

Syllabus -- NRSM 271N Conservation Ecology

Instructor Information

Instructor: Natalie G. Dawson
Office: University Hall room 308
E-mail: Natalie.dawson@umontana.edu
Phone: (406) 243-6956 or (406) 552-5550
Office hours: Wed. 3-4:30 PM and by appointment

Meetings

Jeanette Rankin Hall (JRH) 203

MW 12:10-1:30 pm (and occasional Monday afternoons)

Format: Regular meetings will include lectures, discussions, in-class exercises and occasional field excursions. Some weekend field trip will correspond with in-class materials.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Ecology is the study of relationships between organisms and the physical environment, organisms and other organisms, and the cycling of matter and energy.

This course introduces ecological theory and terminology, particularly as related to the study, management and conservation of wild landscapes. Concepts will be illustrated with examples from local and regional ecosystems. Students will develop their critical analysis ability, and hone the technical communication skills necessary to integrate ecological science into natural resource policies, management plans, and prescriptions.

Students completing the course should be able to:

1. Understand the role of abiotic factors in determining the distribution of species and productivity of ecosystems.
2. Develop informed hypotheses about the role of biotic processes in regulation of ecosystem composition, structure and function.
3. Clearly communicate ecological concepts and ideas verbally and with the written word.
4. Critically evaluate and apply the technical ecological literature.
5. Describe the relationship between natural disturbances, ecosystem succession, and the application of these concepts to conservation.

Readings

Readings will be taken from taken from various books as well as scientific journal articles, will be distributed to the class via the course website on Moodle. Students should read assigned material prior to the course meeting for which it is assigned.

Assignments

Students will write review and opinion papers as part of the course. The final research project will consist of a review of the biology, ecology, and current conservation strategy of a species protected as Threatened or Endangered under the Endangered Species Act or a conservation topic related to evaluation and critique of a component of the Endangered Species Act. Writing assignment details will be provided in class. Quizzes and a final exam will also be graded assignments for the course.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, cheating, and other misconduct are serious violations of your contract as a student. We expect that you will know and follow the University's policies on cheating and plagiarism. Any suspected cases of academic misconduct will be handled according to University regulations. More information, including definitions and examples, can be found at [Student Conduct Code](#).

Disability Accommodations

This course is accessible to and usable by otherwise qualified students with disabilities. To request reasonable program modifications, please consult with the instructor. Disability Services for Students will assist the instructor and student in the accommodation process. For more information, visit the [Disability Services website](#).

Late Assignments

Students participating in official University activities (e.g., sports, etc.) will be allowed extensions on assignments with terms established on a case-by-case basis.

Negotiated excused absences for non-University activities (e.g., family emergency) will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Requests for extensions will only be considered when made at least 1 week prior to the assignment deadline. Post-hoc extensions will be considered in extreme circumstances (e.g., you could not make the deadline because you were unconscious or in the hospital) on a case-by-case basis.

Unexcused late assignments will be accepted up to 4 working days (i.e., weekdays **not** course meetings) after the original due date. The overall grade of the assignment will be diminished by 20% for each day late. E.g., the highest possible score for a “perfect” assignment turned in 3 days would be 40% of the possible points for an on-time assignment.

There are no excused absences for field trips.