You can earn up to 5 points on your last (or next) exam by completing this exercise AND it is fun!

Take A Hike - Due December 9th --class time.

1. Go for a hike in an outdoor location or visit a local, state, or national park or forestland. While you are there, take some (physical or mental) notes about the earth science features and processes you are seeing. Also make sure to get a photo, map, and/or brochure.

2. Write a 200- to 300-word descriptive essay about at least four earth science features or processes that you observed. You should make sure to use correct terms to identify the features and describe how you knew what you were looking at. (i.e. the granite appeared slightly weathered.) Also, make sure that your essay includes geographical information (trail, park, nearest city, state).

3. Provide a copy of a trail map, brochure, or photo that you took on your hike.

You will turn in: Your description AND the map, brochure, or photos.

Grading will be based on content (70%), writing, spelling, and grammar (20%), and neatness and professionalism (10%). Late assignments will not be accepted. Assignments should indicate that some thought and analysis has gone into the activity, and they should be free of obvious spelling and grammatical errors. They should be well organized and clearly presented. If you use additional resources, please list the resources.

How to be sure you get full credit:

- Is the assignment of appropriate length (200-300 words)? *Assignments will not be read past 400 words.

- Is there appropriate supporting documentation? Provide a copy of a trail map, brochure, or photo that you took on your hike.

- Is the location of the hike adequately described?

Do not worry so much about getting all the “geo-speak” perfect. The idea is to illustrate you have learned to observe geology. We haven’t covered a whole lot at this point. I would prefer you show me you see things differently than you did at the start of the semester.
Here’s an example submission from an environmental geology class:

On October 8th, I hiked the Proxy Falls trail in the Willamette National Forest, near Belknap Springs, Oregon. The trail is about 1 ¼ miles long and crosses a lava flow that is about 1600 years old. The soil is very thin or absent on the lava flow, and the rock can be seen in most places. The lava is partially covered by moss and lichen and there are a few conifer trees. The plant community seems to be at an early stage of primary succession, based on the bare rock and species such as moss and lichen.

On the far side of the lava flow, there is a ~100 ft high waterfall. This waterfall is an example of a knickpoint. At the base of the waterfall, there are some large blocks of rock, indicating that the waterfall may be eroding headward over time. The stream below the waterfall is a mountain stream, because it is steep, relatively straight, and not meandering or braided.

Farther along the trail, there was a little bridge over a dry streambed. I could tell it was a streambed because there were rounded pebbles and sticks that were aligned in a downstream direction. It was interesting that there was no water in the stream. It hadn’t rained for several weeks before my hike, but usually streamflows between rains are sustained by groundwater. Since water was absent, I can conclude that the water table was below the level of the streambed, and that it was probably a losing stream when it carried water. The high porosity of the lava also suggests that there would be a high infiltration rate.

Documentation: Here is a link to the trail description and map:
Here is a photograph I took during the hike:

(Click to view image)

(Note that you would only need to provide one form of documentation.)

This example was completed by a Professor at the University of North Carolina – Charlotte. I do not expect this level of expertise from you. (Although I encourage you to do your very best!)