

Special Topic: Grassland Ecology (NRSM 595)

Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:50am in CHCB 426

Instructor information:

Instructor: Dr. Akasha Faist

Office: CHCB 441

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Office hours: by appointment

Course description:

Grasslands are found globally and play an important role in carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, and so much more! This course is intended to develop a deeper understand of the biotic and environmental components of grasslands, their interactions and what may influence structure and function of grassland systems.

Lecture and course topics are structured around broad grassland topics. The lectures will generally follow the Gibson textbook with alternate readings to augment learning. All assigned readings should be read before the lectures they are to be discussed and will be provided on Moodle a minimum of one week prior to when we will cover the topic in class. Material covered in the lecture and required outside readings can be included in the written assignments and will be listed in the annotated bibliography.

Learning Outcomes:

To serve as a background course covering the broad range of subjects found within Grassland Ecology, the main learning outcome of this course is to provide students with a foundational knowledge of what Grasslands are, general grassland ecology principles and practices, and where our knowledge can be used across different disciplines outside of ecology. Upon completion of this course students will have the ability to:

1. Describe grasslands in general, with a depth of knowledge of what defines, and what perhaps doesn't, a grassland across different abiotic and biotic conditions.
2. Understand the different types of grasslands globally as well as more locally here in Montana.
3. Connect the ecological levels of organization found within grasslands, and across scales, to enhance an overall understanding of grassland ecosystems.
4. Realize, and explain, the ecological threats and ecosystem level changes in grasslands and potential avenues to minimize these threats.
5. Determine social and economic components influence grasslands broadly.

Textbooks and required reading:

Some of the readings will come from (Gibson 2010) and purchasing the book is entirely optional. All Chapters from textbook will be made available on Moodle at the beginning of class, and outside readings across the topic areas covered will be uploaded to Moodle at least one week prior to the date that topic will be covered in class. You are expected to have read the assigned readings before the class period for which they were assigned.

- Textbook: Gibson D.J.. Grasses and grassland ecology. New York: Oxford University Press; 2009
- Additional readings will involve scientific peer reviewed papers, reports, and other current literature and will be uploaded to Moodle prior to the class topic it is associated with.

Required assignments and assessments:

The different components will all be combined for one final grade in this course (Table 1)

Table 1: Breakdown of the different assessments and their associated points and percentage of the total grade.

Category	Number	Total points	Percent of grade (rounded)
Annotated bibliography	3 at 50 pts each	150	25%
Leading discussion	2 at 50 pts each	100	17%
Written assignments	3 at 50 pts each	150	25%
Final written assignment	1 at 100 pts each	100	17%
In class assignments and participation	multiple	100	17%

Course guidelines and policies:

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory, and essential, to comprehend course material a portion of the grade is dedicated to participation. Students missing more than 3 lecture periods without prior consent from the instructor will receive a 10 pt deduction for each

additional absence that is not approved by the instructor. Attendance will be taken in the first 10 minutes of classes, if greater than 15 minutes late to sign in after the start of class, this will be considered an absence unless prior arrangements were made. All University policies associated with class attendance (e.g., current COVID quarantine/isolation policies) will be respected and proper procedures followed by the student and instructor.

Grading policy

This is a points-based class with a total of 600 points possible (Table 2). Grades are allocated according to these total points. Should the point totals change in the semester, the associated grades will be adjusted and communicated to students.

Final Exam

This class is scheduled to have its Final Exam on May 12th, 8:00-10:00am.

Table 2. Breakdown of how points are associated with a letter grade and the potential notations outside of the standard letter grade that will be entered into CyberBear at the completion of the course.

Grade	Associated points
A	558-600+
A-	540-557
B+	522-539
B	498-521
B-	480-497
C+	462-479
C	438-461
C-	420-437
D+	402-419
D	378-401
D-	360-377
F	0-359
I – Incomplete	
N – To be completed in following semesters	
NF – No record of academic performance	
W – Withdrawal or drop after 15 th instructional day.	
WP – drop after 45 th instructional day with a pass	
WF – drop after 45 th instructional day with fail	
AUD – auditor registration	

Assignment expectations

Late Assignment Policy: In the case that you are not able to complete assignments on time, you have the option to turn it in late under the following conditions: **late assignments must be submitted within one week (7 days) of the original due date**; and 10% (for 1 to 3 days late) and 50% for (4 to 7 days late) will be automatically deducted from the points possible for the late assignment. Exceptions to this policy are at the discretion of the instructor and may be made under certain circumstances but student is responsible for communicating with the instructor *before* the assignment is late. The requirement for prior arrangements may be waived by the instructor in response to tragic events outside the control of the student.

Multiple Submissions: Multiple submissions or using work that has been submitted for credit in another course for this course, is highly discouraged. Any multiple submissions must be discussed with the instructor prior to assignment due date. If an assignment is submitted that has received credit in another course, without discussing this with the instructor, the assignment will automatically be given a zero.

University guidelines, policies, and resources:

Student Conduct Code

All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review on-line at the [Student Conduct Code](#) website.

Course add and withdrawal dates

The last day for students to add classes via CyberBear without the consent of the instructor is January, 25, 2023. From January 26th through February 6th adds must be approved by instructor via electronic override in CyberBear. The [academic calendar](#) in addition to holidays and other academic calendar events states the semester withdrawal deadlines and information to contact with questions. February 6th is the last day to withdraw from a class with refund where applicable. May 5th, 2023 is the last day to withdraw from the semester.

Disability modifications

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and [Disability Services for Students](#). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 or call 406.243.2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.

Cultural Leave

Cultural or ceremonial leave allows excused absences for cultural, religious, and ceremonial purposes to meet the student's customs and traditions or to participate in related activities. To receive an authorized absence for a cultural, religious, or ceremonial event the student or their advisor (proxy) must submit a formal written request to the instructor. This must include a brief description (with inclusive dates) of the cultural event or ceremony and the importance of the student's attendance or participation. Authorization for the absence is subject to approval by the instructor. Appeals may be made to the Chair, Dean or Provost. The excused absence or leave may not exceed five academic calendar days (not including weekends or holidays). Students remain responsible for completion or make-up of assignments as defined in the syllabus, at the discretion of the instructor.

ElevateU Career readiness

The University is committed to the career success of our students and encourages you to participate in [ElevateU](#) -UM's signature career readiness program- to ensure that you graduate career-ready, with the education, skills, and tools needed to launch, carry-on, and pivot your post-graduate career. Participation in ElevateU is free and can be started at any time, no matter where you are in your academic career or career journey. Get started by creating a profile on [Handshake](#) to search for jobs and internships or by [scheduling an appointment](#) with an [Experiential Learning and Career Success \(ELCS\)](#) career coach or advisor.

Land Acknowledgement

"The university of Montana acknowledges that we are in the aboriginal territories of the Salish and Kalispel people. Today, we honor the path they have always shown us in caring for this place for generations to come."