

## STUDENT HANDBOOK:

### FIRST YEAR GEOGRAPHY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES, MONA CAMPUS (Revised 2008/2009)

#### 1.1 THE DISCIPLINE OF GEOGRAPHY

Geography is an important and dynamic discipline which encompasses the concerns of the humanities and social sciences and the scientific study of the natural world. It provides those who study it with a broad-based education about the world, and is one of the few academic subjects to synthesize ideas and information from the environment, economics, politics, society and culture. In a world increasingly characterized by global change (climate warming and other environmental changes, and economic and cultural globalization), the importance of a solid, broad-based geographical education to an understanding of our complex, inter-related planet has never been greater.

In the Department we place considerable emphasis on the linkages between developed and developing countries, and on applied geographical themes that connect people to the environment, such as natural hazards and disaster management, tourism and coastal processes, natural resource management and the environment, and urban geography and planning. Our courses cover a wide range of material, from tropical and temperate countries, and from industrialized/developed countries and the developing world. However, the Caribbean region is our geographical tapestry, so naturally many of our courses include Caribbean examples – more so than any other university geography degree in the world. We even have a special, compulsory Level III course on the region. Thus, we want UWI geography graduates to have the broad world view of geography graduates elsewhere, but also to have a deeper understanding of the Caribbean than their counterparts from universities in North America and elsewhere in the world.

The Department provides a friendly teaching and learning environment. The administrative structure of has changed several times since the Geography degree was introduced on Mona campus in 1965. In 1996, Geography and Geology were merged to form a single academic department housed in two buildings. Building A (the de la Beche building) is the older building. The **upper floor** includes the offices of geography lecturers and the computer laboratory. The **ground floor** houses the offices of geology lecturers, teaching classrooms (Labs #1 & #2), a tutorial room and three analytical laboratories (sedimentology, optics and chemistry). The **basement** houses a teaching classroom (Lab #3), the Geology Museum and rock-cutting laboratory. Building B includes the Map Library, Undergraduate Reading Room and teaching classroom (Lab #4).

We hope you find the department an exciting, stimulating and friendly place to study geography. Our most significant non-physical feature as a learning environment arises because we attract students from all over the Caribbean region; from Trinidad & Tobago, Barbados, St Vincent, St Kitts & Nevis and St Lucia and other islands, as well as Belize. The regional character of the UWI, sadly, is not as strong as in the past. But we are very proud that our department can still offer West Indian students a West Indian experience, an opportunity to meet people from different parts of the region, to share educational, social and personal learning experiences and ideas, and forge lifetime friendships.

We place great emphasis on developing good relationships and rapport between staff and students. The Department is fairly small in comparison to other academic departments at Mona, and certainly in comparison to geography departments elsewhere in the world. Nevertheless, the Department has a good reputation for its “family atmosphere” and the approachability of staff. In part, this is because of the importance we place on fieldwork which provides opportunities to get outside the classroom and get to know both staff and other students very well. Remember, though, that interaction is a two-way process – a happy and successful Department depends on the active involvement of students and staff alike.

## 1.2 WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION

The most important contact person in first year geography is your first year tutor. You will be allocated a tutor during the first teaching week at the university. Your tutor will be either a lecturer or a postgraduate, the latter are research students who have obtained good first degrees in geography from our department and so “know the ropes.”

You will have weekly meetings with your tutor in a tutorial class, which is a small discussion group of first year students like yourself. While the primary role of a tutorial is to help you prepare for the first year examinations, these meetings will also help you gradually understand what it means to be a university student, how to improve your academic and time management skills, and how to take advantage of the facilities available on campus. You can get to know your tutor very well during your first semester, and you can turn to your tutor for advice as the need may arise.

### *1.2a Undergraduate Notice Boards*

Information about courses, timetables, seminars and tutorials is to be found on the notice boards which are located outside the Main Departmental Office on the ground floor of Building A. This is the main way in which lecturers and the Academic Coordinator routinely communicate with students. You should check the notice boards **every time** you come into the Department, in order not to miss important announcements. There are other notice boards in the Department which provide additional information. One notice board is dedicated to Student Matters, including the Geographical and Geological Societies and other student activities, as well as the Minutes of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee.

### *1.2b Departmental Offices*

The Main Department Office is located on the ground floor in Building A, and is manned by secretarial staff from 8.30am to 4.30pm, Mondays to Fridays. This is the normal point of entry for visitors to the Department. There is a smaller Departmental Office located on the upper floor in Building A. Secretaries are usually able to answer your questions concerning undergraduate information. Any official Departmental forms that you may need to obtain are normally available from one of these offices. If you want to leave a message for a member of staff, it can be left in staff letter boxes (pigeon holes) in the Main Departmental Office. The secretary will place the message in the appropriate pigeon hole for you. She will also convey any messages to lecturers you may phone in to the Department in the same way.

The Department has its own website at [www.uwimona.ed.jm/](http://www.uwimona.ed.jm/) which has additional information about courses. The UWI website ([www.uwimona.edu.jm](http://www.uwimona.edu.jm)) contains a wealth of relevant information on campus services, news items, and other matters of interest.

### *1.2c Email*

You are strongly encouraged to use the email facility provided by the University, often referred to as **Campus Pipeline**. Many important announcements are sent by email, and the use of a common format for email addresses makes it easier for you to be contacted by lecturers or tutors if necessary.

### 1.3 WHO'S WHO IN THE DEPARTMENT

#### *Head of Department*

Professor David Barker

#### *Other Lecturers*

##### *Geography*

Dr Michael Burn  
Dr Savitha Ganapathy  
Dr Susan Mains  
Dr David Miller  
Mr Kevon Rhiney

##### *Geology*

Mr Rafi Ahmad  
Dr Arpita Mandal  
Professor Simon Mitchell  
Dr Tom Stemann

#### *Academic Coordinator*

Mrs Anne Lyew-Ayee

#### *Support Staff*

*Administrative Assistant*

Mrs Nadine Sherlock-Marshall

*Senior Secretary*

Ms Denise Francis

*Clerical Assistant*

Mrs Coreen Cornwall-Perry

*Museum Curator*

Appointment pending

*Map Curator*

Ms Lisa Williams

*Computer Technician/Cartographer*

Mr Leonard Notice

*Laboratory Technician*

Ms Tanesha Samuels

*Office Attendants*

Mrs Isolene Riley & Ms Donna Williams

*Senior Laboratory Technician*

Mr Alfred Rose

#### *Marine Geology Unit*

Professor Edward Robinson

Ms Shakira Khan

### 1.4 USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

#### *Department of Geography and Geology*

*Phone* 876-927-2129, 876-927-2728

*Extension* 2258, 2259, 2246, 2210

*Fax* 876-977-6029

*Email* [geoggeol@uwimona.edu.jm](mailto:geoggeol@uwimona.edu.jm)

#### *Faculty Offices*

*Pure & Applied Sciences* 876- 927-1785, extensions 2401, 2961, 2962

*Humanities & Education* 876-970-1666, 876- 977-3659, extension 2365

#### *Office of Student Services & Development*

876-970-2739, 876-977-3880, extensions 2541, 2546

#### *UWI Health Centre*

876-970-0017, extension 2270, 2370

### 2.1 THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

The Head of Department has the ultimate responsibility for all the administrative, financial and academic activities of the Department, including the undergraduate programme. As far as possible, he tries to maintain close contact with students. He is also one of your lecturers in first year human geography. You will be able to discuss any matter concerning the Department or the degree programmes should the need arise.

## 2.2 LECTURER AVAILABILITY

We think it is important that staff members are available to see students. You will get an opportunity to discuss your courses with lecturers in the classroom, in their offices, during field work, or informally and on an *ad hoc* basis around the Department. If you have a problem with or a query about a course, you are encouraged to discuss this first with the appropriate lecturer. However, remember that all lecturers are also active in research and other professional activities, in addition to their undergraduate, postgraduate teaching and administrative duties, so they are sometimes not available for consultation.

You can make arrangements to see staff informally or via a formal appointment arranged through the Main Departmental Office. In an emergency you should contact the Departmental Office.

## 2.3 THE ACADEMIC COORDINATOR

The Academic Coordinator, Mrs Anne Lyew-Ayee, has overall day-to-day responsibility for the undergraduate degree programme, including timetabling, course registration and counselling, and she is also the Departmental Examinations Officer, in charge of coordinating our examinations with the Examinations Section of the Registry.

The Academic Coordinator will be one of the first people you meet in the Department because she needs to ensure that your course registration is in accordance with the university regulations. It is absolutely essential that you have registered on-line properly at the beginning of each semester, as it may affect your smooth progression through Levels I to III. You should see the Academic Coordinator if you have queries about your course registrations, declaration of Majors and Minors or other degree changes, or suspending or withdrawing from the degree programme.

## 2.4 STUDENT RECORD CARDS

When you join the Department, you will be asked to fill in a record card, giving details of your home and term addresses and your educational history and qualifications. This will be done during **the first practical class in the first week of Semester I**. It is important that you are present at this session because it is also used to assign first year students to tutorial groups. If, during the time you are in the Department, you change your address or telephone contact numbers, please inform the Academic Coordinator so we can update your records. The record cards are important because lecturers use them when they are writing references for you, for example, when you are seeking a job or applying for postgraduate courses. Please help us keep your information up to date by informing of changes in your contact details.

We also display class photographs in the upper floor Departmental Office, and you can consult these to learn the names of your classmates.

## 2.5 ILLNESS AND OTHER EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

Unfortunately, problems such as illness occur from time to time. If, for any reason, you have an illness or other problem which influences your ability to attend classes or undertake your academic studies for any length of time, you should inform the Departmental Office and, if possible, the lecturers whose classes are affected.

The University has strict rules about procedures to be followed in the case of illness, so you need to familiarize yourself with them. If you are absent from a lecture, practical, tutorial class or field class, you will need to obtain a doctor's note from the **University Health Centre**. This is a University regulation. The note needs to specify the dates of any classes missed, and you need to ensure that the Health Centre sends it on to the Head of Department. The University does not accept sick notes from your family doctor, so even if you obtain treatment from your family doctor you must still follow the correct University procedure and also visit the University Health Centre to obtain the relevant documentation.

## 2.6 ATTENDANCE AND PAID EMPLOYMENT

**You are expected to attend all lectures, tutorials, seminars, field trips and any other teaching classes indicated by your lecturers.**

Permission for any prolonged absence for reasons other than illness must be obtained from the Head of Department.

Both the Geography and the Geology programmes have field classes on Saturdays, at Levels, I, II and III. Field classes are critical aspects of your geography/geology education and learning and are also opportunities for social interaction. They are often enjoyable and rewarding experiences and allow you to visit places in Jamaica you may not have visited before. Saturday field classes are unavoidable because of the intensive organization of the university timetable. Participation in field work affects the social lives of both students and lecturers alike. Saturday field classes, thus, are compulsory, in both Geography and Geology. Non-attendance at field classes in both Geography and Geology will result in your not getting a final grade for the course in question.

**If you are unable to attend Saturday field classes for any reason you should NOT register for the Geography or Geology degree.**

Attendance records are taken at the start of all tutorials and field trips and, from time to time, at the beginning of lectures and practical classes. Absences are reported to the Head of Department and there are consequences for missing classes:

- Regular non-attendance at lectures, tutorials and practical classes can result in your being debarred from sitting an examination.
- Non-attendance in tutorials will result in marks being deducted from your final tutorial grade.
- Non-attendance at practical classes will result in your being graded with a zero for that particular class.
- Non-attendance in a field class will result in your coursework mark being incomplete. Even if you pass the examination and have a letter from the Health Centre, you will need to successfully complete the fieldwork the following year before you are deemed to have passed the course. An incomplete field class may affect your ability to advance to the next level in the degree programme.

**Non-attendance at lectures will not only affect your academic performance, but is unlikely to impress your lecturers whom you may ultimately depend upon to write you a job reference after you graduate.**

### ***2.6a Timetable Clashes***

Faculty timetables are not infallible. As far as possible, timetables are designed to ensure that students at a particular level can combine cognate subjects, like geography and geology, or geography and life sciences, without timetable clashes. However, on occasion there may be timetable clashes, especially where your course registration straddles different levels, or where you have selected an unusual combination of subjects. Missing classes is prejudicial to your education and can have serious consequences in terms of your preparation for and performance in examinations. Should a timetable clash arise, you need to resolve it as quickly as possible at the start of the semester and in a way that is acceptable to all the lecturers involved. If other students have the same clash, it is sensible to try to act as a group to resolve the problem rather than acting individually. All timetable clashes must be reported to the Academic Coordinator.

The Department recognizes that many students have to seek paid employment during the academic year for financial support. However, we are also concerned that such paid employment does not disrupt your academic work. University regulations state that full-time undergraduates shall not undertake paid employment during scheduled class hours, and that this should not normally exceed 20 hours in any one week during term-time.

Permission to waive such regulations must be obtained from the Dean, and is only granted in exceptional circumstances. You should ensure therefore that if you undertake employment during the semester it does not clash with any of your academic commitments, including lectures, tutorials, practical classes, seminars and field classes. If, for any reason, you feel that you are having difficulty completing work or coping with your courses, you should talk to your tutor, the Academic Coordinator, or the Head of Department or any other lecturer as early as possible. Genuine difficulties will be viewed sympathetically, and most problems can be dealt with as long as we are informed early enough.

### 3. THE UNDERGRADUATE GEOGRAPHY DEGREE PROGRAMME

#### 3.1 Undergraduate Geography at UWI

The discipline of Geography concerns the study of the earth's places and environments, with a particular interest in the relationships between people and their environments. It is a discipline which stretches from the humanities and social sciences (which seek to understand the dynamics of societies, cultures and human behaviour) to the earth sciences (which seek to explain the development of physical landscapes and the dynamics of environmental processes). Geography puts this understanding of social and environmental processes within the essential context of places and regions. It recognizes differences in cultures, political systems, economies, landscapes and physical environments across the world, and the complexities of the links between them.

The Geography degree programme at UWI is designed to give a sound and extensive introduction to the study of Geography, and provides the opportunity of studying advanced, specialized courses at Level III. Our first and second year core courses are compulsory, and provide the essentials of the modern discipline of Geography. Our courses are progressively more demanding, commensurate with your personal intellectual development, increasing knowledge and your acquisition of key technical skills as you move through your university degree programme. Our final year courses reflect the specialized research of lecturers as well as current knowledge, debates and issues in the discipline. The current range of courses available in final year includes urban development, tourism, tropical agriculture and rural development, coastal and karst geomorphology, hazards and disaster management, tropical biogeography and GIS.

Geography is offered at UWI either as a **B.A.** or a **B.Sc.** degree, in the **Faculty of Humanities and Education**, and the **Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences**, respectively. Despite the different names of the degree, the geography content and geography courses available are the same irrespective of which Faculty you belong to. The difference between the B.A. Geography and the B.Sc. Geography degrees lies in the choice of other subjects and courses you are able to combine with your geography programme.

If you are in the **Faculty of Humanities and Education**, you will be registered for a Geography Major. Please note that you have to be a Geography Major to do any courses in Geography, and that you will not be able to do another Major with Geography.

If you are in the **Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences**, you are likely to be registered either for a **Geography Major** or a **Geography Minor**. It is possible to register for a **Double Major**, in Geography and Geology, Geography and Life Sciences, or Geography and Computer Sciences, for example, but we strongly advise you to seek counselling from the Academic Coordinator and from lecturers before embarking on such, because of the heavy workload involved and the registration regulations governing double majors.

#### 3.2 Grade Point Average (GPA) and the UWI marking scheme

The marking scheme below is used in marking all tutorial and exam essays, practical class assignments, coursework and field work projects, and research dissertations. In Geography, we have developed guidelines (called "Grade Descriptors" – a series of tables) which are intended to help you understand the rationale of our marking schemes. There are separate guidelines for essays, field and coursework projects and research theses, and se guidelines may be viewed on the Departmental website.

GRADE	Mark as a %	GRADE	Mark as a %
A+	86 – 100	C+	53 – 56
A	70 – 85	C	50 - 52
A-	67 – 69	C-	47 - 49
B+	63 – 66	D+	43 - 46
B	60 – 62	D	40 - 42
B-	57 - 59	F (Fail)	0 - 39

The class of degree with which you graduate is based on the **Grade Point Average** (GPA) system. Information on how your GPA is calculated should have been included in the package you received from the University. You should take the time to become familiar with the GPA system. If you have any questions, with the GPA system, you may contact the Faculty Office, the Student Records Unit, or the Examinations Section of the Registry. Our academic co-ordinator can also provide further advice.

### 3.3 Prerequisites and Other Hurdles

- You must have at least one CAPE subject (both units) or a GCE 'A' level or its equivalent to register for a Level 1 course.
- **Both** GG10A/GEOG1101 **and** GG10B/GEOG1201 must be successfully completed before you can proceed to **any** Part II courses in Geography.
- **Both** GL10A/GEOL1001 **and** GL10B/GEOL1002 must be successfully completed before you can proceed to **any** Part II courses in Geology.
- For all courses in the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, you must be successful in both the theory and the practical/coursework components.

## 4. LIBRARY RESOURCES

Geography books are located in both the **Main Library** and in the **Science Library**, so you need to familiarize yourself with both libraries. There are conducted tours of the libraries for new students at the beginning of the semester. It is critical that you sign up for one of these tours at the beginning of your time as a U.W.I. student. The U.W.I. libraries are the most important of student resources, and you should learn to make full use of them, including access to the on-line catalogue, and on-line journals.

Human geography books are located in the Main Library and physical geography in the Science Library. Get into the habit of visiting the library regularly when you are not in classes, once a day or several times a week. If you go to the library only a few times a semester, then you are not functioning properly or sensibly as a university student. The internet is a useful information source but it is **no substitute** for a good university library. Browsing the shelves is a useful way of finding additional lecture material and for researching tutorial essays and assignments. Further, the nature of geography is such that not all relevant books are catalogued under "geography" and, indeed, many geography books are not even classified under "geography", especially in the Main library. So you will need to learn how to use a large university library; it will take time and patience to become familiar with its intricacies and idiosyncrasies.

Both the Main Library and the Science Library have a **Reserved Book Collection (RBC)**. These contain multiple copies of key text books for first year courses. These books are on restricted loan; they must be used in the library or are available on overnight loan only. This facility is useful if, like most students, you are unable to afford the cost of purchasing expensive textbooks.

### 4.1 Departmental Map Library and Reading Room

This facility is located in Building B. Our Map Library has one of the largest collections of maps in the English-speaking Caribbean. We have comprehensive topographical coverage of Jamaica at the scales of 1:50,000 and 1:12,500, as well as Geology maps, other specialized maps, town plans and hydrographic

charts. The collection also includes a selection of maps of the Eastern Caribbean. The collection of aerial photographs is mainly used for teaching purposes.

The Map Library is also a quiet reading for geography and geology undergraduates. It houses essential reading material for undergraduate courses - photocopied articles and book chapters. You can read these articles in the Reading Room, or take them home as an overnight loan. You may borrow the articles for photocopying purposes; articles may be photocopied in the Department for a small charge. Our Map Librarian, Lisa Williams, will explain how the loan system works. It is important to recognize, however, that we have created this facility to help alleviate the problem of the shortage of key textbooks and journals in the library. The collection is not a substitute for using the U.W.I. libraries; you should use the Main Library and the Science Library to research tutorial essays, and to dig deeper into the literature for lectures.

Other useful reference material is housed in the Map Library, including past exam papers.

#### **4.2 Departmental Printing and Photocopying Services**

The following services are available. Prices listed below may be subject to change:

<i>Photocopying</i>	<i>Letter size/A4</i>	<i>\$5 per sheet</i>
	<i>Legal size</i>	<i>\$7 per sheet</i>
<i>Laser B/W Printing</i>	<i>Letter/size A4</i>	<i>\$5 per sheet</i>
<i>Colour printing</i>	<i>Letter, A4, Legal</i>	<i>\$20 per sheet</i>
<i>Map Sheets</i>	<i>Size D (24"x36")</i>	<i>\$300</i>
	<i>Size E (36"x48")</i>	<i>\$500</i>

Payments must be made first in the Main Departmental Office. You will be issued with a receipt. Carry this to the person undertaking this service for you.

### **5. STUDENT GEOGRAPHY SOCIETIES AND PRIZES**

#### **5.1 U.W.I. Geographical Society**

There is a very active undergraduate geographical society on campus which meets regularly on Thursday at lunch time. It is run by a student committee composed of geographers from first, second and third year. It organizes meetings and field trips. You are encouraged to join and get involved in the activities.

#### **5.2 Jamaican Geographical Society**

The Jamaican Geographical Society is the main professional geographical association on the island. The Society invites students to join at special student rates. The Society was formed in the 1960s and organizes meetings, field trips, conferences and social activities. It has an on-line newsletter. You are encouraged to participate in the Society's activities. The Council is the main organizing committee of the JGS and its officers are elected at the Annual general Meeting. The U.W.I. Geographical Society is represented on the JGS Council.

#### **5.3 Barry Floyd Prizes in Geography**

The Barry Floyd Prizes in Geography are named after the first Head of Geography at UWI, Dr Barry Floyd. There are two small cash prizes awarded to the best first year and the best second year Geography students each year. The prizes are awarded at the appropriate Faculty Awards Ceremony in the following academic year.