

## Physical Geography Honors Option

You may choose one of the following paper topics for your honors option:

1. Write a paper fully outlining the ecosystem(s) of the Mojave Desert. What animal species are present? What plant species are present? What are the abiotic factors that influence the flora and fauna? How do all of these ecosystem players interact? A visit to the Prime Desert Woodland Preserve and its Interpretive Center may help.
2. Visit Vasquez Rocks Natural Area and take a ranger-guided hike. Write a paper linking the geologic phenomena of the area to the tectonic history of California. When did it form? What else formed at the same time? How does this geologic landscape affect the climate and ecosystems found there today? Your paper should use information from the Natural Area as well as academic sources.
3. One thing David Owen's book, *The Conundrum*, shows us is how frustrating it can be to lessen our negative impacts on the planet. We buy energy efficient products yet that may cause us to behave worse from a "green" standpoint. So what does this mean for you? Are you environmentally responsible? Are you killing polar bears? Write an essay examining your own environmental impact. How does your life affect the Earth? What do your shopping habits and leisure activities do to the Earth's climate and resources? Are you taking your fair share of resources or are you a bloated tick sucking the Earth dry? Your essay should be informed by *The Conundrum* (prove you read it) as well as additional sources. This is a personal essay, but it should be based in scientific fact to support your writing.

Regardless of the topic you select, you will first submit an annotated bibliography by week eight and then submit a five-page paper fully answering the topic. You should have at least five academic (peer-reviewed journal, academic book) sources to support your paper. *The annotated bibliography must be hand delivered to me during office hours so we can talk about it.* Keep in mind that Wikipedia and About.com do not count as sources. The works you use must be cited properly. *The final paper will be due on the penultimate week of the semester.*

I don't care about the style you use to write your paper, as long as you use one. I don't do MLA, but many of you do. Use what works for you. I mainly want to see 12-point font, double spaced, 1-inch margins, and the use of spell check. Make sure that the final product is legible and neat.