

NRM 5324 – Conservation Biology

Course Syllabus | Fall 2026

Course Information

Instructor

Dr. Amanda Veals Dutt

Amanda.dutt@sulross.edu

Office: RAS 140

(480) 353-6409 (can call or text)

Office Hours

MW 10:30am – 12:00pm, or by appointment

Class Meeting Time/Place

This is an online class with readings that replace formal lectures. Blackboard will be used for all email communications, announcements, discussions, reading assignments, and grades.

Course Description

This is an advanced course exploring conservation-oriented research, including threats to biodiversity, biogeography, extinction, conservation genetics, landscape connectivity, endangered species conservation, ecological restoration, and conservation education.

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 will require you to complete readings from the textbook and from recent scientific articles. You will be expected to synthesize that information into a variety of formats, including written reports, recorded video presentations, and outreach publications. There will also be reading quizzes. These diverse assignments are designed to help you understand the breadth of the conservation field. Communication with the public and other scientists is increasingly important. I want you to feel confident in analyzing new information and in discussing your thoughts and ideas in a variety of formats.

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. Management of biodiversity in diverse ecosystems, and
3. The impact of humans and human systems on biodiversity and conservation efforts.

Student Learning Outcomes, M.Ag. in Natural Resources Conservation

1. Student will be able to apply statistical concepts and procedures to natural resource data.
2. Student will be able to evaluate literature and references as they apply to the natural resource field.
3. Student will be able to demonstrate their knowledge of the fundamentals and advanced concepts of range and wildlife management.

Student Learning Outcomes, M.S. in Range and Wildlife Management

- Students will be able to apply statistical concepts and procedures to research.
- Students will be able to evaluate literature and references to substantiate the applied research project.
- Students will be able to justify and defend research questions and design.

Marketable Skills, M.Ag. in Natural Resources Conservation

1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of key Natural Resource Management topics.
2. Students will be able to apply knowledge to projects that include biostatistics, research methods, and scientific writing.
3. Students will demonstrate skills in scientific writing and analysis.

Marketable Skills, M.S. in Range and Wildlife Management

1. Students able to communicate scientific research results to a wide variety of audiences.
2. Students will be able to analyze a dataset with a wide variety of statistics.
3. Students will demonstrate competence in scientific writing – also includes appropriate literature review.

Course Materials and Policies

Textbook and Other Reading Materials

An eBook will be available through Blackboard. If you purchase a physical copy, be sure to get the 4th edition.

Hunter, M. L., J. P. Gibbs, and V. D. Popescu. 2021. *Fundamentals of Conservation Biology*. 4th Ed. Hoboken, NJ, USA: Wiley Blackwell. 654 pp. **Required.**

Additional required and recommended readings will be provided through Blackboard. These will include peer-reviewed articles chosen by the instructor and peer-reviewed articles chosen by the student.

Grading – Point Breakdown

Introductory assignments	80
Communicating science	100
Feedback discussions	60
Quizzes	60
Final project	150
Final exam	100

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

If you have a question about your grade, you must send a Blackboard message. Due to privacy concerns, I cannot discuss grades over email.

Due Dates and Extensions

This course is structured into weekly time periods that begin on Monday and end on Sunday. All assignments are due by Sunday at 11:59pm unless otherwise specified. **No due dates for ANY graded work will be extended and no points will be given for late assignments except under extraordinary circumstances.** The student must initiate contact with the instructor to request an exception for late work. See the class schedule (posted in Blackboard) for the dates and assignments for each week.

Student Responsibilities Statement

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.

<https://www.sulross.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Student-Handbook-24-25-1.pdf>

<https://catalog.sulross.edu/>

<https://www.sulross.edu/about/administration/university-policies/>

Assignments and Examinations

Introductory assignments: understanding scientific papers

Over the first 4 weeks, we will break down a scientific paper into its components and your assignments will help you understand how to read each part (20 points each).

Communicating science

You will choose a scientific paper to read and then summarize, both in writing and as a presentation (50 points each).

Feedback discussions

For each report/presentation, you will be assigned to review the work of 2 other classmates and provide meaningful feedback (15 points each).

Quizzes

You will have readings assigned from the textbook each week. At the end of each section, there will be a quiz. Please note that although each quiz is not worth a lot of points, the final is a significant portion of your grade, and it will include questions similar to those on the quizzes (3 quizzes, 20 points each).

Final project

You will choose a scientific paper to read and summarize either as a report or a presentation. This will look similar to the “communicating science” assignments that you do early in the semester, except that you will choose the format and the work will be expected to be longer and more thorough (150 points).

Final exam

Rather than a fourth quiz, you will take a final exam that covers material from all readings, assignments, and projects.

Academic Integrity and Generative Artificial Intelligence

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused; meaningful and pertinent participation is appreciated. Academic dishonesty hurts everyone and reduces the value of college degrees. Students should submit work that is their own and should not engage in behaviors that violate academic integrity, such as: 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 an 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.

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) and/or may be penalized in accordance with published University Rules.**

General Expectations

As this is a graduate-level course, I have high expectations for all students. I expect quality graduate-level writing and that you will seek assistance from the university help center if needed.

You can expect graduate-level instruction from me. That includes providing you with prompt and meaningful feedback on your assignments.

Some of the topics we discuss in this course will be contentious and there will probably be many different points of view amongst the class. As we cover these topics, I expect you to:

- Treat your classmates with respect, even if you do not agree with their viewpoints
- Defend your own opinions with logical rhetoric and not fallacies
- Avoid all ad hominem attacks, insults, or other derogatory comments against a person

You can expect me to:

- Serve as a moderator
- Provide current scientific information
- Articulate where science ends and policy or opinion begin
- Remain neutral in most discussions; when I give an opinion, you can expect me to show the same respect that I expect from you.

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 at the end of the semester.



SRSU Distance Education Statement

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website.

Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

Resources

SRSU Disability Services (ADA Statement)

SRSU Accessibility Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the 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 Mrs. Mary Schwartz Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director, or Ronnie Harris, LPC, Counselor, at 432-837-8203 or email mschwartz@sulross.edu or ronnie.harris@sulross.edu. Our office is located in Ferguson Hall, Room 112. Mailing address: P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, TX, 79832.

Counseling Services

Sul Ross State University (SRSU) has partnered with TimelyCare, which is an online mental health support platform, giving all SRSU students 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).

No matter where you are based, public libraries and many academic and special libraries welcome the general public into their spaces for study. SRSU TexShare Cardholders can access additional services and resources at various libraries across Texas. Learn more about the TexShare program by visiting library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/ or ask a librarian by emailing srsulibrary@sulross.edu.

Tutoring

If you need help with writing, please contact Graduate Student Support Services: gradcenter@sulross.edu or (432) 837-8524.

Tutor.com offers FREE 24/7 online tutoring in over 200 subjects, including specialized support for ESL and ELL learners with native Spanish-speaking tutors. Log in through Blackboard.

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.

Tentative Course Schedule

Subject to change, please check Blackboard for updates.

Week	Dates (Mon-Sun)	Topic	Activities/Assignments <i>All due dates Sun. 11:59 PM Central</i>
1	8/24 – 8/30	Introduction	Introductory assignment 1
2	8/31 – 9/6	Biodiversity	Introductory assignment 2
3	9/7 – 9/13	Threats to Species	Introductory assignment 3, Quiz 1, CS article selection due
4	9/14 – 9/20	Global Change	Introductory assignment 4
5	9/21 – 9/27	Ecosystem Health	CS 1: Written summary (draft due)
6	9/28 – 10/4	Invasive Exotics	CS 1: Written summary (final due)
7	10/5 – 10/11	Protected Areas	CS 2: Quiz 2, written summary feedback
8	10/12 – 10/18	Sustainable Use	CS 2: Presentation (draft due)
9	10/19 – 10/25	Restoration	CS 3: Presentation (final due)
10	10/26 – 11/1	Urban Conservation	CS 3: Quiz 3, presentation feedback
11	11/2 – 11/8	Human Values	Final project (outline due)
12	11/9 – 11/15	Politics and Economics	Final project (draft due)
13	11/16 – 11/22	One Health	Final project (final due)
14	11/23 – 11/29	Review	<i>Nothing due – Happy Thanksgiving!</i>
15	11/30 – 12/6	Wrap-up	Final exam