

Geography of the James River Watershed

GEOG 215

Spring 2025



Instructor:

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How to Reach Me:

Office hours: Wednesdays 2:30-3:30 pm or grab me after class
Pop in or if you know ahead of time you'd like to chat at a specific time, email me first
I make a point of trying to respond to all correspondence within 24 hours (48 hrs on weekends). So if you do not hear back from me in that time, feel free to ping me again.

Course Description and Objectives:

What defines a place? We will explore this question through the study of the James River watershed, our home while at the University of Richmond. How does the concept of a watershed link us to this place? How does it link us to all places? This course will explore the relationship between the people, the land, and the water in the River City. But many of the observations that we will make this semester in our study of this place will reveal truths that extend beyond these local watershed boundaries.

The course has three primary objectives: (1) to provide an introduction to physical geography by thinking about place, space, scale, connectivity, boundaries, and region, (2) to exercise and hone skills of critical observation through writing, and (3) to link the theory learned in class to the practice of resource management in the local community.

These goals are accomplished through a combination of reading and writing about the watershed, scholarly discussion in the classroom, and first-hand exposure to the people and environments that define the resource challenges and opportunities within the James River watershed. We will

spend roughly half of our class time together exploring the watershed, learning from first-hand observations, and meeting with local practitioners working on projects related to our local environment. The impressions made from these excursions will be deconstructed as part of the core lecture material and writing assignments. A final project ties together the lecture and field-based components of the course.

This class counts towards the Written Communication Integrated Focus Area and emphasizes written communication and the ability to communicate effectively in geography and resource management. As such, the course carries the following specific goals:

1. Students will produce written work that reflects disciplinary conventions and attention to audience and situation.
2. Students will produce written work with a clear perspective and, where appropriate, forward claims supported by evidence, and cite sources responsibly.
3. Students will produce written work undergoing an iterative process, where content evolves (creation, drafting, and revision) and improves based on feedback from the faculty member.
4. Students will compose written work with clarity, cohesion, concision, and minimal error.

The website for the class can be found on Blackboard (<http://blackboard.richmond.edu/>). All assignments, administrative information, readings, and class lecture notes are available there.

Course Schedule:

Class meets on Fridays from 10:00-12:30 in the INTC 231. The schedule will alternate weeks in the field and in the classroom, depending on the weather.

In-class trips (scheduled depending on weather):

January – James River Park System Belle Isle (Geotour and Dry Rocks), Library of Virginia (Mapping the Watershed)

February – Flood Wall and Slave Trail (History), VA Department of Historic Resources Offices (National Historic Landmarks Program)

March – Riparian Tree Planting (Upper James Riparian Consortium)

April – Fish Electroshocking and Water Sampling on the James (EcoCorridor), Pontoon Boat to Dominion Power Plant and Presquile Island (Lower James)

Course Materials:

There is no required textbook for the course, but reading assignments are required in advance of each class. These readings will be accessible through Blackboard. Each student will sign-up to be the expert for one chapter of the book [In River Time](#). We will work our way through the book sequentially. Discussion leaders will post a 1-page summary of their chapter to Box and start Friday class with a 10-minute summary and interactive activity. These will be evaluated as part of the Class Participation grade based on organization, topic knowledge, creativity, and enthusiasm/style. Lecture materials and additional readings will be available on Blackboard.

Student Evaluation:

25 pts Quizzes and Exam

Short in-class quizzes may be given at any time during the semester (5 pts). These quizzes will cover concepts from the previous week's activity and/or the current week's assigned readings. Students missing a quiz for a reason not approved ahead of time will score zero for that quiz. A mid-term exam will be given on **March 28** and will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions focusing on the material from in-class lectures and the readings (20 pts).

9 pts Community Based Learning

Community Based Learning (CBL) will be an integral part of this course. The goals of our community engagement are to provide opportunities for reflection, to draw connections between the academic content of the course and "real-world" applications, and to help us engage with geography in a societal context. Please take a moment when you have a chance to visit the Resources for CBL Students webpage:

<https://engage.richmond.edu/courses-scholarship/students/>

Participation in a total of at least three community events is required. These activities are meant to provide additional exposure to the people and places within the watershed. They can anything from attendance at a talk, roundtable, or museum exhibit or a couple hours of volunteer work. The activities will be written about in your blogs and discussed in class. Plan ahead. I will post opportunities on Blackboard and you can request (ahead of time) to count other activities. Talk with me early on if you have trouble finding activities.

Written reflection will be the primary form of evaluating the CBL, and these reflections should be added to your observation log (see below). The first reflection will be due by **Sunday, February 23**, the second by **Sunday, March 23**, and the final reflection is due at the completion of the last week of classes.

15 pts Observation Logs

Observation logs will be maintained throughout the semester. In addition to the CBL postings, six original posts (1 pt each) are required (see Observation Logs Handout). These will be reviewed by me, and you will also twice have the opportunity to review and comment on a small subset of your classmates' observations (1 pt each). Postings should link observations from time spent in the James River watershed to topics discussed in class. The concepts of place, space, scale, connectivity, boundaries, and region should be emphasized, where relevant. Two longer reflective pieces (3 pt for the first and 4 pts for the second) will be submitted that require linking prior postings in a cohesive essay. Observation Log entries are due on **Wednesday night at 10:00 pm** of the week in which they are assigned.

16 pts Application papers

Two applications papers will be required during the semester in which students will apply relevant theory to management challenges introduced by readings or guest speakers. Each paper will be only two-pages in length (1,000-1,500 words) but arguments should be

carefully researched, documented, and cited. The concepts of place, space, scale, connectivity, boundaries, and region should be emphasized where relevant. Drafts of the application papers will be due before class on the day that the topic is being discussed (4 pts/paper). Comments will be provided and final papers will be due by **week 10 (paper 1)** and the **end of the semester (paper 2)** (4 pts /revision).

25 pts Final project

As a final project, students will create a proposal for a new [National Historic Landmark](#) within the James River watershed. These proposals can be no more than five pages plus accompanying figures and must address why the site represents an illustrative example of the Nation's natural or human history. Final papers will follow the national guidelines and be due at the **end of the semester** (15 pts). The last class of the semester will be dedicated to a discussion of the merits of listing the various sites, with the class nominating the top two proposals to send to Virginia's Outreach Director for consideration. To gain experience, students will first draft two shorter (2-page) NHL proposals for sites within the James River watershed (5 pts each). Students may work in small groups of no more than three for the final project but must write the two shorter practice proposals on their own.

10 pts Class Participation

Class participation will be evaluated primarily on the In River Time assignment (2 pts) and active, engaged participation in the classroom (4 points) and field trips (4 pts). Participation will be quantified using the following guidelines (adapted from JA Schatzel, Stonehill College):

<u>Points</u>	<u>Expectations</u>
A	Always well prepared for class including completion of all assigned readings; consistently facilitates productive peer discussions; offers reasoned responses of high quality; raises substantive questions about the readings and assignments on an ongoing basis; and engages thoughtfully with invited guest speakers and field trip hosts.
B	Contributes regularly; generally prepared; asks questions and provides occasional responses of moderate quality; handles direct questions satisfactorily.
C	Allows others to carry the ball; participates infrequently; needs to be prodded; weak preparation; wastes class time with questions of little substance.
D	Often inadequately prepared; little involvement in class discussions; repeatedly late or leaves during class.
F	Unprepared; disruptive in class; unauthorized use of computers during class – e.g. e-mail or instant messaging; repeated talking with other students about topics not related to class.

Attendance is absolutely critical to this class. Two points will be deducted for each absence not excused ahead of time.

GRADING: Grades will be assigned based on the following formula:

	<u>Point values</u>
Exams and Quizzes	25
CBL activities	9
Observation logs	15
Application papers	16
Final project	25
Class participation	<u>10</u>
	100

- The grading scheme will follow standard University of Richmond guidelines (<http://registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/grading.html>).

A > 93 pts	B 87-83	C 77-73	D 67-63
A- 93-90	B- 83-80	C- 73-70	D- 63-60
B+ 90-87	C+ 80-77	D+ 70-67	F < 60 pts

CLASSROOM GROUND RULES: Regardless of age, ability, ethnicity, race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, geographic background, religion, political ideology, language, or culture, we expect all members of this class to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of our class. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion, engagement, accurate assessment or achievement, please notify me as soon as possible.

Ground Rules for a Safe Space:

- Be mindful of one another's privacy -- do not invite outsiders into our class
- Be respectful
- Assume good will
- Challenge with care. Approach discussion as a "think out loud". Debate the concepts not the person.
- Speak from your own experiences, not assuming others have similar experiences
- Try not to make assumptions, seek to understand, not to judge
- Be open to challenges and different perspectives as an opportunity to learn something new
- Be flexible when things don't work
- Use preferred names and gender pronouns
- No side conversations
- Be willing to work together

ACADEMIC HONESTY: The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. I take the pledge to academic honesty

very seriously, do not put yourself in jeopardy for a lazy plagiarism or other violation. It is not worth it. Report any violations you witness to the instructor.

<https://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/guide.pdf>

USE OF AI TOOLS: Our understanding of AI tools (like ChatGPT) is constantly evolving. While I encourage you to explore how these technologies can help you select appropriate topics to write about in your assignments or even answer any grammatical questions you may have ... you are prohibited from using these tools to complete course assignments including any written assignments unless I have explicitly asked you to do so. Unauthorized use of these tools will be considered an Honor Code violation in this class.

TIME-ON-TASK EXPECTATIONS: To be successful in this course, you should expect to devote an average of 10-14 hours each week to doing readings and preparing for class (2-4 hours), participating in class sessions (3 hours) and service learning (1 hour), studying course related materials after class and for exams (1 hour), and completing course assignments and projects (3-5 hours). If you find you are spending significantly more than this amount of time averaged over the semester, please let me know. It is expected that you will have completed all reading assignments before class to participate actively in the classroom discussions and exercises.

If you experience difficulties in this course, do not hesitate to consult with me. Additional support services are available at:

Disability Services

The University of Richmond's office of Disability Services strives to ensure that students with disabilities and/or temporary conditions (i.e., concussions & injuries) are provided opportunity for full participation and equal access. Students who are experiencing a barrier to access due to a disability and/or temporary condition are encouraged to apply for accommodations by visiting: disability.richmond.edu. Disability Services can be reached at disability@richmond.edu or 804-662-5001.

Once accommodations have been approved, students must 1) Submit their Disability Accommodation Notice (DAN) to each of their professors via the Disability Services Student Portal available at this link: sl.richmond.edu/be, and 2) Request a meeting with each professor to create an accommodation implementation plan. It is important to complete these steps as soon as possible because accommodations are never retroactive, and professors are permitted a reasonable amount of time for implementation. Disability Services is available to assist, as needed.

Weinstein Learning Center

Academic Skills Center (asc.richmond.edu): Academic coaches assist students in assessing and developing their academic and life-skills (e.g., critical reading and thinking, information conceptualization, concentration, test preparation, time management, stress management, etc.). Peer tutors offer assistance in specific subject areas (e.g., calculus, chemistry, accounting, etc.) and will be available for appointments in-person and virtually. Peer tutors are listed on the ASC website. **Email Roger Mancastropa** (rmancast@richmond.edu) **for coaching appointments in academic and life skills.**

English Language Learning assists multi-lingual and international students in honing their language, academic, and/or intercultural skills. Among other available services for students are one-on-one tutoring, group workshops, and semester-long classes on writing and U.S. culture. **Please contact Leslie Bohon** Leslie.Bohon@Richmond.edu **for more information and appointments.**

Quantitative Resource Center: (qrc.richmond.edu): Provides services related to quantitative and computational learning across curriculum through tutoring, consultation and training. **Email Erica Modeste** erica.modeste@richmond.edu **for more info.**

Speech Center: (speech.richmond.edu): Assists with preparation and practice in the pursuit of excellence in public expression. Recording, playback, coaching and critique sessions are offered by teams of trained student consultants. During scheduled **appointments**, consultants assist in developing ideas, arranging key points for more effective organization, improving style and delivery, and handling multimedia aids for individual and group presentations.

Technology Learning Center: (tlc.richmond.edu): The TLC is a staffed public lab dedicated to supporting digital media projects. Services include camera checkout, video/audio recording assistance, virtual reality, poster printing, 3D printing and modeling. The TLC is located on the second floor of Boatwright Library.

Writing Center (writing.richmond.edu): Assists writers at all levels of experience, across all majors. Students can attend [walk-in hours](#) at Boatwright Library (room 171A) with trained writing consultants who offer friendly critiques of written work.

Other Campus Services

Boatwright Library Research Librarians: (library.richmond.edu/help/ask/ or 289-8876): Research librarians help students with all steps of their research, from identifying or narrowing a topic, to locating, accessing, evaluating, and citing information resources. Librarians support students in their classes across the curriculum and provide individual appointments, class library instruction, tutorials, and [research guides](http://libguides.richmond.edu) (libguides.richmond.edu). Students can [contact an individual librarian](#) (library.richmond.edu/help/liaison-librarians.html) or ASK a librarian for help via email (library@richmond.edu), text (804-277-9ASK), or [chat](http://library.richmond.edu/chat.html) (library.richmond.edu/chat.html).

Career Services: (careerservices.richmond.edu or 289-8547): Can assist you in exploring your interests and abilities, choosing a major or course of study, connecting with internships and jobs, and investigating graduate and professional school options. Update your profile in [Handshake](#) and schedule an appointment with a career advisor early in your time at UR.

Counseling and Psychological Services: (caps.richmond.edu or 289-8119): Assists currently enrolled, full-time, degree-seeking students in improving their mental health and well-being, and in handling challenges that may impede their growth and development. Services include brief consultations, short-term counseling, skills-building classes, therapy groups, crisis intervention, psychiatric consultation, and related services.