



NEW JERSEY CENTER  
FOR TEACHING & LEARNING

**Progressive Science Initiative® (PSI®)**  
**SCI 6205: Learning & Teaching Physical Environment**

**Course Credit:** 3.0 NJCTL credits

**Dates & Times:**

This is a 3-credit, self-paced course, covering 6 modules of content. The exact number of hours that you can expect to spend on each module will vary based upon the module coursework, as well as your study style and preferences. You should plan to spend 9-11 hours per module, completing the module slides, readings, short answer assignments, labs, mastery exercises, practice problems, and module exams.

**Graduate Student Handbook:** [njctl.org/graduate-handbook/](http://njctl.org/graduate-handbook/)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is designed for those who are currently teaching, or preparing to teach, middle school science. Learners will develop a strong scientific understanding of the science behind phenomena seen in the physical world. Topics include states of matter, air flow & pressure, earth-sun-moon system, seasons, basic chemistry and factors impacting our changing climate.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Integrate PSI materials to support student learning and deliver effective instruction.
2. Implement hands-on and virtual labs to promote a deeper understanding of the content.
3. Create a social constructivist learning environment through the use of formative assessment questions.
4. Interpret the results of formative assessment to effectively facilitate student-led discussions that build mental models that support the understanding of the content.
5. Integrate multiple attempts to demonstrate student mastery of content knowledge, as encouraged/fostered by the PSI pedagogy.
6. Implement learning plans that are aligned to NGSS/Common Core standards, incorporate literacy strategies and allow for differentiation.

**TEXTS, READINGS, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES:**

**Required Texts:**

- PSI Physical Environment uses a free digital text book accessible at: <https://njctl.org/materials/courses/physical-environment/>
- Participants will download SMART Notebook presentations, homework files, labs, and

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teacher resources from the PSI Physical Environment Course

- Participants will also need to access the Next Generation Science Standards at : <https://www.nextgenscience.org/>

### **Recommended Texts:**

There is no additional text.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

In order to receive a Passing grade, the participant must complete the following course requirements:

1. **Activities:** A number of different learning activities will ensure participant engagement and learning in the course. These include:
  - Engage in video module lessons which demonstrate minimized direct instruction followed by frequent formative assessment
  - Completion of formative assessments aligned to learning objectives which include detailed analysis when answered incorrectly.
  - Interaction with module discussion boards that allow conversation with peers and course instructors about the module's content, delivering that content to students. Discussion boards also serve as a place to ask and answer questions related to the module's content.
2. **Short Answer Assignment:** Each module requires one (1) original response to a given prompt. These prompts are typically based upon course lessons and require teachers to analyze, reflect, and make connections between the module's content and their own classroom practice.
3. **Mastery Exercises:** For each module, these multiple-choice question quizzes assess the content knowledge gained in a module. Participants have the opportunity to retake; random questions are pulled from a larger question bank on each attempt ensuring varied questions.
4. **Virtual Labs:** In each module, a virtual lab write-up will be submitted. Virtual Labs are interactive lab simulations that promote a deeper understanding of the content knowledge being learned through real-world applications and analysis.
5. **Module Exams:** Within each module, there are chapter tests which are culminating exams consisting of multiple choice and free response questions aligned to the standards and objectives of the module.
6. **Reflection Paper:** At the end of the course, participants are required to reflect on the knowledge taught in the course, make connections, and compare/contrast their current pedagogy with new strategies gained in this assignment.
7. **Final Exam:** At the end of the course, a comprehensive exam consisting of Multiple Choice and Free Response questions assesses the content knowledge learned throughout the course.

### **GRADE DISTRIBUTION AND SCALE:**

#### **Grade Distribution:**

Module Exams	70%
Final Exam	10%
Labs	6%
Short Answer Assignments	6%

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Mastery Exercises	6%
Reflection Paper	2%

**Grade Scale:**

A	93 – 100
A-	90 – 92
B+	86 – 89
B	83 – 86
B-	80 – 82
C+	77 – 79
C	73 – 76
C-	70 – 72
D	60.0 – 69.9
F	59.9 or below

**GRADING RUBRIC:**

The following rubric is used to score:

- Short Answer Assignment – 6% of grade
- Reflection Paper – 2% of grade

The minimum possible score for this rubric is 4 points, and the score will be converted to the minimum grade available in this module (which is zero unless the scale is used). The maximum score 25 points will be converted to the maximum grade.

Intermediate scores will be converted respectively and rounded to the nearest available grade. If a scale is used instead of a grade, the score will be converted to the scale elements as if they were consecutive integers.

	<b>Meets Expectation</b>	<b>Approaches Expectation</b>	<b>Below Expectation</b>	<b>Limited Evidence</b>
	<i>7 points</i>	<i>5 points</i>	<i>3 points</i>	<i>1 point</i>
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates excellent knowledge of concepts, skills, and theories relevant to topic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates fair knowledge of concepts, skills, and theories.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates incomplete or insubstantial knowledge of concepts, skills, and theories.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates little or no knowledge of concepts, skills, and theories.</li> </ul>
<b>Depth of Reflection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content is well supported and addresses all required components of the assignment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content is partially supported; addresses most of the required components of the assignment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content contains major deficiencies; addresses some of the required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content is not supported and/or includes few of the required components of the assignment.</li> </ul>

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			components of the assignment.	
<b>Evidence and Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response shows strong evidence of synthesis of ideas presented and insights gained throughout the entire course. The implications of these insights for the respondent's overall teaching practice are thoroughly detailed, as applicable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing is mostly clear, concise, and well organized with good sentence/paragraph construction. Thoughts are expressed in a coherent and logical manner. There are no more than five spelling, grammar, or syntax errors per page of writing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response is missing some components and/or does not fully meet the requirements indicated in the instructions. Some questions or parts of the assignment are not addressed. Some attachments and additional documents, if required, are missing or unsuitable for the purpose of the assignment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response excludes essential components and/or does not address the requirements indicated in the instructions. Many parts of the assignment are addressed minimally, inadequately, and/or not at all.</li> </ul>
	<i>4 points</i>	<i>3 points</i>	<i>2 points</i>	<i>1 point</i>
<b>Writing Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing is well-organized, clear, concise, and focused; no errors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some minor errors or omissions in writing organization, focus, and clarity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some significant errors or omissions in writing organization, focus, and clarity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numerous errors in writing organization, focus, and/or clarity.</li> </ul>

The following rubric is used to score:

- Labs – 6% of grade

The minimum possible score for this rubric is 2 points, and the score will be converted to the minimum grade available in this module (which is zero unless the scale is used). The maximum score 14 points will be converted to the maximum grade.

Intermediate scores will be converted respectively and rounded to the nearest available grade. If a scale is used instead of a grade, the score will be converted to the scale elements as if they were consecutive integers.

	<b>Meets Expectation</b>	<b>Approaches Expectation</b>	<b>Below Expectation</b>	<b>Limited Evidence</b>
	<i>7 points</i>	<i>5 points</i>	<i>3 points</i>	<i>1 point</i>

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<b>Completeness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lab write-up is complete with no missing fields.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lab write-up has 1-2 missing fields.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lab write up has 3-5 missing fields.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are more than 5 missing fields on the lab write-up.</li> </ul>
<b>Calculations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All answers are calculated correctly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most answers are calculated correctly, but there are 1-2 minor calculation errors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most answers are calculated correctly, but there are multiple minor calculation errors, or 1-2 gross miscalculations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are calculation errors throughout the lab.</li> </ul>

The remaining types of assignments are not scored using a rubric. These assignments are scored using percentage correct to assign a letter grade. The assignments in this manner are as follows:

- Mastery Exercises – 6% of grade
- Module Exams – 70% of grade
- Final Exam – 10% of grade

Mastery Exercises can be retaken as many times as desired to ensure a high score. Due to the nature of these assignments, each time they are taken, they will be comprised of ten unique questions pulled randomly from a larger question bank.

Module and Final Exams are scored using a curve, which allows us to keep content exams rigorous. Module Exams can be retaken one time. Final Exams cannot be retaken.

#### **ACADEMIC STANDING:**

NJCTL has established standards for academic good standing within a student’s academic program. Students enrolled in any NJCTL online course must receive an 80 or higher to successfully complete a course and receive credit for that course. An 80 is equivalent to a GPA of 2.7 or B-. Additionally, students in an endorsement program must receive a cumulative GPA of 3.0 for all courses combined in order to successfully complete the program.

#### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

Students must assume responsibility for maintaining honesty in all work submitted for credit and in any other work designated by the instructor of the course. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, plagiarism, reusing /re-purposing your own work, unauthorized possession of academic materials, and unauthorized collaboration.

#### **CITING SOURCES WITH APA STYLE:**

All students are expected to follow proper writing and APA requirements when citing in APA (based on the APA Style Manual, 6th edition) for all assignments.

#### **DISABILITY SERVICES STATEMENT:**

We are committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. Any student with a documented disability requesting academic accommodations should contact the

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Dean of Students, Dr. Rosemary Knab, additional information to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities (rosemary@njctl.org).

**NETIQUETTE:**

Respect the diversity of opinions among the instructor and classmates and engage with them in a courteous, respectful, and professional manner. All posts and classroom communication must be conducted in accordance with the student code of conduct. Think before you push the Send button. Did you say just what you meant? How will the person on the other end read the words?

Maintain an environment free of harassment, stalking, threats, abuse, insults or humiliation toward the instructor and classmates. This includes, but is not limited to, demeaning written or oral comments of an ethnic, religious, age, disability, sexist (or sexual orientation), or racist nature; and the unwanted sexual advances or intimidations by email, or on discussion boards and other postings within or connected to the online classroom.

If you have concerns about something that has been said, please let your instructor know.

**CLASS SCHEDULE:**

<b>Module</b>	<b>Required Readings</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
<b>1 - Hurricanes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations within LMS Course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Answer</li> <li>• Lab</li> <li>• Mastery Exercises</li> <li>• Module Exams</li> </ul>
<b>2- Global Climates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations within LMS Course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Answer</li> <li>• Lab</li> <li>• Mastery Exercises</li> <li>• Module Exams</li> </ul>
<b>3 – Earthquakes, Tsunamis &amp; Volcanoes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations within LMS Course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Answer</li> <li>• Lab</li> <li>• Mastery Exercises</li> <li>• Module Exams</li> </ul>
<b>4 – Trees: An Introduction to Chemistry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations within LMS Course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Answer</li> <li>• Lab</li> <li>• Mastery Exercises</li> <li>• Module Exams</li> </ul>
<b>5 – A Changing World</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation within LMS Course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Answer</li> <li>• Lab</li> <li>• Mastery Exercises</li> <li>• Module Exam</li> </ul>
<b>6 – Final Reflection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review topics as desired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflection Paper</li> <li>• Final Exam</li> </ul>

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