

LIFE/LAND 220 - Fundamentals of Ecology

Course Syllabus

Instructor Information

Instructor: Patrick Miller, Ph.D. Contact Information:

Email: millerpatricka@msn.com (Emergency use only, please. See "[E-Mail](#)" below.)

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Phone: (970) 372-8423

Office Hours: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday

On-line any time

Instructor Accessibility: Please do not hesitate to e-mail me with any questions you may have. Please use the WebCT email tool except in case of an emergency.

I will respond to e-mail as promptly as possible, usually within twenty-four hours from Monday- Friday. Weekend response times will be longer.

Course Information

Course Title: Fundamentals of Ecology

Course Description: This course will introduce students to the concepts and terminology of ecology and ecosystem science that will provide a foundation for understanding the structure and functioning of the earth's ecological systems.

Credit Hours: This course carries 3 semester credits. You can normally expect to put in 10-15 hours per week on this course.

Prerequisites:

- College level math, reading, writing, and study skills
- Proficiency in basic computer skills (i.e. keyboarding, e-mail, and WWW skills) See:
- <http://www.online.colostate.edu/onlinedistance/>

Student Outcomes:

At the end of the course, the student should be able to:

- You will be able describe in general terms the concepts of ecology and ecosystem science and how these relate to other sciences.
- You will be able to define "system" and understand what attributes are required for a system to be a system.
- You will be able to locate and describe boundaries of ecosystems of different scales in space.

- You will begin to identify and describe factors that separate one ecosystem from another across landscapes.
- You will be able to discuss the major physical factors that determine the geographic locations of biomes.
- You will begin to explain why those ecosystems exist where they do. Apply these outcomes to student's life experiences

Course Materials

Required Text: Elements of Ecology, Eighth Edition, 2012, Author(s): Robert Leo Smith, (Emeritus) West Virginia University, Thomas M. Smith, University of Virginia. Publisher: Benjamin Cummings, ISBN-13: 978-0-321-73607-9

Note from Your Instructor

Welcome to LIFE/LAND 220, Fundamentals of Ecology. Participation and communication are the keys to a successful online learning experience. I suggest that you log into the course, if only to check mail and announcements at least every other day. I look forward to "meeting" each of you in the student introductions.

The first step toward success: **LEARN YOUR WAY AROUND!** Look first at the Start Here information (click on the link at the top of this page), definitely read and perhaps print out the syllabus and schedule, get acquainted with how the online classroom works.

Getting Started

An online course requires a great deal of self-discipline. While this course is not self-paced, you still have more flexibility in timing the completion of your assignments than you would in most on-campus courses. Be sure to pace yourself, allowing plenty of time for computer difficulties or e-mails lost in cyberspace!

The biggest key to success in an online course is participation. Log-on often, get to know your fellow classmates and do not be reluctant to ask questions. In a traditional classroom you can count on being able to catch your instructor at class, but that is not the case in the online world. You need to take the time to contact me by other means. My e-mail address and phone number are listed on the syllabus.

Your schedule outlines due dates for all assignments—it is an important document! Whether you are new to online learning or a seasoned online student, you may have some questions or concerns about how the process works. Please follow the steps outlined below, and after completing these steps, e-mail me with any questions you have about this online course. Sometimes a quick question now can save a lot of frustration later!

In order to complete this course successfully, you should be responsible and have the ability to work independently. This is not a self-paced course. You are expected to spend a

minimum of 10 to 15 hours per week on coursework). If you find that this amount of time cannot be allocated, it is recommended that you withdraw as soon as possible.

Computer Access Considerations

You will use WebCT's (a.k.a. RamCT BlackBoard) internal E-mail function for this course. You must have access to a computer with email and web browsing software. Such access may be via your own personal computer and an account with an ISP, through any one of the public computer labs on a campus utilizing a student account, or through facilities provided at a local public library. In any case, it is important that you be able to access the World-Wide Web at a sufficient speed to view graphics and preferably, full multimedia content.

If you experience a technical problem with access to on-line course materials, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor immediately and alert the instructor to the problem. You are expected to consult with the appropriate technicians at the link listed on the login page ([Student Resources](#)) [link opens in new window], or at the software site in use to resolve technical problems. Be sure to complete the [browser tune-up](#) to make sure your computer settings will allow you to complete all course tasks.

Course Activities and Design

In this course you will gain a basic overview of ecology and the ecological sciences. The course is divided into 9 sections: Introduction and Background, The Physical Environment; The Organism and Its Environment; Populations; Species Interactions; Community Ecology; Ecosystem Ecology; Biogeographical Ecology and finally, a section on Human Ecology.

This may be your first exposure into the natural sciences. There may some areas within this broad framework that may be of interest to you. Unfortunately, we'll only be able to "scratch the surface" with our limited time frame. Other classes related to this area are also available at Colorado State University (see University Catalog) at <http://www.catalog.colostate.edu/> [link opens in new window].

The biological and other sciences are different from other subjects that you may have taken. The largest hurdle that many students face is not in understanding the concepts but in learning the language. This course will have many specialized terms that you won't encounter elsewhere. It is critical to your success that you take a little extra time to learn the vocabulary for each chapter before you try to learn the material. It is very difficult to comprehend a conversation when it is being spoken in a language that you don't understand!

Course Schedule

The Schedule is subject to change as needed.

- All assignments for each week are due or must be postmarked by 8:00 a.m. of the Monday following the assignment listed in the calendar. This course is not self-paced.
- Assignments submitted after the unit closes will be considered late and may lose points for late submittal.
- Discussion Credit is available only for participation during time specified by instructor. Discussions will be open from the beginning of the unit and close at midnight at the end of the unit. Student posts will not be accepted before or after the open discussion period. See Discussion Guidelines for grading details.
- If you anticipate problems in meeting course deadlines, contact your instructor immediately. This course is not self-paced and is not open-exit. All assignments, papers, quizzes, discussions, etc, are to be completed by no later than midnight of the due date.

NOTE: Important Colorado State University semester dates (e.g., drop/withdraw/term end) appear on the [Colorado State University's](#) academic calendar.

Grading and Evaluation

Methods: Final grades will be determined by total points you earn divided by the total points possible on all graded assignments.

Grading Policies:

- This class is NOT self-paced and is not open-entry, open exit.
- Exams have specific due dates and the course continues at a pace that allows you to complete all materials within one semester.
- You should commit to regular study time and communication time online with the class and instructor as you would with any college course.
- If you have a question concerning any of the learning concepts presented in this course, please email your instructor.

How and Where to Hand Work In:

Each unit has the following requirements that should be completed during the time allotted for each unit as outlined in the Course Schedule.

Submit homework/lab assignments via mail or as an attachment through the internal e-mail (discussions). Indicate in the body of your message: your name and section #, and name of the assignment you are sending. Text attachments should be sent in .rtf or .doc format. If you plan to submit anything via external e-mail, (please notify me in advance) as this is not the preferred way to submit assignments. There will be numerous occasions you can get extra-credit (especially when viewing PowerPoint presentations.) I encourage you

to get these points throughout the course, as they can make the difference between a B and an A. They are also easy points to get!

Late Work:

One percent of the total points per item will be deducted for each day late.

All assignments for each week are due or must be postmarked by 8:00 a.m. of the Monday following the unit end date, except as noted on the Schedule page. Assignments submitted after Monday 8:00a.m. will be considered to be late.

Summary of Grading

Task	Points
Quizzes (9, each approximately every week @ 25 points each)	225
Internet Assignments (4 @ 25 points each)	100
Term Paper (topic 10 points; outline 15 points; final draft, 50 points).	75
Essay Discussions (10 @ 5 points each)	50
Final (comprehensive)	50
Total Course Points	500

Grading Scale

Points	Percent	Grade Equivalent
500 - 450	100 - 90	A
445 - 400	89 - 80	B
395 - 350	79 - 70	C
345 - 300	69 - 60	D
299 - 0	59 - 0	F

Course Policies

Mutual Respect in Communications:

A very important aspect of online learning is respectful communication. The Colorado State University

Learning Community is based on the value of mutually respectful communication.

Upon enrolling in programs provided by or at Colorado State University, students assume responsibility for respectful communications with other students and with course instructors, including communications which do not disrupt the online environment.

The definition of disruptive communications and their consequences are listed below.

Disruptive Communications:

Definition:

- **Communications which disrupt the learning environment**
- **Use of profanity and/or insulting or harassing remarks in email, discussions, chat or telephone communications. Consequences:**
- **A student who participates in disruptive communications forfeits the right to further class participation and is subject to removal from all Colorado State University courses for the given term without reimbursement by Colorado State University.**
- **A student who is suspended more than once for disruptive communications forfeits the right to further enrollments at Colorado State University.**

E-Mail:

All email contact should be made using WebCT's internal email tool except in case of emergency. If you must contact me via external email, you may do so at the email address on the syllabus.

ALL emails to me MUST contain your FULL name (first and last), the class and section number in which you are enrolled (for example, "CSU BI201 Sect 1"), and the topic of your email IN THE SUBJECT LINE or I will delete it. Do not send email attachments; use the assignment drop box to submit all of your assignments.

Incomplete Grades

The "Incomplete" grade is a temporary grade indicating that the student has a satisfactory record of work completed but, for exceptional reasons, was unable to complete the final assignments.

If circumstances beyond your control prevent you from completing an assignment at the end of the term, consult your instructor, immediately. The instructor will determine whether you have a reasonable chance of satisfactorily completing the remaining activities without online access to course materials. Your instructor must work out a way for you to complete the course without benefit of the course Web site.

NOTE: You are encouraged to let me know as soon as possible if you are having difficulties with any part of the course.

Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism is the act of using words and/or ideas from another person or source without acknowledgment of debt to that person or source and is a serious academic crime. Students are expected to do their own work. Whenever you use a general concept, idea, quotation, fact, statistic, or illustration that is not yours, site the source. The minimal penalty for plagiarism is failure for the particular project. The maximum penalty is expulsion from the university.

Special Services

If you have a learning or physical disability that will require special accommodation, please notify your instructor immediately upon enrollment.

End of Semester:

You will be able to access the class for one week after the end of the semester. However, the last day to turn in any work is the last day of the semester. The extra week of access is only to check your grades.

Disclaimer

Other than competencies, elements of this syllabus may be subject to adjustment.