

SYLLABUS

Spring Session I 2015 Course Description

Website: <http://people.tamu.edu/~j-packard/courses/wfsc622/wfsc622home.html>

Behavioral Ecology of Vertebrates (WFSC 622) is a graduate-level course offered for 3 academic credits by Texas A&M University each spring. The format is blended (on-campus and off-campus sections). The course is organized in 5 learning modules (3 weeks each): (1) concept overview, (2) habitat, (3) social, (4) reproduction, (5) cooperation. This is an intermediate level course that assumes prior knowledge of the concept map of Ethology and Ecology (see [\[Tutorial\]](#) link), e.g. a beginning level behavior course.

Instructor

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Required Textbook

Krebs, J.R., N.B. Davies & S.A. West. 2012. An Introduction to Behavioral Ecology. 4th Ed. Signature Associates, Sunderland, Mass. ISBN:978 1-4051-1416-5 (available through Amazon.com in kindle edition)

Schedule

Materials are provided on-line at ecampus.tamu.edu. This course contains some learning activities that are synchronous (webinars, optional field trip), and some that are asynchronous (essays, threaded discussion). During the first week, students view an online lecture, schedule an appointment with the professor (phone/SKYPE/in person) and respond to an emailed poll (<http://doodle.com>) to choose an optimal time for virtual meetings. Updates to the course schedule will be posted on the course website prior to the course and periodically during the course as students participate in fine-tuning the schedule to meet time constraints.

Course Approach

This course is designed for employees/trainees in a variety of work settings: graduate research assistants, natural resource managers, interpretive naturalists and K-12 teachers. The course objectives address higher-order thinking and communication skills. The course content includes relevant knowledge using the four basic scientific perspectives defined in the conceptual framework of modern biology: pattern (cause, function) and process (development, evolution). In addition, you will need to distinguish between the scientific perspective and the popularized folk psychology perspective (which has an experiential rather than a scientific basis). Students learn to match the message to the audience (i.e. use the scientific perspective in scholarly communication and reserve the folk psychology perspective for communication in other contexts outside academia). A tutorial and concept map are provided on the webpage. This course is in "flipped" format, where you view the lecture video independently and discuss it in a virtual meeting.

Course Goal and Objectives

The main goal of this course is to help students understand the scientific basis of behavioral ecology in a manner that diverse participants can adjust to their own needs, interests and constraints. All learning activities for the course are designed to specifically meet the following course objectives:

1. **Participate:** To participate by engaging with other students from diverse backgrounds in constructive communication and positive problem-solving.
 - a. Attend weekly virtual meetings with instructor/peers (on-campus students will be in the same room with the instructor and off-campus students will join by phone/SKYPE)
 - b. Positive problem-solving (PS) messages posted on discussion thread or email to instructor

- c. Optional Field Trip to Fossil Rim Wildlife Center on a weekend (tba)
- 2. **Comprehend:** To understand and retain basic concepts and examples in textbook
 - a. Read for comprehension of concepts in the course materials (textbook, webinar notes)
 - b. For 3 virtual meetings, sign up to be a discussant (in classroom, phone/SKYPE); comment on how the keyword concepts and examples relate to your experience, interests and readings.
- 3. **Apply:** To apply scientific information to personal experience and personal learning goals, matching personal learning styles to appropriate supplements (eg. primary literature, videos, fieldnotes).
 - a. Write 5 short scholarly essays (approx. 1 -2 pages single-spaced) applying keyword concepts to personal interests (choose relevant supplements for modules 2-5)
 - b. Submit each essay through eCampus (NO PLAGIARISM; your essay will be checked)
- 4. **Synthesize:** To synthesize information from diverse sources, strengthening written communication skills by integrating what you have learned from other learning activities for each of 5 modules.
 - a. Practice critical thinking about the relationships between (a) the concepts in each chapter, (b) discussion during webinars and (c) assigned supplements (primary literature)
 - b. Participate in interactive threaded discussions on eCampus; threaded discussion topics correspond to the 5 learning modules (3 weeks each)

Grading

Your grade will be based on a percentage of 150 points, which you may earn by completing the following learning activities. See the Grading Criteria workbook in the START HERE folder for more details.

Objective	Learning Activity	Points
1. Participate	Participation (2 pt for each virtual meeting attended; bonus:12 pts for field trip)	30
2. Comprehend	Participate as discussant during virtual meeting (3 @ 6 pt, see on-line rubric)	
3. Apply	Essay for each learning module (5 at 12 pts each, see on-line rubric)	60
4. Synthesize	Discussion for each learning module (5 at 12 pts each, see on-line rubric)	60
TOTAL POSSIBLE		150

You can check your grades at anytime using the My Grades tool on eCampus. The letter grades will be assigned as: A (90-100%), B(80-89%), C (70-79%), D (60-69%), F (<60%), I (only by written approval).

Incomplete Grade:

Occasionally, students encounter stressful problems (eg. loss of a loved one, illness, accident, hard-drive crash, over-commitment, etc.) that make it extremely difficult to complete course requirements within the allotted time. An Incomplete is one option for solving such problems, yet not one to be taken lightly in fairness to other students who complete the work within the time constraints. An email personal PS message must be filed and approved prior to the last day of classes for an incomplete grade to be granted.

American Disability Act (ADA)

ADA is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life/Services for Students with Disabilities, in Cain Hall. The phone number is (979) 845-1637

Academic Integrity Statement

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do." This includes PLAGIARISM!

You are responsible for the Honor Council Rules and Procedures at <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor>