

Wildlife behavior and conservation: ES 318, fall 2011

Course description

This course is designed to teach the fundamental theory of behavioral ecology and then apply that theory to wildlife conservation. We will examine how environments shape organisms' lives and what that means for our efforts to manage and conserve species.

Specific course objectives

1. Gain a rigorous biological foundation in behavioral ecology, evolutionary biology, and related topics in order to understand how environments shape behavior.
2. Provide a forum for discussion of current issues in conservation biology.
3. Develop a framework for applying behavioral ecological theory to wildlife conservation.

Instructor/class information

Instructor

M. Elsbeth (Misty) McPhee
mcpheem@uwosh.edu
424-0644

office hours:

Tues 11:00 – 1:00

Wed: 12:40 – 1:40

If these don't work for you, I'm happy to set up an appointment at a more convenient time.

office: 3448 Sage

Meeting times/locations:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday

10:20a – 11:20a

Sage Hall 2221

Required Texts & Materials

Alcock, John. 2009. *Animal Behavior*, Ninth Edition. Sinauer Associates, Inc., Sunderland, MA.

Other readings will be assigned by your classmates and me; these will be posted on D2L.

Grading

Your grades will be based on (for descriptions, see below):

1. Class participation	100
2. Discussion leadership	100
meeting with me (15)	
paper choice	
timeliness (10)	
lit search (15)	
discussion	
preparedness (20)	
how well handled (20)	
how well you worked with your partner(s) (20)	
3. Discussion questions (5 pts each)	60
4. Three exams (100 pts each)	300
5. Ethogram exercise	100
6. Group projects	100
prospectus (10)	
presentation (30)	
how well you worked with your partner(s) (10)	
report (50)	
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To figure your grade at any point throughout the term, add the total points earned and divide by the total points possible up to that point. Attendance is required and that, with participation, can raise a borderline grade.

<u>% of total points</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>% of total points</u>	<u>Grade</u>
94-100	A	73-76	C
90-93	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
77-79	C+	≤ 59	F

Grade descriptions

1. Class participation will be based on your overall engagement in the class – obvious signs of engagement are questions and participation in discussion; other signs are coming to talk to me in office hours or before/after class; finally just general attitude and attendance in the classroom matters.

Participation grades will be given as follows:

- A = participates often and meaningfully in class discussions
- A- = participates a fair amount
- B = participates some
- B- = participates rarely
- C = in class but doesn't participate

Your **active** participation is the key to your learning the material and to the success of the course—both for you as an individual and for the class as a whole.

2. Mondays and Wednesdays will be lectures on behavioral theory. For these, I will assign chapters from the text book.

Fridays will be open discussion of assigned journal articles or book chapters from other books. I will lead the first few discussions, but then each of you will sign up to lead a discussion with one of your classmates – discussions will be lead by 2-3 students. You will sign up for a topic that interests you and then work with me to choose the readings for that week.

Your grade for the discussion leadership will be based on two main things. (1) Your meeting with me. Each group/pair **MUST** meet with me **two weeks** prior to your leadership to go over possible journal articles. I will have some suggestions at the meeting, but you are encouraged to bring some ideas of your own. (2) The discussion itself: how you handle it, how prepared you are, and how well you and your partner(s) work together.

3. For the weeks you don't lead, you are responsible for posting three discussion questions on D2L (in the Discussions section) about the readings assigned for that Friday. Bring your questions to class (either electronically, on paper, or in your head). These questions will **NOT** be questions about details of the readings but big-picture questions that foster discussion. For example, do not

ask, “Did the animals in the treatment group forage more or less than those in the control group?” but, “What implications does the difference in foraging behavior have on reproductive success?”

4. There will be three take-home exams, worth 100 points. I ask very broad essay questions. The more you've read of the text and the more you've asked questions in class, the better you'll do in your written answers.
5. On the Monday of Thanksgiving week, there will be no class. You are to take this time, however, and go into the field to observe animals and create an ethogram. The exercise itself will take more than the one-hour of class time I'm giving you, so be sure to plan accordingly.
6. For your group projects, you will get into groups of 2 or 3 students and study the behavior and conservation of a given species. On **24 October**, you will turn in a prospectus of your project, then on either 5, 7, or 9 December, you will give a 15-min presentation to the class on your species along with a written report. A full description of the assignment is below.

Miscellaneous – but important – comments

1. Cell phone use will NOT be permitted in my classroom. If your cell phone goes off or you text during class, you will be asked to leave and I will automatically deduct 50 points from your overall grade.
2. Laptops: you are more than welcome to use laptops in class to take notes, but you are NOT to use them for any other purpose. If I see you using your laptop for anything other than note-taking, I will ask you to close your computer and automatically deduct 50 points from your overall grade.
3. I will NOT tolerate emails or assignments written in shorthand – if you send me anything in shorthand I will consider it unreadable and thus, won't read it. If it is a graded assignment, you will receive a 0 until you hand in a legitimate version (at which point penalties for handing in the work late will apply).

4. This is a conservation class, therefore, I prefer all documents to be turned in electronically. If you must turn in a hard copy, consider printing on both sides of a sheet of paper, or even printed on scratch paper! Let's try to keep our resource use down.
5. If you are late for an assignment and the dropbox is closed, put your assignment in the "Late assignments" dropbox. **I WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY ASSIGNMENT VIA EMAIL – EVER.** If it goes into the late dropbox, I don't guarantee it will get graded before the end of the term. Do not complain about timing – if you were late, I have no obligation to be timely. All late submissions are subject to a 10 - 20% penalty and will appear as a 0 until I grade it.
6. The syllabus is a general guideline – we might go slower or faster depending on interest and engagement on various topics. Feel free to give feedback on the speed of the class!
7. **EXAMS.**
 - If you need to miss an exam due to a University-sponsored activity (e.g. athletics contest), you will know ahead of time and your coach will have provided you with a letter. Bring a copy of that letter to me ahead of time, to permit a make-up to be arranged.
 - If you miss the exam for any other University-accepted reason (e.g. illness or bereavement), provide me with a written excuse. If I find the excuse valid, I will arrange a make-up exam.
 - I will NOT reschedule the exam for reasons of holiday or end-of-term travel.
8. **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ARE WELCOME IN THIS COURSE.** Please contact me in the first week of class so that we may arrange all possible accommodation ahead of time.
9. **EMAIL COMMUNICATION and D2L** will be used frequently throughout the semester to communicate between Instructors and Students. Emails constitute legal, official University communication. Not checking your email is not an excuse for performance problems in the class. Contact Academic Computing or any Campus Computer Lab supervisor for assistance with email and D2L.
10. **ACADEMIC HONESTY** policies are clearly defined at this University and all students are expected to abide by them. Penalties for

violations are severe in this course. Cheating on an exam (including looking at someone else's paper) at a MINIMUM leads to zero on that exam, with no opportunity for a make-up or extra credit. A second offense is an F in the course and a report to Dean of Students.

Group Project description

Early in the semester you will identify an endangered or threatened species of interest. You and your partner(s) will study the species' behavior and life history, evaluate the current conservation program for that species, and talk about how behavioral ecology has been incorporated into the conservation program for that species – or how incorporating behavioral ecology could potentially enhance the success of the program. **A large part of your grade will be based on your analysis of the program in relation to behavioral ecology.** You will then put together a 15-min presentation and a 5-10 page report on the species. (One report/group.)

On 24 October, a prospectus is due. (Hint: the more you have done here, the less you'll have to do at the end!) This will be a short description of the species and its conservation status - and **a list of references** that will be helpful as you put together your presentation and report.

On either 5, 7, or 9 December, your group will give your presentation and turn in (via D2L) your report with an electronic copy of your presentation. The report should be fully cited and it must be *your original work* — plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in 0 points for the paper AND presentation.

For the presentations, you will be expected to fill out evaluation forms on your peers' presentations. The evaluations themselves will not be graded, but you will get credit for handing them in.

Scoring group projects can be difficult and students typically feel that it's unfair. Therefore, after you present your species report, you will turn in a brief description of what you did (as an individual) to research the topic and prepare for and give the presentation, and how your group worked together. One short paragraph is sufficient. You should then:

1. give **yourself** a letter grade
2. give your **partner(s)** a letter grade

These grades will not necessarily be identical, and as I already have some idea of how I will grade you, you should evaluate your efforts honestly.

Proposed lecture and assignment schedule

Date	Topic	Assignment
<u>1. Introduction</u>		
Wed, 7 Sept	Intro: Why study behavior and conservation?; course goals and structure	
Fri, 9 Sept	<i>Discussion:</i> Bridging conservation and behavior	<u>Read:</u> Caro 2007 <u>Read:</u> Buchholz 2007 Due: Discussion questions
Mon, 12 Sept	Examples: reintroductions, evolutionary traps	<u>Read:</u> McPhee & Carlstead 2010
Wed, 14 Sept	<i>Movie:</i> Continuing the Line	
Fri, 16 Sept	<i>Discussion</i>	<u>Read:</u> Aaltonen et al. 2009 <u>Read:</u> Bremner-Harrison et al. 2004 Due: Discussion questions
<u>2. Fundamentals: Hypotheses, evolution, and natural selection</u>		
Mon, 19 Sept	Evolutionary approach to behavior	<u>Read:</u> Alcock, Chapt 1
Wed, 21 Sept	Hypothesis testing/making predictions with ecological theory in conservation	<u>Read:</u> Heinrich, <i>Ravens in Winter</i> , pp. 33-47, 58-94
Fri, 23 Sept	<i>Discussion</i>	<u>Read:</u> Stockwell et al. 2003 <u>Read:</u> Swarts et al. 2009 Due: Discussion questions (for Stockwell et al., Swarts et al., AND Heinrich)
<u>3. Development of Behavior</u>		
26 & 28 Sept	Development of behavior	<u>Read:</u> Alcock, Chapt 3
Fri, 30 Sept	<i>Discussion</i>	<u>Read:</u> Assigned papers Due: Discussion questions
Mon, 3 Oct	Neurons	<u>Read:</u> Alcock, Chapt 4 Due: Take home exam #1
Wed, 5 Oct	Hormones	<u>Read:</u> Alcock, Chapt 5
Fri, 7 Oct	<i>Discussion</i>	<u>Read:</u> Assigned papers Due: Discussion questions
<u>4. Exploiting the Environment</u>		
10, 12 Oct	Feeding	<u>Read:</u> Alcock, Chapt 7
Fri, 14 Oct	<i>Discussion</i>	<u>Read:</u> Assigned papers Due: Discussion questions
17, 19 Oct	Choosing where to live	<u>Read:</u> Alcock, Chapt 8
Fri, 21 Oct	<i>Discussion</i>	<u>Read:</u> Assigned papers Due: Discussion questions
<u>5. Interacting with conspecifics</u>		

24, 26 Oct	Communication	Read: Alcock, Chapt 9 Due: Prospectus due 24 Oct
Fri, 28 Oct	<i>Discussion</i>	Read: <i>Assigned papers</i> Due: Discussion questions
31 Oct, 2 Nov	Reproductive behavior	Read: Alcock, Chapt 10 Due: Take home exam #2 due 31 Oct
Fri, 4 Nov	<i>Discussion</i>	Read: <i>Assigned papers</i> Due: Discussion questions
Mon, 7 Nov	Mating systems	Read: Alcock, Chapt 11
Wed, 9 Nov	Parental care	Read: Alcock, Chapt 12
Fri, 11 Nov	<i>Discussion</i>	Read: <i>Assigned papers</i> Due: Discussion questions
14, 16 Nov	Social behavior	Read: Alcock, Chapt 13
Fri, 18 Nov	<i>Discussion</i>	Read: <i>Assigned papers</i> Due: Discussion questions
<u>6. Ethograms</u>		
Mon, 21 Nov	<i>no class – Ethogram exercise</i>	
23, 25 Nov	<i>thanksgiving</i>	
<u>7. Human behavioral ecology</u>		
28, 30 Nov	Human behavior	Read: Alcock, Chapt 14 Due: Ethogram exercises
2 Dec	<i>Discussion</i>	Read: <i>Assigned papers</i> Due: Discussion questions
<u>8. Species Reports</u>		
5, 7 Dec	<i>Group presentations</i>	
Fri, 9 Dec	<i>Group presentations</i>	Due: Reports
<u>9. Conclusions</u>		
Mon, 12 Dec	Wrap up, applications	
Wed, 14 Dec	<i>Discussion</i>	Read: Ralls 1997 Read: Caro 1998 Due: Discussion questions
Fri, 16 Dec		Due: Take home exam #3