THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Course Outline

Part I

Programme Title	**:**	Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) in Sociology and Community Studies and Bachelor of Education (Honours) (Geography); all undergraduate programmes
Programme QF Level	**:**	5
Course Title	**:**	**Foundation of Physical Geography**
Course Code	**:**	GGP1001
Department	**:**	Social Sciences and Policy Studies
Credit Points	**:**	3
Contact Hours	**:**	39
Pre-requisite(s)	**:**	Nil
Medium of Instruction	**:**	English
Course Level	**:**	1

Part II

The University's Graduate Attributes and seven Generic Intended Learning Outcomes (GILOs) represent the attributes of ideal EdUHK graduates and their expected qualities respectively. Learning outcomes work coherently at the University (GILOs), programme (Programme Intended Learning Outcomes) and course (Course Intended Learning Outcomes) levels to achieve the goal of nurturing students with important graduate attributes.

In gist, the Graduate Attributes for Sub-degree, Undergraduate, Taught Postgraduate, Professional Doctorate and Research Postgraduate students consist of the following three domains (i.e. in short "PEER & I"):

- **P**rofessional **E**xcellence;
- **E**thical **R**esponsibility; **&**
- **I**nnovation.

The descriptors under these three domains are different for the three groups of students in order to reflect the respective level of Graduate Attributes.

The seven GILOs are:

1. Problem Solving Skills
2. Critical Thinking Skills
3. Creative Thinking Skills

4a. Oral Communication Skills

4b. Written Communication Skills

5. Social Interaction Skills
6. Ethical Decision Making
7. Global Perspectives

1. Course Synopsis

This is an introductory course about the physical and biological environment that interacts with human beings. The course will cover the processes that govern the character and spatial patterns of the physical landscapes, including solar energy input, water cycle, ocean and atmospheric circulation; and how these processes shaped our planet's ecosystems and geomorphological landforms. Emphasis will be placed on the interactions between various physical systems and their relationships with the biota, including human beings ourselves.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes ($CILO_s$)

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

$CILO_1$: understand the nature and relevant concepts of physical geography

$CILO_2$: describe the major processes involved in the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere and biosphere that influence the characteristics and spatial relationships of climate, hydrology and vegetation

$CILO_3$: identify the relationships among the four spheres of our Earth system

$CILO_4$: understand the role played by scale in our study of different geophysical processes that have caused variations in different geographical processes, elements, or features

$CILO_5$: appreciate the ways that the geophysical environment interacts with the biota, including our human societies

3. Content, CILOs and Teaching & Learning Activities

Course Content	CILOs	Suggested Teaching & Learning Activities
(a) The Earth's environmental systems - Introducing physical geography - Spheres, systems and cycles	$CILO_{1,4,5}$	- Lectures - Presentation - Discussion - E-learning - Self-directed learning
(b) Global energy balance and the thermal environment - Radiation balance and insolation - Composition and structure of the atmosphere - Spatial and temporal variation of air temperature (c) Atmospheric circulation, weather systems and world's climates - Pressure and winds - Global wind and pressure pattern - Air masses and weather systems - Global climates (d) Global biogeography and processes - Energy and ecosystems - Biogeochemical cycles - The biomes	$CILO_{2,3,4,5}$	

Course Content	CILOs	Suggested Teaching & Learning Activities
(e) Earth materials and plate tectonics - Minerals and rocks - Plate tectonics - Volcanic landforms - Tectonic landforms (f) Global hydrology, freshwater resources and fluvial processes - Hydrological cycle - Soil erosion - Fluvial processes and landforms - Droughts and floods (g) Coastal environments and processes - Global change and coastal environments - Work of waves and tides - Types of coastlines		

4. Assessment

Assessment Tasks	Weighting (%)	CILO
(a) Mid-term Test: Multiple choice questions	20%	$CILO_{1,2,3,4,5}$
(b) Group presentation (3-4 students a group): Student presentation on a selected topic related to various Earth sub-systems	30%	$CILO_{1,2,3,4,5}$
(c) Examination: Short questions	50%	$CILO_{1,2,3,4,5}$

5. Use of Generative AI in Course Assessments

Please select one option only that applies to this course:

☐ ***Not Permitted***: In this course, the use of generative AI tools is not allowed for any assessment tasks.

☑ ***Permitted***: In this course, generative AI tools may be used in some or all assessment tasks. Instructors will provide specific instructions, including any restrictions or additional requirements (e.g., proper acknowledgment, reflective reports), during the first lesson and in relevant assessment briefs.

6. Required Text(s)

Strahler, A. (2016) *Introducing Physical Geography* (6thEd.) Wiley.

7. Recommended Readings

Brutsaert, W. (2023) *Hydrology: An Introduction* (2nd Ed.) Cambridge University Press, 622pp.

Cox, C.B., Ladle, R.J. and Moore, P.D. (2020) *Biogeography: An Ecological and Evolutionary Approach* (10th Ed.) Wiley, 528pp.

Davidson-Arnott, R., Bauer, B. and Houser, C. (2019) *Introduction to Coastal Processes and Geomorphology* (2nd Ed.) Cambridge University Press, 536pp.

Fossen, H. and Teyssier, C. (2024) *Plate Tectonics*. Cambridge University Press, 462pp.

Goudie, A. (2018) *Human Impact on the Natural Environment: Past, Present and Future* (8th Ed..). Wiley-Blackwell, 480pp

Hartmann, D.L. (2026) *Global Physical Climatology* (3rd Ed.). Elsevier Science, 568pp.

Hess, D. & Tasa D. (2016*) McKnight's Physical Geography: a landscape appreciation*. Pearson, 688pp.

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8. Related Web Resources

Physicalgeography.net:
http://www.physicalgeography.net/
GCSE Bitesize Geography, BBC:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/geography/
Fundamentals of Physical Geography, UBC:
http://serc.carleton.edu/resources/22397.html

9. Related Journals

Applied Geography
Climatic Change
Geografiska Annaler: Series A, Physical Geography
Global Environmental Change
Journal of Geographical Sciences
Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences
Progress in Physical Geography
Physical Geography

10. Academic Honesty

The University upholds the principles of honesty in all areas of academic work. We expect our students to carry out all academic activities honestly and in good faith. Please refer to the *Policy on Academic Honesty, Responsibility and Integrity* (https://www.eduhk.hk/re/uploads/docs/00000000001633679892454 8BbN5). Students should familiarize themselves with the Policy.

11. Others

Newspapers and magazines related to topic issues.

Updated April 2026