NRM 2303 – Principles of Conservation Biology
Course Syllabus – Spring 2026

Course Information

Instructor

Name:	Dr. Maureen Frank
Office:	RAS 113
Main Phone:	(830) 261-0539 (cell, 8-5 daily, best way to reach me quickly)
Email:	maureen.frank@sulross.edu (checked daily)
Office Hours:	Mondays: 2:00 – 4:00pm Wednesdays, 9:00 – 11:00am Or by appointment, or anytime my door is open!

Class Meeting Time and Place

MWF, 1:00 - 1:50 pm
RAS 129

Course Description

This is an introductory course covering the fundamental knowledge and theories of conservation biology, including: biodiversity, how it is measured, and how it informs conservation work; ethics, goals, and the role of humans in conservation; and situation-dependent applied conservation through maintaining, managing, restoring, and adapting.

Expanded Course Description

Conservation biology is fundamental to natural resource management. Whether you hope to work with endangered species or game species, private or public lands, for a state agency or a non-governmental organization, the concepts covered in this class will give you a foundation for understanding and applying current topics in conservation science.

This course is based around a case study at a local private property. You will learn about the ecosystem on this property, and we will discuss challenges and opportunities in conservation in a desert landscape, on private properties, and the impacts of ecotourism. Throughout the course, we will build from lessons on the biology underlying conservation (Unit 1), to tools of conservation (Unit 2), to conservation in practice (Unit 3), and finally to examining some "wicked" problems in conservation (Unit 4).

Clear communication – both written and verbal – is essential in the practice of conservation. You will be expected to read and critically evaluate material from a variety of sources, including *A Sand County Almanac*, scientific abstracts, scientific reports, news releases, and essays. You will also write reflections and reports based on your readings and class discussions. There is a final project in this class that will build on everything you have learned during the semester.

We will learn about critical analysis of empirical and quantitative data and practice using these concepts to inform conservation work. As a core curriculum course, we will also be learning about teamwork. You will be expected to evaluate your own strengths and weaknesses as part of a team and to contribute meaningfully to multiple group projects.

Course Objectives

Students will learn the principles of conservation biology and how to apply these concepts to natural resource management. Specifically, upon course completion, students shall understand:

1. Biodiversity and its role in conservation,
2. Applying principles of conservation biology in diverse ecosystems to maintain, manage, restore, or adapt biodiversity, and
3. The impact of humans and human systems on biodiversity and conservation efforts.

As this course is a Core Course, students will also:

1. Develop empirical and quantitative skills to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions, and
2. Develop teamwork skills to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.

Program Learning Outcomes for the B.S. in Natural Resource Management

The graduating student will demonstrate that he/she is able to:

1. Identify species of wildland plants and wildlife common to the western United States and describe their natural history.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the elements of an ecosystem.
3. Communicate about natural resources and conservation both verbally and in writing.
4. Conduct range and wildlife inventories in a team setting.
5. Apply knowledge about elements of an ecosystem into an appropriate conservation management plan.

Marketable Skills for the B.S. in Natural Resource Management (THECB requirement)

As part of attaining a B.S. in Natural Resource Management, students will develop the following Marketable Skills:

1. Students will demonstrate public speaking skills.
2. Students will demonstrate writing skills.
3. Students will be able to apply course knowledge through a research project.

Course Materials and Policies

Required Text

A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold
Other readings will be assigned; these will be provided by the instructor.

Grading

Quizzes (11)	100 points
Graded discussions (2)	50 points
Reports/reflection (4)	200 points
Unit exams (4)	400 points
Final report	150 points
Final presentation	50 points

Grade Scale

89.5 – 100: A
79.5 – 89.4: B
69.5 – 79.4: C
59.5 – 69.4: D
0 – 59.4: F

Major Assignments and Examinations

Quizzes
Most weeks, there will be a quiz to review the previous week's material. Consider these quizzes an opportunity to practice what you have learned and gauge whether you are on track for the unit exam. There will also be one reading quiz for each unit based on the assigned essay from *A Sand County Almanac*. Each quiz is worth 10 points and the lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Quizzes **cannot** be made up if you miss class.

Graded discussions
Class participation is important and all classes will include discussion. However, there will be two classes dedicated entirely to discussion of our case study. Preparation for those discussions and participation during the discussions will be graded; each discussion is worth 25 points.

Reports and reflection
To build towards the final project and integrate topics from each unit, students will write a series of reports. The Unit 1 report will be completed individually. The Unit 2 and 3 reports will be completed in groups. There will also be a written reflection due after our first field trip. Each of these writing assignments is worth 50 points.

Unit exams
At the end of each unit, students will be given an exam to evaluate their understanding of the concepts learned in that unit. Exams are not cumulative, but given the complex nature of conservation, concepts will build across the semester. Each exam is worth 100 points and will contain a mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions.

Final report and presentation
This is a small class, so for the final project students will work together in a single group to complete a report tying together concepts from throughout the course in the framework of our case study. This is worth 150 points. Students will also give a presentation to the instructor about the case study, which is worth 50 points.

Due Dates and Extensions

All graded work is expected to be on time. **No due dates for ANY graded work will be extended without PRIOR e-mail arrangements initiated by the student**, and only for valid reasons. Late work will only 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 work will not be accepted after 7 days.

Extra Credit

Extra credit may be offered for opportunities that are relevant to the course, such as graduate student defenses and the SRSU Research Symposium. Extra credit opportunities are not guaranteed and students should not rely on this as part of their grade.

Attendance

Students are expected to make every effort to attend class. Your grade depends on your regular attendance. **Please communicate with me in advance if you will miss class**.

Students are expected to arrive to class on time. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class and cannot be made up if you arrive after they are turned in. They also cannot be made up if you are absent.

Required Student Responsibilities

All full-time and part-time students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Student Handbook and the Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog and for abiding by the University rules and regulations. Additionally, students are responsible for checking their Sul Ross email as an official form of communication from the university. Every student is expected to obey all federal, state and local laws and is expected to familiarize themselves with the requirements of such laws.

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.

Academic Integrity

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused; meaningful and pertinent participation is appreciated.

Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor
- Turning in another person's work as one's own
- Copying from professional works or internet sites without citation
- Collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden

Generative AI may not be used in this class. The use of generative AI tools for ANY part of your work – including brainstorming, coding, creating images, creating slides, writing drafts, and composing final works – **will be treated as plagiarism**. If you have questions, please ask us.

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

Electronics in the Classroom

The use of personal laptops, cell phones, tablets, 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 except when designated by the professor. 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.**

Connecting with Students for Success

This is a "Connecting with Students for Success" course. In addition to the items listed in the graphic below, you will be asked to take a survey about this course. I am excited to make this course a good experience for you! The graphic below outlines what you can expect from this course. I will schedule individual meetings during the third week of class.

Resources

SRSU Disability Services (ADA Statement)
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.
To schedule an appointment for accommodations or mental health services, you can:

- Call 432-837-8203
- Email Grace Knight (gak20wv@sulross.edu) or Ronnie Harris (ronnie.harris@sulross.edu)
- Go to Ferguson Hall, Room 112

Counseling Services
Sul Ross State University (SRSU) has partnered with TimelyCare, which is an online mental health support platform, and all SRSU students will have access to nine free counseling sessions. These can be accessed by visiting https://timelycare.com/srsu. Counseling is also offered in Ferguson Hall Room 112 in Alpine, and via telehealth Zoom sessions for remote students.

Library Information
The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine 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. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LoboID and password. 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
The Lobo Den Tutoring Center offers FREE tutoring support to help you excel in your courses.

- Drop-in and scheduled appointments offered, Monday–Friday, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM
- Location: BWML Room 128
- Regularly hosted academic workshops on STEM topics and professional development,

For more information or to book an appointment, email tutoring@sulross.edu or call (432) 837-8726.

Blackboard Support Desk
If you have any technical issues with Blackboard itself, the Blackboard 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.

Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
1	1/14, 1/16	----	Course Overview	Unit 1 lesson
2	1/21, 1/23	NO CLASS	Unit 1 lesson	Unit 1 lesson
3	1/26, 1/28, 1/30	Unit 1 lesson	Unit 1 lesson	Unit 1 lesson
4	2/2, 2/4, 2/6	**Unit 1 Exam**	Unit 2 lesson	Unit 2 lesson
5	2/9, 2/11, 2/13	Unit 2 lesson	Unit 2 lesson	Unit 2 lesson
6	2/16, 2/18, 2/20	Unit 2 lesson	NO CLASS	NO CLASS
7	2/23, 2/25, 2/27	Unit 2 lesson	Unit 2 lesson	Unit 2 lesson
8	3/2, 3/4, 3/6	**Unit 3 Exam**	**Field Trip**	Case Study Disc.
9	3/9 - 3/13	NO CLASSES – SRSU SPRING BREAK		
10	3/16, 3/18, 3/20	Unit 3 lesson	Unit 3 lesson	Unit 3 lesson
10	3/23, 3/25, 3/27	Unit 3 lesson	Unit 3 lesson	Unit 3 lesson
11	3/30, 4/1, 4/3	Unit 3 lesson	**Unit 3 Exam**	Unit 4 lesson
12	4/6, 4/8, 4/10	Unit 4 lesson	Unit 4 lesson	SRSU Research Symposium
13	4/13, 4/15, 4/17	Unit 4 lesson	Unit 4 lesson	Unit 4 lesson
14	4/20, 4/22, 4/24	Unit 4 lesson	**Field Trip**	Case Study Disc.
15	4/27, 4/29	**Unit 4 Exam**	**Presentations**	----