

NRM4302 – Advanced Topics in Conservation Biology Course Syllabus – Spring 2021

Instructor

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Appointments (face-to-face or virtual) can always be made via e-mail or text. For those needed to meet on main campus, we can do so via appointment.
I also have "Open Door Office Hours". Feel free to come in anytime you see me in my office.

Teaching Assistant

Name: Joshua Coward
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Office Hours: M-F 9:00-10:00 (Josh has "open door office hours" as well.)
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Course Description

Examines the major areas in conservation-oriented research including patterns of biodiversity, extinction, conservation genetics, conservation of populations, communities and landscapes, and natural resource sustainability.

Course Objectives

Students will examine various advanced topics in Conservation Biology. On completion of the course, students will:

1. Understand how to research key topics and present the information to an audience.
2. Be better communicators having daily practice discussing issues amongst a group of peers, and
3. Have a broader understanding of the most current and pressing issues in the field of conservation biology.

Additional Outcome Objectives

As required by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for the B.S. in Natural Resource Management, additional outcome objectives are:

1. Students will be able to identify species of wildland plants and wildlife common to the western United States and describe their natural history.
2. Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the elements of an ecosystem.
3. Students will be able to communicate about natural resources and conservation both verbally and in writing.

Course Outline

Topics to be decided on by students on the first class day. Instructor will provide a preliminary list of topics which will be ranked by students. The highest ranking topics will be presented and discussed in class.

Course Design and Organization

This course will focus on a different conservation biology topic each week (defined as Monday-Sunday), allowing us to delve more deeply into each than is possible in an introductory course. Topics for the first two weeks are pre-selected and will be led by the instructor. Topics for the remainder of the course will be selected during Week 1 by the students according to their interests (via vote). Next, each topic will be assigned to a single student as "Topic Facilitator" who will be responsible for preparations in advance, then for leading and facilitating their assigned week's activities (with the guidance of the instructor). (Students may be paired to lead a particular week's discussion, if we have high enrollment.)

Class Meeting Time/Place

Times: Tuesday, Thursday 9:30 am -10:45 am (lecture recording times; join if you can)

Place: Blackboard Collaborate Ultra (online)

Text and Supplies

- No textbook required. All reading materials will be provided to students.
- You will be required to watch several documentaries, some of which will require a rental fee; every effort will be made to keep the total cost for documentary rentals under \$30.

Course Grade

Topic Week Facilitation	20%
Topic Week Report	10%
Weekly Discussion Forum Contributions	40%
Final Exam	30%

Grade Assignment

<60 = F, 60-69 = D, 70-79 = C, 80-89 = B, 90-100 = A.

Topic Week Facilitation and Report

Each student must carefully plan and prepare for their assigned week as Topic Facilitator. This includes:

Prior to Topic Week:	Meet with the instructor to choose materials for the topic. Materials must include: 1) 75 minutes of online video (documentary style, free or low rental cost), 2) Two non-peer-reviewed articles (usually from Conservation/Anthropocene Magazine); and 3) Two peer-reviewed journal articles. After approval by the instructor, post links to the materials in Blackboard no later than Sunday at 11:59 (since topic weeks start every Monday). (Paired students will each choose their own separate journal articles, but the remaining material will be common to the pair.)
Mon-Wed of Topic Week:	- Read and watch all materials (if not done already). - Monitor and address Blackboard discussion for any questions on the material. - - - Prepare a lecture-style overview of the topic, based on the 2 (or 4 for paired students) journal articles.
Thu of Topic Week:	- Present your "topic lecture" (using your PowerPoint) to the class. - Post 5+ open-ended questions to kick-start discussion for the rest of the week.
Thu-Sun of Topic Week:	- Make at least one original post per usual weekly requirements (see below). - Facilitate online discussion forums - the Topic Lead is required to thoughtfully respond to EVERY question or comment made by others.
Wed after Topic Week:	Submit written topic report by 11:59 pm. The report must be based on your two peer-reviewed journal articles, but may cite other sources as well. If paired, each student submits their own report, based on their 2 assigned journal articles. The report must be a minimum of 5 pages in length (single spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font).

Weekly Discussions

Thoughtful participation in the online discussion forums is *critical* to the learning process in this class. I expect a high level of online discussion to enhance everyone's learning. Topic Facilitator requirements are given above. When not serving as Topic Facilitator, each student must contribute at least 3 posts per topic, as detailed next:

- *One original post* is required by Friday at 11:59 pm. In it, you should give your personal thoughts and experiences regarding the topic, replying either to one of the 5+ "kick-start" questions the Topic Facilitator posted, or other thoughts of your choosing. If you include a question(s) as part of your post, you should also give your own answer(s), then invite others to consider your question. This should NOT be a summary of the topic! Although there is not a length requirement, you should target at least 250 words to ensure you are contributing sufficiently to the discussion and receive the maximum score.
- *Two comments on others' posts* (by other students or the instructor) are required by Sunday at 11:59 pm. Although there is not a length requirement, you should target at least 100 words to ensure you are

contributing sufficiently to the discussion and receive the maximum score. Note that you will not be able to see or comment on others' posts until after you submit your own original post (see prior bullet).

- All posts will be graded based upon their relevance, depth of knowledge, and unique contribution made to the discussion, using a rubric that will be made available in Week 1. Short posts saying things like "I thought the same thing" or "I never thought of that", but nothing more, will be ignored.
- Students are expected to have read all assigned reading and watched all assigned videos, and watched each topic lecture BEFORE posting in the discussion forums. Posts that indicate you haven't read and/or watched the material assigned by the Topic Facilitator will lower your discussion grade significantly.
- Zeros will be earned for the entire discussion grade for any week if any single post is judged by the instructor to be unprofessional, discourteous, and/or uncivilized.
- All posts must be entered directly into Blackboard; not as file attachments.
- You must make these postings during the week in which it was scheduled. You will not receive credit for late postings.

Exams

A comprehensive online final exam will be due on the university-scheduled final exam day (see schedule below).

- Questions will be short-answer and cover the major points from each week of the course.
- Exams will be completed outside of class, online in Blackboard, **using a strict honor code**. The following statement must be e-mailed to your instructor *after* you submit *each* exam for you to earn a grade other than zero:

"I have neither given nor received any unauthorized aid on this exam."

Online Participation Guidelines

Any time you attend class online (via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra), you are required to be properly dressed, avoid video distractions, and keep your microphone muted except to ask questions or request clarification. **Anyone causing distractions may be muted, have their video shut off, and/or removed from the session without warning, at the instructor's discretion.**

Due Dates/Times/Extensions

In general:

- All graded work, including exams, are expected to be on-time. **No due dates for ANY graded work, including exams, will be extended without PRIOR e-mail arrangements** initiated by the student, and only for valid reasons.

Topic Facilitators:

- ***Due to the nature of this course, late products expected during a student's facilitation week cannot and will not be accepted.*** It is imperative that conflicts with your topic week are identified **before** you are assigned to that topic and its week. Once scheduled, changes will be made only if the student finds another student with whom to switch topic weeks, or if unable to find such a student, only in the case of emergency.
- Late **topic reports** will be accepted at the discretion of the instructor, with a **10% penalty for each day late** (i.e. 10% for 0-24 hours late, 20% for 24-48 hours late, etc.) Late topic reports are not accepted after seven days. Extended due dates on topic reports may be allowed due to college-related conflicts **ONLY WITH** the instructor's approval **PRIOR** to the due date. In case of emergencies, arrangements for completing assignments should be made immediately upon return to SRSU.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty hurts everyone and reduces the value of college degrees. Doing someone else's work, presenting the ideas and work of others as your own, submitting the same paper for multiple classes, and/or failing to cite your sources when you utilize the ideas of others, are all examples of academic dishonesty. It is your responsibility to read and understand the university's policy on academic dishonesty in the SRSU Student Handbook, as all violations will be taken seriously and handled through the appropriate university process. The Student Handbook can be found at: <https://www.sulross.edu/page/2454/student-handbook> (page 80). In addition, please note that plagiarism detection software will be used in this class for written assignments, as well as monitoring software for any online

exams. **Any student shown to violate academic integrity will receive no credit (0) for work done and/or may be penalized in accordance with published University Rules.**

Communication

You are required to check your *Sul Ross e-mail and Blackboard announcements several times per week*. I do not use the personal or preferred e-mail addresses that you may have on record with the University.

Attendance

- Students are expected to make every effort to attend class live (as it happens) either online OR in person (when available and if comfortable doing so). All lectures will be recorded and posted in Blackboard. If live class must be missed, the student is expected to watch the recorded lecture as soon as practical.
- Roll will be taken every lecture for the face-to-face students, attendance will be automatically recorded for those joining live lecture online, and viewing of recorded lectures will also be automatically recorded by Blackboard.
- It is policy of this class to **drop a student with a grade of ``F" if 9 hours or more of class are missed**. Any time class is missed, for any reason, it will be recorded as an absence. Any time class is missed, for any reason, it will be recorded as an absence, unless an absence can be shown to be due to a college-related event.
- Students are expected to arrive to class on time. If a student is perpetually late, they will be asked to not attend class unless they can arrive on time. If tardiness becomes a problem for the class as a whole, people who arrive late will not be permitted to enter the class. If this stricter policy becomes necessary, there will be an announcement made in class.

Electronics in the Classroom

The use of personal laptops, cell phones, iPads, and other electronic devices can create distractions for learning, both for yourself and others. However, such devices can also be great tools to aid learning. Therefore, using electronic devices for class purposes (e.g. taking notes, working out problems, searching the internet) is allowed in silent mode. If you choose to use electronic devices in class, do so in a professional manner that does not impede others' learning.

The use of internet-capable devices (e.g. smartphones) is not allowed for exams. Headphones will not be allowed in class for any reason.

Resources and Assistance

SRSU Library Services

The Sul Ross Library offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu. Appointments to access the building are required (see <https://sulross.libguides.com/covid19/building>). The library also offers curbside delivery of physical resources (see <https://sulross.libguides.com/covid19/curbside>). Off-campus access requires your LoboID and password. Check out materials using your photo ID. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or phone (432-837-8123).

Tutoring

Since the library can be visited by appointment only, there will be no drop-in tutoring, nor can face-to-face tutoring be done safely during COVID-19. So, all tutoring will be online. Tutoring will be available starting on August 31. Contact Anita Banegas (432-837-8992, abanegas@sulross.edu) or Mabel Garcia 432-837-8629, mag15bf@sulross.edu) to get an e-mail invitation for either group or individual tutoring, or to request an appointment.

Blackboard's Support Desk

SR has moved its Blackboard site to the Texas State University System's (TSUS) Blackboard Environment. Sul Ross' Blackboard login page will take you straight into the new TSUS Blackboard environment from the Sul Ross website. It may look slightly different to you, and may want to tweak some of your settings that you had previously. If you have any technical issues with the new system or Blackboard itself, e.g. if you are having issues submitting a document, getting videos to play, or you are dealing with a technical error in the course, then the Blackboard Support Desk is ready to help you. The support desk is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can reach the support desk by calling 888-837-6055, emailing blackboardsupport@sulross.edu, using resources from the Technology Support tab within Blackboard, or clicking the Support Desk graphic on the course homepage. As always, academic questions about course assignments, due dates, and general course questions should be directed to your instructor.

Americans With Disabilities Act

Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility / accommodations services must contact Rebecca Greathouse Wren, LPC-S, SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203 (please leave a message and someone will get back to you as soon as possible during working hours), or email rebecca.wren@sulross.edu. The office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall (Suite 112), and the mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

Tentative Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1	1/12	Course Overview / Topic Selections	Mrozinski
	1/14	De-extinction & Rewilding	Mrozinski
Week 2	1/19, 21	Nature Deficit Disorder	Mrozinski
Week 3	1/26, 28	Wildlife Corridors	Student
Week 4	2/02, 04	Exotic and Invasive Species	Student
Week 5	2/09, 11	Hunting and Conservation	Student
Week 6	2/16, 18	Global Insect Population Decline	Student
Week 7	2/23, 25	Predators and Trophic Cascades	Student
Week 8	3/02, 04	Freshwater Conservation Biology	Student
Week 9	3/09, 11	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES	
Week 10	3/16, 18	Human Demographics / Pop. Growth	Student
Week 11	3/23, 25	Ecotourism	Student
Week 12	3/30, 4/01	Special Topic: Climate Change	Mrozinski
Week 13	4/06, 08	Ex-Situ Conservation	Student
Week 14	4/13, 15	Conservation in Urban Areas	Student
Week 15	4/20, 22	Course Review / Special Topic	Mrozinski and Students
Week 16	4/27	Final Exam Review	Mrozinski and Students
Week 17	5/03	Final Exam due at 11:59 pm	All

Holidays

Mon	01/18	MLK holiday (no classes)
Mon-Fri	03/08-12	Spring Break (no classes)
Fri	04/02	Good Friday Holiday (no classes)

COVID-19 Safety Pledge - One University/One Community

As a partner in each campus community the faculty, staff, and students agree to the following statements in relation to the COVID-19 virus:

- I will wear a face covering, wash my hands, and disinfect my workspaces to protect others from the potential spread of this virus.
- I promise to follow social distancing guidelines as a way to mitigate the risk of transmission to others both professionally and personally.
- I will monitor my health and report any potential COVID-19 illness and agree to follow the guidelines set forth in the *Sul Ross State University Return to Campus Plan* or as described by Sul Ross State University to protect the public health.
- I understand that my actions may impact the larger community and could affect my academic progress or professional attainment at Sul Ross State University.

Additionally:

- Between classes, incoming and outgoing faculty members and students are expected to sanitize their desks, chairs or other areas they have occupied. Cleaning by both outgoing and incoming individuals minimize the risk of any contagion.
- Students and faculty entering buildings will be asked to respect the flow of foot traffic and to enter and exit buildings and classrooms through designated areas.
- Only two people may ride an elevator at one time. Students are encouraged to take the stairs when possible.
- Students and faculty are **REQUIRED TO WEAR FACE MASKS** while in enclosed spaces for classes and lab.

Furthermore, University employees and students are expected to help monitor COVID-19 as a way to prevent the spread of the virus and protect each other. To accomplish the required data collection, the University asks its community members to take three actions:

1. Keep keep track of their health and track any potential symptoms;
2. Test for the virus when you have potential symptoms or have been in contact with someone who has symptoms; and
3. Trace your steps and keep accurate track of your interactions with others so that contact tracing can, if necessary, be done quickly and efficiently.

If you have been exposed to COVID-19 or think you might have been exposed, then you must quarantine for 14 days before you return to class.

If a student attends class without a face mask, the instructor will ask the student to wear one, and if necessary, leave to get one, advising the student where some disposable masks might be available in the building. If the student refuses to wear a mask, they will be required to leave the lecture and join online. If an unmasked student refuses to leave, the instructor will call UDPS to have the student removed and/or cancel the class to be resumed later online or recorded without students. The violating student will be reported to the appropriate department chair(s) and the Office of Student Life for potential disciplinary action, as described below.

Failing to meet these expectations may be subject to corrective action under University disciplinary policies.

Changes or recommendations to the guidelines based on evolving guidance from federal, state, or local agencies will be communicated to the university community.