

Welcome to your ecology course! Our first class wasn't what you were expecting, was it? What you experienced was a learning community. I am your guide, but also fellow learner. Each one of you has skills and knowledge that will contribute to all our learning. You have input into what we cover, how we cover it, and how you get to assess how well you are meeting the goals of the course. This also means that we won't have as firm of a plan as you might be used to in your other classes.

What is ecology? Ecology is the study of how and why organisms live where they live. In other words, the science of ecology seeks to understand how life persists on this planet. In order to get the most out of the semester, I will try to engage your intellect, curiosity, emotions, and state of awareness in many different ways.

I have compiled the responses from the "what would you like to learn this semester" activity:

- 60% of you want to learn about edible and poisonous plants or just plants in general
- 54% of you want to learn about animals or animal tracking
- 51% of you want to learn about ecosystem processes, human impacts & sustainability
- 20% of you said you want to know everything on the tourist test
- 20% are interested in tree i.d.
- There were also requests for learning about weather, amphibians, bogs, fungi, invasive species.

Ok, this is what we will do. At the same time, the biology faculty has agreed on course learning objectives for this course. Combining your goals with the department goals, we get:

Student Learning Outcomes (= SWBAT = Students Will Be Able To. . .)

- (1) Develop deep observation skills and couple these with an understanding of major ecological principles to understand how processes operating at multiple time and spatial scales are connected.
- (2) Using project-based learning, service-learning and learning-by-doing to develop an understanding of natural history that allows observing, predicting, and possibly mitigating ecological change.
- (3) Understand the social and personal relevance of what we learn and be able to draw connections with other disciplines.
- (4) Develop the communication skills relevant for different audiences and different media to disseminate ecological knowledge to others.
- (5) Develop the ability to form a deep intellectual & emotional connection to place (wherever you are) using ancient skills such as tracking; knowledge of edible, medicinal & useful plants; bird language; reading the landscape; and identification of natural hazards.

If all this sounds like too many words and unnecessarily convoluted sentences, Thoreau said it more :

I seek acquaintance with Nature--to know her moods and manners. Primitive Nature is the most interesting to me. I take infinite pains to know all the phenomena of the spring, for instance, thinking that I have here the entire poem, and then, to my chagrin, I hear that it is but an imperfect copy that I possess and have read, that my ancestors have torn out many of the first leaves and grandest passages, and mutilated it in many places. I should not like to think that some demigod had come before me and picked out some of the best of the stars. I wish to know an entire heaven and an entire earth. All the great trees and beasts, fishes and fowl are gone. The streams, perchance, are somewhat shrunk. (Thoreau's Journal, March 23, 1856)

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I have an open door policy. Feel free to stop by my office and talk to me at any time. If I happen to be busy, please do not be offended if I ask you to come back later. *If the sign on the door indicates "do not disturb", please do not knock.* E-mail is also a good way to contact me and I welcome any questions you might have. However, please do not turn in assignments by e-mail.

Course requirements

Attendance: Because of the interactive nature of the class, attendance is expected. If you will be unable to attend a class, notify me in advance (I check e-mail and voice-mail regularly). If you do not, it will count against your class grade, as well as losing credit for in-class assignments that day.

Class participation: You are expected to be engaged and contribute regularly to the class. Deductions will be made for unexcused absences, failure to contribute to group or class discussions, or for unacceptable work on informal writings.

Final Project: We will have some kind of big project, to be determined.

Other writing assignments: There will be regular, shorter writing assignments. The assignments will include graded writings and informal writings that will not be graded, but will count into the class participation grade.

Quizzes: There will be about six quizzes throughout the semester.

Final: During the final exam time slot (Tuesday Dec 15, 1:30-4:00), there will be a presentation of your final project.

Grading Scale

Grades will be based on your achievement relative to the five goals identified above. For each of the goals relevant to the assignment you will be graded on a scale of 0 – 3 as follows:

0 = *No evidence of achieving goal.* The work was either not done, or done so poorly that one cannot discern any progress towards achieving the goal.

1 = *Approaches goal.* The guidelines of the assignment were followed and the work shows evidence of progress towards meeting the goal. Nevertheless, it may be unclear, partially incorrect, or reflect misunderstandings.

2 = *Meets goal.* The work is performed with no errors or misunderstandings, but does not show strong evidence of analytical ability. For example, it may be more simplistic, literal and descriptive with less analysis, integration, sophistication or rigor.

3 = *Exceeds goal.* Performs the task at the level expected of an experienced scientist. There are no significant errors or misunderstandings, the work is clear and comprehensive, and it demonstrates sophisticated thinking (insight, analytical ability, integration etc...).

These grades correlate *loosely* to letter grades as follows:

“A” – meets or exceeds most goals (note that it is extraordinarily rare to exceed most goals)

“B” – meets most goals

“C” – Approaches most goals

“F” – No evidence of achieving goals

Course Evaluation

Student input is highly valued and is important to maintain high quality instruction. Online course evaluations are mandatory and must be completed. An incomplete will appear on your transcript if it is not submitted on time. The evaluation will be submitted to the Department Assistant. She will verify that you have submitted the form. Once that has been checked, your identification will be removed and will not be printed with the comments.

Academic Honesty:

All the work in this class must be your own, unless stated otherwise. Confirmed instances of academic misconduct will result in a zero for that assignment/quiz and referral to the school judiciary system. Please refer to the Student Handbook for a detailed description of the policies regarding student academic conduct. If you have a question about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me or refer to the following web site: <http://www.ithaca.edu/library/htmls/plagiarism.htm>

Accommodations will be made for students with disabilities following the college's procedures as outlined in the Student handbook.

Getting more help

Diminished mental health, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with optimal academic performance. The source of symptoms might be strictly related to your course work; if so, please speak with me. However, problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis can also contribute to decreased academic performance.

Ithaca College provides a Counseling Center to support the academic success of students. The Counseling Center provides cost-free services to help you manage personal challenges that threaten your well-being.

In the event I suspect you need additional support, I will express my concerns and the reasons for them, and remind you of resources (e.g., Counseling Center, Health Center, chaplains, etc.) that might be helpful to you. It is not my intention to know the details of what might be bothering you, but simply to let you know I am concerned and that help, if needed, is available.

Getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do -- for yourself and for your loved ones.

Required Course Texts:

Wessels, T. *Reading the Forested Landscape*. The Countryman Press.
Cain, M.L., W.D. Bowman, S.D. Hacker. 2008. *Ecology*. Sinauer.

You will be responsible for all information in the assigned readings whether I discuss it in lecture or not. **You must read any assigned material prior to class, and come to class prepared to discuss it.**

Topic Schedule: Notice that this is mostly blank. We will fill it in as we go. Yellow labs are tentative.

week	Week of . . .	NOTE:	Topic	Activity	Reading Assigned	Lab	Assignments
1	August 24 (lecture 1)	Classes begin	Being a tourist; observing natural systems	Go outside and take the tourist test	<i>J. Lubchenco, Science 1998 279:491-497</i>	No labs this week	Sit spot activity
2	August 31 (lecture 2,3)		What is Natural? ; Ecosystem Linkages	Look at the forest and the trees; Thanksgiving address activity; modified MPEX pre-test	Cain Chapt 1 Wessels Chapt 1-5	Learning the vocabulary of ecology: Tree I.D.; forest communities	<i>Sit spot activity due Wessels quiz next Tuesday</i>
3	September 7 (lecture 4,5)	Labor day on Monday	Prepare for lab: Japanese Stilt Grass The Ecosystem Concept	Quiz on Tuesday	Cain Chapt. 3; 19 Wessels 6-8	Invasive Species Rapid Response Teams	Ecosystem Linkages assignment assigned
4	September 14 (lecture 6,7)		Ecosystems Continued	Quiz on Thursday	Cain Chapt 20 Online textbook	Forest Forensics: reading the forested Landscape	
5	September 21 (lecture 8,9)		Systems thinking & Global carbon cycle			Fischer Old Growth	
6	September 28 (lecture 10,11)		Systems ecology Ecophysiology of Succession	Quiz on Tuesday	Cain Chapt 4,5,16	SimBiotic Lab	<i>Simbiotic assignment due Friday</i>
7	October 5 (lecture 12,13)			Quiz on Tuesday		Freeville Bog trip	
8	October 12 (lecture 14)	Fall Break Th & F				No lab this week	<i>Ecosystem Linkages Due Tuesday</i>
9	October 19 (lecture 15,16)	Mid-term Grades Due Oct 21st				Forest Garden/mushrooms/cornell forest garden website	
10	October 26 (lecture 17,18)					The Great Dance/ Urban Ecology field trip	
11	November 2 (lecture 19,20)					Emerald ash borer	
12	November 9 (lecture 21,22)					Emerald ash borer	
13	November 16 (lecture 23,24)					ICNRR forestry treatments	
14	November 23	Thanksgiving Break	Have a great break			No lab	
15	November 30 (lecture 25,26)					Gait analysis & tracking	
16	December 7 (lecture 27,28)	Last week of classes				Final Projects	
17	December 14	Finals week				No lab	Final project presentation