

Course Tag Reflection Exemplar Communication Skills

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GEO 353: Geographies of Environmental Justice

Identify the course learning objectives in the syllabus that are clearly aligned to Communication Skills and respective assignment(s).

At the completion of this class, students should be able to:

Write clearly and critically;
Articulate what a geographic perspective brings to our understandings of a changing world and its human and environmental dynamics;
Describe and explain the dynamic relationship between people and places, and among places, over time and among space and scales.

Explain the connection between specific assignment(s) and Communication Skills. At least 30% of the course grade must engage students in the selected competency for the course to be tagged.

This course fulfills both a writing intensive and a critical issues requirement. It has four writing assignments, each of which will be 5-7 pages. These are:

1. Essays #1 and #2: will be based on readings for the previous 3 weeks and will ask students to respond to a prompt. The readings examine social issues related to topics such as environmental justice, structural racism, environmental policy, pollution, etc. (see syllabus for detailed list of topics). Essays are worth 50 points (20% of grade) each, for a total of 40% of grade overall.

2. Map assignments #1 and #2 will require students to make a map related to environmental justice topics covered in class. Students will create a map (conceptualized broadly as a visual representation of spatial processes and relationships) and write a ~2000 word essay about the processes included in the map. The map assignments are worth 50 points (20% of grade) each, for a total of 40% of grade overall.

Maps are an important mode of (visual) communication. The combination of maps, essays and class participation (e.g. presenting results of group work) will help students improve their communication skills across multiple domains (verbal, written, visual).

Thus, the essays and map assignments account for 80% of students' total grade. Participation grade (which will include verbal participation in discussions and activities) accounts for 20%.

Describe in detail the instructional strategies faculty use to intentionally teach Communication Skills in the course.

We will dedicate at least two course periods to discussing research and writing techniques, and at least two class periods to workshopping paper drafts (i.e. students will work in small groups and share a draft of their writing with their group members, who will give them written and verbal feedback). Because this is a writing intensive class, students I will give students detailed written feedback on their assignments. The assignments are designed to build on one another, to give student an opportunity to incorporate feedback from one assignment into their next assignment.

Describe the feedback tool(s) faculty use to support students' competency development on Communication Skills.

I give students detailed written feedback on their writing and map assignments in the following formats:

1. margin comments on writing mechanics and specific concepts;
2. summary comments on the student's overall performance on the assignment;
3. grading rubric that specifies how students did on particular aspects of the assignment (writing mechanics, engagement with references, clarity of argument, etc.).