



EESC6664: Field Study of Soils

Course Syllabus – Summer 2025

Instructor:	Dr. Alain Plante	158 Hayden Hall, 215-898-9269 aplante@sas.upenn.edu
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Course Description

Soil is a natural body that exists as part of the environment where inorganic, geologic materials combine with organic materials to produce a large array of soils with varying properties. Students will learn the principles of field description of soil properties, soil classification, and land use classification, and apply these skills in a series of day-long field trips to study soils *in-situ*.

Tentative Class Roadmap

The proposed schedule of virtual sessions will be finalized based on student availability and preference. Scheduling of make-up field days due to inclement weather will be discussed as needed.

Wed, May 28 (evening)	Synchronous virtual introduction
Asynchronous	Online primers via Canvas
Monday, June 2	Field Day
Thursday, June 3	Field Day
Wednesday, June 4	Field Day
Thursday, June 5	Field Day
Friday, June 6	Field Day
Week of June 9-13 (evening)	Review and Q&A of field observations
Week of June 9-13 (evening)	Review and Q&A of primers
Week of June 9-13 (evening)	Virtual office hours
Mon, June 16 - Tues, Jun 17	Oral final exam (30min)

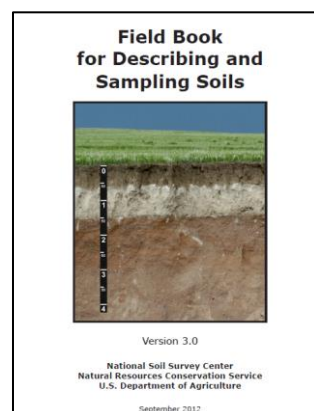
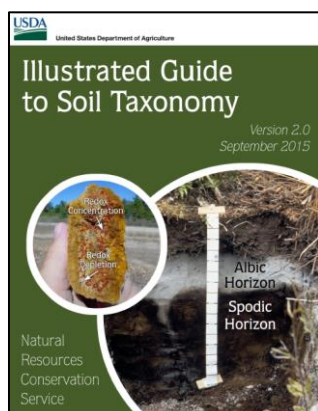
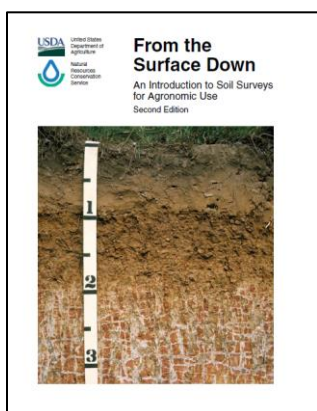
Assignments & Grading

Attendance & participation	40 %
Primer assignments	4 @ 5 % each, 20 %
Field trip reports	5 @ 4 % each, 20 %
Final exam	20 %
	<hr/> 100 %

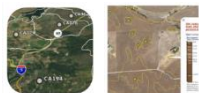
The rubric used to assess your attendance and participation is as follows:

	Excellent (A, A-)	Good (B+, B)	Fair (B-, C+)	Poor (C)
Attendance	Present for every class.	Absent for 1 class but provided sufficient notification.		Absent for 2 or more classes and/or did not provide sufficient notification.
Punctuality	Always on time for beginning of class.	Usually on time (tardy only 1 or 2 times).		Rarely on time (tardy more than 2 times).
Preparation	Always prepared for class with completed readings and assignments. Student also sought additional help between classes if necessary.	Usually prepared for class with completed readings and assignments.		Unprepared for class. Clearly did not complete readings or assignments.
Engagement	Brought original thought/perspective to discussions. Fully engaged and actively involved during class. Worked well in groups.	Often participated freely in class, asked questions, and participated in discussions/group work.	Sometimes participated in class without being prompted but was reluctant to join discussions/group work.	Rarely participated in class discussions or asked questions. Interactions in groups was minimal.
Field notes	Field notes were complete, detailed, and fully represented the information presented.	Field notes were complete but lacked details.	Field notes inadequately represented the information presented.	No field notes taken.

Learning Resources



— These documents are available as PDFs on Canvas. —



“SoilWeb” apps, available [online](#) and at:



- Field note book (something like [this](#) from Rite-in-the-Rain or larger for more sketching)

Course Policies, Expectations & Logistics

Class attendance

This is a very short, intense course. Your full attendance and participation is mandatory and represents the largest portion of your grade. The most important aspect of your participation will be discussions and questioning during field trips and the field notes that you record during the trips. If you are unable to attend any of the sessions, you must alert me **at least 24 hours before** the session. Only one absence will be permitted.

Communication

The course site on Canvas will be the primary “home” for communication (Discussions), course materials (Modules), interactions (Zoom links, Discussions) and the submission of assignments (Modules). When you do send an email, you can expect to receive a response within 24 hours during regular weekday hours (9 am – 5 pm). Emails received after 5 pm on Friday will be answered the following Monday. You should write professional messages include EESC6664 in the subject line.

Academic misconduct

Students are expected to be familiar with and comply with Penn’s Code of Academic Integrity, which is available in the Pennbook, or online at <http://www.vpul.penn.edu/osl/acadint.html>. I generally have a zero-tolerance policy for cheating, and all violations will be reported.

Students with disabilities

The University of Pennsylvania strives to provide an environment for personal and intellectual growth of all its students, and also complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Student Disability Services (SDS) collaborates with the Office of Learning Resources to provide comprehensive academic support for students with disabilities. This office coordinates the self-identification process and the provision of reasonable accommodations, arranges auxiliary services, monitors campus accessibility, and refers students to other appropriate University services and programs.

As a field-based course, attendance will require a minimum level of personal mobility. Any students with physical disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class should contact the professor as soon as possible to discuss possible accommodations.