

History of the Gulf of Mexico, Spring 2025
AMH 3931-5JD1

Professor Jack E. Davis

(he, him, his)

davisjac@ufl.edu (best means for communicating with the prof)

Rm: K-F 111

T: 8:30-10:25, Thrs: 9:35-10:25

Ofc Hours: Thrs, 10:30-1:30

Ofc phone: 352-273-3398

Summary

This course is offered to help satisfy a core requirement in the Sustainability Studies major. The course, however, is open to all students.

This course will present a subject that is typically ignored in the classroom and textbooks, the history of the Gulf of Mexico. Students will explore the social and environmental history of the Gulf from geological formation to the present. Presented within the context of the larger and more familiar historical experience, the course will offer a relatively comprehensive overview of the relationship between people and their natural physical surroundings. It begins with the premise that the natural environment of the Gulf of Mexico has been not only an object—which humans contemplated, exploited, or protected—but also an active variable in shaping the political, social, and cultural lives of people who through the ages have lived in proximity to the Gulf.

Students will be required to complete two 5-page research papers and two 5-page papers addressing major themes of the class. As a reading- and writing-based course, they will be encouraged to engage in intellectual reflection and group discussions. While learning about the Gulf of Mexico's history and nature, they should take away an understanding of how the past can inform the present and facilitate decision-making on personal and civic levels.

Learning Outcomes/Course Objectives:

* Expanding one's knowledge of the Gulf of Mexico's integral place in the larger American experience.

- * Introducing the idea that the Gulf is not a regional but an American sea that is connected to the rest of the country both historically and ecologically.
- * Introducing the student to scholarship in Gulf history.
- * Promoting critical thinking about the human relationship with nature and its impact in the social relationships among different human groups.
- * Advancing the student's experience in the reading, researching, and writing tasks of the historian.

Course Requirements:

- Take-home essays 1 and 2 (2 x 30%) 60% (due March 11 and April 24)
- Research project 30% (due April 15)
- Class participation 10%
- Grammar and Writing Style Guide (factored into writing assignments) (due January 20)
- Nearly every week you will be required to write a haiku poem on a TBA topic of either a grammar rule or a course-related subject. This requirement will be factored into your class participation grade.

(Please see last section of syllabus for a description of course requirements.)

Course Grading Scale (see UF grading scale at end of syllabus):

A+ =97-100
 A =94-96
 A- =90-93
 B+ =87-89
 B =84-86
 B- =80-83
 C+ =77-79
 C =74-76
 C- =70-73
 D =65-69

Assignments not completed earn a 0

Plagiarized assignment (see plagiarism section below) earn a 0

Assignments not turned in before or by the stated due date will not be accepted. All assignments must be submitted through Canvas.

Only course grades of C or better will satisfy Gordon Rule, general education, and college basic distribution credit.

Required Books:

Jack E. Davis, *The Gulf: The Making of an American Sea* (Liveright, 2017) (I will provide students a PDF copy so they don't have to buy the book.)

Mike Tidwell, *Bayou Farewell: The Rich Life and Tragic Death of Louisiana's Cajun Coast* (Vintage, 2004). (Students will need to acquire this book.)

Book on Library Reserve:

Tori Bush and Richard Goodman eds, *The Gulf South: An Anthology of Environmental Writing* (University Press of Florida, 2021)

Weekly Schedule

Week I: Jan 14 & 16

Introduction to the Course and Connecting to the Sea

Reading: Davis, *The Gulf*, Prologue and Introduction

Film in class: *Ancient Origins of the Gulf of Mexico* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrhY-OOGPiI>

****Grammar and Writing Style Guide Exercise Due Jan 20****

Week II: Jan 21 & 23

First People and Cultural Encounters

****Grammar and Style Guide Exercise Due Jan 20****

Davis, *The Gulf*, chapters 1-4

Week III: Jan 28 & 30

Come the Americans

Davis, *The Gulf*, chapter 5

Week IV: February 4 & February 6 (**no class on February 6**)

Under the Sea and in the Air

Davis, *The Gulf*, chapters 6 & 8

Film in class: "Hummingbird Migration: 5 Ways to Survive Gulf of Mexico Crossing"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QObDsNxShIo&t=114s>

"Fisherfolk of Southwest Florida

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1DHTV9Ac64>

Week V: Feb 11 & 13

Tourists

Davis, *The Gulf*, chapters 7 & 9

Catherine Cole, "Last Island," Bush and Goodman, *The Gulf South*, 11-19 (on reserve)

Week VI: Feb 18 & 20

Offshore

Davis, *The Gulf*, chapters 10 & 11

Week VII: Feb 25 & 27

Riding out the Storm

Davis, *The Gulf*, chapters 12 & 13

Film in class: "Why Life on the Gulf Coast isn't a Vacation"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ip5RhOkhw-M>

Week VIII: March 4 & 6

****Take-Home Essay 1 Due March 4****

Suburbs on the Coast

Davis, *The Gulf*, chapter 14

Week IX: March 11 & 13

Industry on the Coast

****First Take-Home Essay Due, March 11****

Davis, *The Gulf*, chapter 15

Robert Bullard, "Houston's Northwood Manor Neighborhood," *The Gulf South*, 136-40

Week X: *March 15-23 SPRING BREAK*

Week XI: March 25 & 27

A Water Culture

Tidwell, *Bayou Farewell*, all

Week XII: April 1 & 3

Connections Near and Far

Davis, *The Gulf*, 16 & 17

Film in class: "The Gulf of Mexico's Dead Zone, Explained"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQd8FUELp7w>

Week XIII: April 8 & 10
Fleeting

Davis, *The Gulf*, chapters 18 & 19

E. L. Corthell, "The Delta and the Mississippi River," Bush and Goodman, *The Gulf South*, 27-29

Week XIV: April 15 & 17
A Sustainable Course?

Davis, *The Gulf*, Epilogue

Week XV: April 22
Mopping up, Wrapping Up

April 24
****Take-Home Essay 2 Due****

Course Requirements Descriptions:

All assignments, except the haiku poems, must be turned in through the Canvas course page. If you submit your work after the deadline time and date, ten points will be deducted from your assignment. If you have trouble submitting, call the help desk at 352-392-4357.

Class participation: Students are expected to come to class for lectures and prepared to participate in discussions. If you are called on to answer a question and are not present, you will be marked absent. As the saying goes: "Though the spirit may be willing, if the body is not present, troubles they will arise. If the body is present but unaccompanied by an active mind, troubles they will arise."

You are allowed one free absence for the semester. Each additional absence will cost 10 percent of the course participation grade. Example: if you miss four classes, your class participation grade will be 70 (or 7 of 10 percent).

Grammar and Writing Style Guide exercise can be found on my Canvas site. Download and answer the questions by highlighting that which you believe to be the correct response. You will be required to follow the rules of the guide in all writing assignments for the course. If you fail to complete the guide before any one of the writing assignments is due, you will lose 5 points from the assignment grade. If you fail to follow the standards laid out in the guide, you will be penalized 2 points for standards covered in the guide and 3 points for standards covered in the guide and a haiku poem. Submit to Canvas.

Take-home essays will represent responses to a set of discussion prompts posted on Canvas. The prompts will be drawn from the assigned readings, films, and course discussions, and you will be expected to use those and your class notes as sources to respond to the prompts (do not consult any other sources). Each answer must be presented in essay format, using formal, academic language and style (i.e., complete sentences, tightly constructed paragraphs, no colloquialisms). Do not, in other words, provide answers in lists or bullets. Those exams that address each prompt in a rigorous and organized manner are more likely to earn a decent grade. These grades, too, will be dependent in part on your compliance with the rules in the course “Grammar and Writing Style Guide” exercise. Submit to Canvas.

Research Project: The research project offers multiple options. You can go the conventional route and write a 15-page research essay on an approved topic of your choice or create a web page, a virtual museum exhibit, a quantitative study, or a recorded podcast (you are also welcome to propose some other idea to me). Whatever option you choose must demonstrate a level of research and analysis equivalent to a 15-page research paper, meaning the work must draw on primary- and secondary-source evidential material. Again—hammer over the head—following the rules of the “Grammar and Style Guide” exercise is imperative to doing work of full potential.

**Every class in March will begin with brief status reports on research sharing what you are discovering.

Class Rules are relatively minimal. You may take notes with a computer. Cell phones sounds and vibrations should be silenced. If your phone rings, I reserve the right to answer it. (See In-Class Recording below.)

Other Business:

Plagiarism and Honesty Code:

Keep in mind that your written assignments must represent original work. You cannot copy the words, phrases, arguments, ideas, and conclusions of someone else or of another source (including Internet sources) without giving proper credit to the person or source by using both **quotation marks** and a **footnote**. Do not cobble together paragraphs or passages of separate texts and then try to claim that you have done original and legitimate work. You must write with your own ideas and in your own words. If you copy the words of someone else without putting those words in quotation marks, REGARDLESS OF CITING THE SOURCE, you are plagiarizing. Plagiarism is theft, and it is academic dishonesty. You can be reported to the Dean of Students office for plagiarism, and the incident may then become a permanent part of your academic record. Plagiarism **will** earn you a failing grade in the course, a grade that is final and that cannot be made up. If you have any questions about how you are citing or using sources, come to me for the answers.

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of

Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>

Again, please consult with me if you have any questions or concerns.

In-Class Recording:

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student

Classroom Assistance:

Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed. Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. Click here (<https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>) to get started with the Disability Resource Center. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Health Considerations in the Classroom

* Sanitizing supplies are available in the classroom if you wish to wipe down your desks prior to sitting down and at the end of the class.

* Hand sanitizing stations will be located in every classroom.

* If you are sick, please stay home as a courtesy to the campus and classroom community. Please visit the UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website about next steps, retake the questionnaire and schedule your test for no sooner than 24 hours after your symptoms began. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 (or email covid@shcc.ufl.edu<<mailto:covid@shcc.ufl.edu>>) to be evaluated for testing and to receive further instructions about returning to campus. UF Health Screen, Test & Protect offers guidance when you are sick, have been exposed to someone who has tested positive or have tested positive yourself. Visit the UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website<<https://click.info.gator360.ufl.edu/?qs=8f0d5e01a3f7385148f144e2089093522a358a8d85cb9db73c31675d3c5e5c0d27748d40c212f544822551342f1912ea5b4f2b890d5952e8>> for more information.

* Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.

Online Course Evaluation:

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Academic Resources Information:

E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601.

Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding

resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420.

General study skills and tutoring. Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138.

Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.

On-Line Students Complaints: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.

History Majors:

If you are a history major or minor and wish to receive important announcements on courses, scholarships, awards, and the Phi Alpha Theta Honor Society, please sign on to the history department listserv. Compose a message to: majordomo@clas.ufl.edu. In the text of the message, type the following: subscribe hist-ba@history.ufl.edu

Alpata: A Journal of History

Keep in mind that the undergraduate- and graduate-student members of Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society at the University of Florida publish an academic journal each spring. In the fall, the journal editors will be sending out a call for submissions (articles and book reviews) to the journal. The journal is also looking for talented students who would like to serve on the editorial board. Please contact me if you're interested.

UF Grading Scale

Please note UF's new grading scale with the addition of minuses.

A = 4.0

A- = 3.67

B+ = 3.33

B = 3.0

B- = 2.67

C+ = 2.33

C = 2.0

C- = 1.67

D+ = 1.33

D = 1.0

D- = 0.67

E = 0.0

E1 = 0.0 Stopped attending or participating prior to end of class

I (incomplete) = 0.0

Welcome, and good luck!