

# **IB 451: Conservation Biology (4 credits)**

## **Syllabus Spring 2025**

Lecture: TU and TH: 9:30-11am

2020B NHB

Professor Alexandra Harmon-Threatt

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TA's: Vivian Cheng, Sana Saboowala

Lab Sections 12-1:50:

Tu: Literatures, Cultures, and Linguistics G27

W: Literatures, Cultures, and Linguistics G7

Open Office Hour: 11-1 Literatures, Cultures, & Linguistics G7

### **Pre-requisites**

Ecology or equivalent. A basic understanding of genetics and evolution is advised.

### **Course description**

Human domination of ecosystems has significantly altered natural landscapes and the organisms that inhabit them. The field of conservation biology was developed to specifically understand the consequences and solutions to human-mediated losses of habitats and species. As an inter-disciplinary field, conservation biology pulls from various areas of social science, ecology, biology, genetics, anthropology, sociology and restoration to identify problems and solutions to losses of habitats and species. In lecture, we will explore general background in these areas and then use periodic class wide discussion to try to pull all of the information together in a particular case study. The lab will provide opportunities to explore common techniques used in conservation biology to assess changes in habitats and populations. *This course meets the IB upper division Lab requirement.*

### **Text Books**

Both of the texts used for this course are freely available and chapters will be posted weekly.

Macdonald, DW and Katherine Willis (2013) *Key Topics of Conservation Biology* 2. Wiley- Blackwell.

Sodhi, Navjot S. and Ehrlich, Paul R. (2010) *Conservation Biology for All*. Oxford University Press.

<https://conbio.org/publications/free-textbook/>

### **Specific learning objectives**

- Cover the major topics of conservation biology
- Discuss current papers in conservation
- Explore the social aspects of conservation biology
- Learn some of the techniques used to determine the status of habitats, populations and communities
- Use the techniques and information discussed in class to further explore an issue of conservation biology

**Teaching and learning method**

In today's knowledge economy you need to be able to think critically and work collaboratively to solve problems. Now that the Internet puts the world at your fingertips, you don't need to memorize facts. Instead, you need to practice sourcing and applying facts to make decisions. Just as in scientific practice, the issues you will address are too overwhelming for one person to gather all the resources needed to make a decision. In this class, as in science, you will work together with your peers to produce a product. Collaborative learning can facilitate deep learning and foster communication and problem-solving skills that will serve you in future coursework and careers. Each of you can contribute different skills that complement each other in the process of articulating your reasoning and creating your group projects.

**In-class activities -10% of total grade***Class participation*

Participation in lecture, discussions and forums is expected. During every class or lab opportunities to participate will be provided and whether you attend or participate will be noted. Failure to participate in at least 80% of class meetings will result in the lowering of your participation grade by the percentage relative to the number of classes participated in below 80%. So if there are 10 classes in a unit and you only participate in 7 of them your grade will be 7/8 or 87.5%.

*In-class assignments*

During class we will have activities that need to be completed to prepare for exams. The goal of these assignments is to help you take a topic deeper and present information to the class. You will be expected to turn in 80% of these for full credit. So missing a few weeks will not negatively impact your grade.

**Reading Write-ups- 15% of total grade**

To prepare for lecture and lab there will be multiple readings per week. You will be expected to answer questions related to these readings and submit them via the LMS. You will be expected to turn in 80% of these for full credit. The lowest scores will be converted to Extra Credit.

**Lab Activities -30% of total grade**

There will be 9-10 labs during the semester to help further develop the topics and skills used in conservation biology. Each of these are worth roughly 40 points which will be split between a pre-lab and the lab. The pre-lab will be information that is essential to getting the most out of the lab and will entail reading some documents and answering some questions. The lab will require you to work through some problems and answer a set of questions and a short write-up. Most labs will happen in the computer lab room at the top of the syllabus. Some of them will require work outside of lab to ensure the lab is completed in a timely manner.

**Exams- 20% of total grade**

There will be 2 exams in the course at the end of each unit. And a cumulative final that can replace one of the exam scores if needed. Each exam will be worth approximately 100 points.

### **Final Project – 25% of total grade**

Using the information learned in lectures and skills learned in lab, students will be responsible for addressing an issue in conservation biology. In small groups, students will be expected to work with the TAs to develop a podcast addressing a topic identified by a state agency to help inform and educate around Illinois Conservation issues. The most important things to remember are that the project will need to explore a topic different in scope or topic from what was covered in class and then be able to translate that to something that would be appropriate for outreach and education.

### **Academic Integrity**

The academic integrity policy of University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign states: "It is the responsibility of each student to refrain from infractions of academic integrity, from conduct that may lead to suspicion of such infractions, and from conduct that aids others in such infractions."

The complete policy and procedures are available at: <http://studentcode.illinois.edu/>. As a student at UIUC, it is your responsibility to become familiar with, understand, and abide by the standards outlined in this policy before performing any academic work. Ignorance of these policies is not a defense in cases of infringement.

Any person found using unauthorized assistance (including plagiarism, submitting work for more than one class without obtaining permission from all instructors, copying answers from another student during an individual exam, sharing clickers, or turning in group work to which you did not contribute) will be forwarded to the Committee for Student Academic Integrity. Students found guilty by the Committee will be given a grade of F for the course and be referred to the Dean for further action.

**AI use in assignments:** When you submit work you are asserting that the work is your original ideas and submission. AI generated responses violates this assumption and thus is not an acceptable way to answer questions. If you use AI to better understand concepts that is ok but submitting AI generated responses as your own work is a violation of the code of conduct. As such if your response is suspected of AI you will be provided an opportunity to explain and given a regrade for the assignment based on your explanation.

### **Accommodations**

We are happy to work with students to meet their needs but it is imperative that students make the instructor or TA aware of religious, disability, or other related accommodations as soon as possible. For exam accommodations notice of at least 1 week before the exam is critical for planning. Only accommodations officially documented with DRES, or other sources, can be accommodated at this time and will be kept in strict confidence.

### **Grades**

Because we strive to be fair in grading and there is extra credit available there will be no exceptions to this grading scale. I suggest you check your grades in Moodle regularly and bring up any inconsistencies immediately.

A+: 100-97	B+: 90-87	C+: 80-77		
A: 97-93	B: 87-83	C: 77-73	D: 60-70%	F: 0-59%
A-: 93-90	B-: 83-80	C-: 73-70		

**Attendance policy**

We expect you to attend and actively participate in all class meetings for which 80% submission of the in class questions will result in a passing grade. You are responsible for all material covered in class whether or not you attend. If something major comes up please give 24 hours notice for classes, 48 hours notice for exams and labs. We will try to work with you to make sure you have adequate time to complete everything.

**Regrading policy**

Every attempt will be made to grade fairly, consistently, and accurately. For regular, in-class exams, if you disagree with the way your answer on your individual exam was graded, you may submit a written request for a regrade within 72 hours of receipt of your graded exam, at which point we reserve the right to regrade the entire exam. For regular assignments you will have 72 hours after receiving the assignment to request changes.

**Late work**

You will have adequate time to complete all assignments and thus late work will not be accepted. If you wait until the last minute (<3 hours before something is due or after 5 PM) to ask questions we will not be able to help you. You have control over your schedule and one of the important skills you need to develop is how to organize and manage your time.

**Technology**

We will not consider technology excuses in this course. Make sure you back up your work to avoid losing data or work if your computer crashes. It is your responsibility to make sure you have access to Moodle and that assignments are uploaded properly.

**Group issues**

A large part of the grade you earn in this course will come from participation in group projects. We believe that this will help you master the material as well as help you develop communication, technology, and collaboration skills, such as dividing tasks and providing and accepting peer feedback, that you will need in college and your eventual profession. If you experience issues with your group members please let us know immediately. We will work with you to address these issues but cannot help you after the fact.

**Topics covered**

During the semester we will cover a diversity of topics to understand how biology and conservation intersect and some of the processes that affect this interaction. The class is loosely divided into three units to cover: Ecology, Genetics and Social Sciences. Roughly one week will be used on each of these topics: History of Conservation Biology, Threats to Biodiversity, Habitat Loss and Fragmentation, Climate Change, Conservation on Private Lands, Species and Populations, Conservation Genetics, The Role of Zoos in Conservation, Genetic Techniques, Working with Native peoples, Disease and The Role of Governments in Conservation.