BIEB 176 - Conservation and the Human Predicament

Spring 2024 Course Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Shermin de Silva
Email: srdesilva@ucsd.edu
Office hours: Muir Biology Room 1104, Mondays 11AM-12PM or by appointment

Lecture times and room: M/W/F 10:00AM-10:50AM, Mosaic Hall 0204
Course website: https://canvas.ucsd.edu/courses/54560

IA:
Ashley Kim: ask002@ucsd.edu

Section time:
A01 Tu 12:00PM - 12:50PM
Zoom link:
https://ucsd.zoom.us/j/99958842254

Course Description

This course will engage you in an interdisciplinary discussion of the human predicament, the biodiversity crisis, and the importance of biological conservation. Examines issues from biological, cultural, historical, economic, social, political, and ethical perspectives emphasizing new approaches and new techniques for safeguarding the future of humans and other biosphere inhabitants.

Discussion section attendance for this course is not required. However, this is where you will have the opportunity to engage more deeply with class contents through discussion with your peers**. If you cannot attend, you are strongly encouraged to form a peer-group outside of the class**.

Prerequisites: BILD 3 or ANTH 2 or consent of instructor*

*This course does not rely on prior knowledge. Non-biology majors who have not had the prerequisites are encouraged to talk to Dr. de Silva about taking the course.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

1) Appreciate the history and variety of life on earth, and interaction between biotic and abiotic variables.
2) Understand fundamental ecological principles relevant to biodiversity conservation.
3) Connect biodiversity to your everyday lives, and vice versa, the impact of human activities on biodiversity.
4) Differentiate biological, economic, social drivers of change and appreciate trade-offs or opposing points of view.

5) Critically examine, challenge, and articulate your own preconceptions, assumptions, social dogmas and paradigms etc. through civil discourse.
6) Read and understand scientific literature.
7) Envision how you can become active participants in solving problems.

Course Philosophy & Grading

This course encourages deep critical thinking about the relationships between concepts and active engagement rather than fact-recall. Accordingly, there will be no midterms or final exams. Your grade will instead be based on online engagement, individual and group assignments. Grading rubrics will be provided for each assignment so that assessments are as transparent and non-subjective as possible.

Required Learning Materials

All required materials can be found on the course website. Readings will be uploaded in advance, lecture slides will be uploaded after the relevant lecture. Please consult the website regularly for weekly discussion topics and assignments that will count toward the final grade. Assignments will not always be announced in lecture, you will be responsible for keeping up with them as per the syllabus.

Accessibility, Diversity and Equity

Our goal is to make this course as accessible as possible. Students requesting accommodations and services due to a disability for this course need to provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), prior to eligibility for requests. Receipt of AFAs in advance is necessary for appropriate planning for the provision of reasonable accommodations. For more information, contact the OSD at (858) 534-4382 (voice), osd@ucsd.edu , or visit disabilities.ucsd.edu.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to get in touch with me early regarding their needs so that we can try to accommodate them.

Assessment Policies

Item	Percent
a. Online participation (weekly)	10%
b. Week 1 Syllabus quiz	1%
c. Other quizzes	14%
d. Paired assignments (3 total)	25%
e. Group assignment 1	25%
f. Group assignment 2	25%
g. Extra credit	5%

The class will be graded on an absolute scale rather than a curve, with the following breakdown (in percent):

≥96.66 = A+ **96.65-93.33 = A** **93.32-90 = A-**	**89.99-89.66 = B+** **86.65-83.33 = B** **83.32-80 = B-**	**79.99-79.66 = C+** **76.65-73.33 = C** **73.32-70 = C-**	**69.99- 60 = D** **<60 = F**

Grade calculation

To calculate **your weighted percentage total**, you may use the following formula:

0.10(% from a) + 0.01(% from b) + 0.15(% from c) + 0.25(% from d) + 0.25(% from e) + 0.25(% from f) + 0.05(% from g) = Your percent total

If you are taking the course pass/fail, the threshold for passing is **70%.**

Readings and Sections

Readings and course material will be discussed during the weekly Zoom sections in small break-out groups. Those who cannot attend sections should make arrangements with peers to discuss or work on assignments.

Quizzes

Quizzes will be announced in advance and taken during lecture. Material will be drawn from lectures and required readings. There can be no make-up for missed quizzes but you can substitute extra credit.

Paired Assignments

There will be four short assignments to be completed with a partner (ONE group may have 3). They should be turned in via the course website. We will strive to return your score by the end of the following week, and comments/corrections will be given either via email or in sections. You are encouraged to discuss any questions with your instructor and/or TA. **Assignments are due by 5pm on the listed due date.** Assignments will not be accepted after the due date without verified reason for exemptions. **Make-ups and regrades:** There will be no make-ups for missed assignments, but you may substitute extra credit. Note however that extra credit may entail more effort for fewer points than the actual assignment. We will not entertain re-grade requests.

Group Assignments

Science and even the humanities are by now highly collaborative endeavors. Solving problems requires cultivating the ability to work together. You will work on these skills via two major group assignments. The first will be a review paper. The second will be a case study and presentation

to be given in the last week of class. For both assignments grades will be broken into two components: 50% of your score will depend on the quality of the final product, as assessed by the instructor; 25% of your score will be based on the peer evaluation score confidentially assigned by your teammates based on your contribution; 25% will be based on your self-evaluation. Out of fairness to all, there will be no extensions granted for group assignment submission.

Online Participation

Weekly prompts for online discussion or journal entry will count toward participation points. The response window to the prompts **will close by 11:59pm on Fridays**. This will not be stated each time, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have responded.

In-lecture Participation

There will frequently be question prompts, polls, and other interactive methods used in lecture. In-lecture participation will not be graded, they are intended to facilitate thinking and engagement with each other and the content, break up monotony, as well as provide on-the-fly feedback on your understanding. So relax, enjoy, and try to pay attention so that you can interact honestly.

Bonus points vs. Extra Credit

Bonus questions may appear on some assignments. The points will count toward your total and not exceed the total for that assignment (i.e. 100%). Opportunities for extra credit will be announced as we go, they are EXTRA tasks that count toward the 5% extra credit. These may include documentary film screenings, hikes and other outdoor activities, bonus assignments, or something else. With few exceptions (see below), you will not know in advance how many possibilities there will be, or what the assignment might entail. Keep a lookout on the course website.

Conduct & Integrity

An IMPORTANT note on civil conduct: Conservation is inherently political and sometimes deeply personal. This should be a safe space for anyone to express their views and opinions. ***Please be respectful of your peers and instructors***, even if you disagree - an important life skill to have when tackling the problems of the world. Failure to uphold a civil standard of conduct will be reflected in your participation scores and/or other disciplinary measures.

Use of **AI writing tools** may be appropriate so long as they are used to assist with improving your writing (e.g. English as second-language speakers), but may NOT be used to do your thinking for you. Think: if AI can do your critical thinking, what use are your skills to you or your future employer? Don't make yourself obsolete by using a mindless algorithm to respond for you.

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Such action may result in failure for that assignment, or failure from the course and reporting to the UCSD Academic Integrity Review Board. Consequences for cheating can be severe, including possible suspension. Please think twice before risking your academic future.

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Course Schedule & Target dates*

*These are subject to change. Changes will be posted on the course website.

Course Content	Activities
Week 1, 4/1 – 4/7: Biodiversity in space and time **April is EARTH MONTH! Find an event to celebrate:** https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-2024/	Readings, respond to discussion prompt and take syllabus quiz.
Week 2, 4/8 – 4/14: Conservation ethics	Sections: Discuss/debate readings. 1. Ethics assignment **(Due 4/15)**.
Week 3, 4/15 – 4/21: Biological Processes I – From Genes To Populations OPTIONAL: April 18th 5-9PM 7th Annual State of Biodiversity Symposium at The Nat: https://www.sdnhm.org/calendar/state-of-biodiversity/ OPTIONAL: Apr. 20 9AM – UC San Diego Natural Reserve System. Naturalist-guided hike with The Canyoneers. Register here. April 21st is Earth Day!	Sections: Readings/get help on assignment 2. 2. Population dynamics assignment **(Due 4/22)**.
Week 4, 4/22 – 4/28: Biological Processes II – From Populations To Ecosystems **Group assignment 1 sign-ups posted online.** All EXCEPT those who are dropping the course should join a group. *4/26: Deadline to drop the course without a "W"*	Sections: Readings/get help on assignment 3. 3. GIS assignment **(Due 4/29).**
Week 5, 4/29 – 5/5: Human Population, Human-Nature Interactions **5/1:** Guest lecture – Margaret Merritt, Field biologist	Sections: Readings/group assignment discussion.
Week 6, 5/6 – 5/12: Consumption I - Food systems **5/10 :** Guest lecture – Helina Jolly, Indigenous ethnography *5/10: Deadline to drop the course with a "W"*	Sections: Discuss locavore's dilemma. **Group assignment 1 and peer evaluations due by 5pm Monday 5/13.**
Week 7, 5/13 – 5/19: Consumption II - Land, Air, Water **Group assignment 2 sign-ups posted online.**	Sections: Listen to podcast, discuss.

Week 8, 5/20 – 5/26: Energy, Global Change	Sections: Readings.
Week 9, 5/27 – 6/31: Economics and Policy *5/27 is Memorial Day Holiday.*	Sections: Readings.
Week 10, 6/3 – 6/7: Mini-Conference	Sections: Readings. **Group assignment 2 and peer evaluations due by 5pm Friday 6/7**.

Further Resources

Making an argument (applies to writing and oral):

Watch an archetypal little professor with a beard, funny bowtie, and British accent tell you how to write a good essay (with cartoons):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liyFKUFCQno

Current Events:

Nature News (often bad):
Mongabay.com

When things get a bit too much, good news & fun things:
Goodnewsnetwork.org
Treehugger.com