will cover material presented in lectures and in the reading assignments. It will cover *terms, concepts, and theories* as well as *regional specifics* presented during the first part of the semester. It will comprise essay questions. Aside from an exceptional situation as outlined in the Student Handbook, there will be no chance to make up the midterm exam.

### **Final Exam**

The final will cover material presented in lectures and in the reading assignments during the entire semester. It will cover *terms, concepts and theories* covered during the entire semester and *regional specifics* presented during the second part of the semester. It will comprise essay questions. Aside from an exceptional situation as outlined in the Student Handbook, there will be no chance to make up the final exam.

## **ASSESSMENT POLICIES**

---

### **Submission Requirements**

Students are expected to submit all written assignments, including forum posts, webinar posts, and discussion questions on the AIMS platform.

### **Makeup Work**

Aside from exceptional situations, there will be no chance to make up missed exams or quizzes or turn assignments in past their due day/time. Proof of an exceptional situation must be submitted to me in writing and signed by the appropriate authority within 24 hours of the beginning of the missed exam. I reserve the right to define an exceptional situation and furthermore to make all final decisions relating to amending, redoing, or making up late or incomplete work.

## **GENERAL POLICIES**

---

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty consists of plagiarism, cheating, fabrication and falsification, multiple submission of the same work, misuse of academic materials, and complicity in the academic dishonesty of others. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

In accordance with AIU policies and good practices in higher education, acts of academic dishonesty such as plagiarism, cheating, forgery (on a paper, examination, test, or other assignment) may result in the failure of the course. An act of academic dishonesty during the final examination, or assignment in lieu of the final examination, may result in failure of all courses registered in the relevant academic term. Cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Student Records for relevant action.

### **Attendance**

Learning is an ongoing process; one that builds upon previously acquired insights and skills. Consistent and engaged attendance is vital for success in this course. I reserve the right to deal with exceptional or extended absences on a case-by-case basis.

### **Special Needs**

If you require accommodations, please alert me of your needs on the first day of class so that I can work with you and the administration to meet them.

### **Civility & Classroom Decorum**

Learning is a participatory process; therefore student contribution to class is important. This course is based on forum discussions. Disagreement is part of all scholarly debate. Colleagues can disagree *and* maintain respect for each other and one another's views. I insist that we strive to learn from the differences that manifest while debating the merit of theoretical and empirical evidence by maintaining an atmosphere of civility during forums.

## **SCHEDULE**

### **Foundations**

Sept 5	Lecture - Introductions
Sept 7	Lecture - The Social Production of Wilderness
Sept 12	Lecture - The Social Production of Progress
Sept 14	Lecture - Property, Progress & Public Domain
Sept 19	Lecture - Preservation & Conservation

### **Fire**

Sept 21	Lecture - A Planet on Fire
Sept 26	Lecture - Anatomy of Wildfire
Sept 28	Lecture - Fire Ecology
Oct 3	Lecture - Hearth & Home
Oct 5	Webinar
Oct 12	Lecture - Fire & Culture
Oct 17	Webinar
Oct 19	Lecture - Consequences of Native American Wildland Management
Oct 24	Midterm Exam

**Conservation**

---

Oct 26	Lecture - Public Land, Private Interests
Oct 31	Webinar
Nov 2	Lecture - Public Land, Private Interests
Nov 7	Webinar
Nov 9	Lecture - The Big Burn & Conservation
Nov 14	Webinar
Nov 16	Lecture - Twentieth Century Forest Management
Nov 21	Webinar
Nov 28	Lecture - Twentieth Century Forest Management
Nov 30	Webinar
Dec 5	Lecture - Feedback Loops
Dec 7	Webinar
Dec 12	Lecture - Adaptation & Resilience
Dec 14	Webinar
Dec 19	<b>Final Exam</b>