Why Physical Geography?

Well, you know about the quakes in Japan and Haiti, right? What about in the US? And not California! A relatively recent quake in the States caused a major river to change directions.

And of course what about our New England weather! Why did we get so little snow......and mild weather this past winter, but now are in a drought. What’s this thing called a Nor’easter? And how does it affect us.

The big difference between Physical Geography and other lab science courses is that in Geography we look at both the natural landscape and the human one. It is sort of like combining psychology with biology, or economics with geology, or political science with chemistry. Geography does all that.

After all Geography is:

*The study of people and their environments including the spatial distributions, movements and interactions.*

If you are still reading this, consider taking GARP0102 Physical Geography Online this Fall 2012!
Geography Superlatives (ok, get this out of the way so we can experience real geography)

Highest point - The peak of Mount Everest on the border of Nepal and Tibet, in the Himalayas is 29,028 feet (8,848 meters) above sea level. Known as Chomolungma, "Goddess Mother of the World," to the native people, the British christened the mountain to honor George Everest, the leader of the team that mapped India for the British Empire.

Tallest mountain - Measured from its base on the ocean floor, Mauna Kea on the U.S. island of Hawaii is 33,476 feet (10,204 meters) tall.

Lowest point - The Dead Sea, located on the border between Jordan and Israel, is 1,312 feet (400 meters) below sea level. It is filled by the River Jordan and drained only by evaporation. Under the hot desert sun, evaporation outstrips the river’s flow, and the level of this saltiest of all lakes drops each year.

Deepest ocean depth - The Mariana Trench, in the western Pacific Ocean, is 36,198 feet (10,920 meters) deep at 11°02' N, 142°12' E. In January 1960 Jacques Piccard and U.S. Navy Lt. Don Walsh made an eight-and-a-half-hour descent to a record 35,800 feet (10,912 meters) in the bathyscaphe Trieste.

Largest island - Greenland, 839,999 square miles (2,175,600 square kilometers), seems to have been misnamed by Vikings hoping to attract settlers to a colony on the southern coast, which, to be fair, is green for a short time in summer.

Longest river - Africa's Nile River, at 4,241 miles (6,825 kilometers) long, barely beats out the Amazon in South America (approximately 4,000 miles; 6,437 kilometers) as the world's longest river. The Nile runs north through Uganda, Sudan, and Egypt into the Mediterranean Sea.

Largest river system - The Amazon wins hands down with a drainage basin of approximately 2.5 million square miles (6.7 million square kilometers), an area equal to three-fourths the contiguous United States. It also carries the greatest flow of water-around six million cubic feet per second, or one-fifth of all the river water in the world.

Highest waterfall - Angel Falls drops 3,212 feet (979 meters), from Auyan-Tepui (Devil Mountain) in Venezuela. The waterfall was named for Jimmy Angel, an American flyer who discovered it in 1935 and crash-landed nearby in 1937.

Widest waterfall - Khone Falls stretch 6.7 miles (10.8 kilometers) across the Mekong River, stopping river traffic at the Laos-Cambodia border.

Largest lake - A lake is an inland body of standing water, whether salt or fresh. As such, the Caspian Sea, at 143,244 square miles (371,000 square kilometers), qualifies as the largest. The sea borders Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Iran.

Largest freshwater lake - Lake Superior on the U.S.-Canada border, 31,700 square miles (82,100 square kilometers), is also the least polluted of the Great Lakes. Its name doesn't refer to its popularity as a vacation spot, but to its location as the northernmost Great Lake.

Deepest lake - Russia's Lake Baikal, 5,371 feet (1,637 meters), also contains more fresh water than any other lake.

Largest canyon - Grand Canyon runs 290 miles (466 kilometers) along the Colorado River in the United States and is approximately 1 mile (1.6 kilometers) deep and 600 feet to 18 miles (183 meters to 29 kilometers) wide. Its fantastic shapes and colors are every bit as "grand" as its size.

Longest cave system - When explorers found a connection between the Flint Ridge cave system and Mammoth Cave in 1972, the system measured 348 miles (560 kilometers). This strange world under central Kentucky in the U.S. is full of strange colors, shapes, lakes, and animals that have never seen the light of day.

Largest coral reef - The Great Barrier Reef, off the northeastern coast of Australia, provides 1,250 miles (2,012 kilometers) of fragile habitat for sea creatures.

Largest desert - Most of Antarctica, 5 million square miles (13 million square kilometers), is a polar desert. The average precipitation is only two inches (5 centimeters) a year, most of which falls on the coast. Traditionally, Africa's hot Sahara desert, 3.5 million square miles (9 million square kilometers) of inhospitable sand, is considered the world's largest.

Largest country - Even after the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia emerged as the largest country in the world (6,592,692 square miles; 17,075,000 square kilometers). Runners up are Canada, China, the United States, and Brazil.

Most populous country - China is home to approximately 20 percent of the people on this planet. But since the Chinese are working to control the rate of population growth, India will likely surpass China as the most populated country by the end of the next century.