

Primate & Bird Behavior & Ecology in Panama Winter Field Course December 29, 2006 - January 18, 2007

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TEACHING STAFF

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Student:

Welcome to Ithaca College's **Primate and Bird Behavior and Ecology in Panama** course. Our **goals are for you** to:

- develop and refine higher-order thinking skills (critical reading, writing & thinking, experimental design, careful observation, etc.)
- develop and refine communication skills including listening and discussion, writing, oral presentation, and data presentation
- learn about and discuss basic tropical ecology and primatology topics
- understand and appreciate biological diversity in general and specifically become familiar with features of the flora and fauna of Panama
- learn about and practice the craft of science, tools you can use for the rest of your life
- gain experience in carrying out your own field-based research project including formulating and justifying a research question, collecting and analyzing data, and communicating your findings and conclusions

You probably have and may want to develop your own, specific goals for this class. Our philosophy is that this course should be a *learning environment*, not a *'teaching' environment*. That means that we will focus on *you*, the learner, rather than on us, the teachers.

Although this class will concentrate on content because there is a certain amount of information you will be required to learn, we also will focus on *process*. We will give lectures on background information on general topics, but each of you will actually be responsible for much of the learning in this class; thus our learning will be a cooperative endeavor. Each of you will report on information from a specific journal article and we will discuss issues related to the study. In addition, you will present your research project to the class. Thus, for some of you, this may be a new academic experience. Regardless, we promise you that we will focus on your learning.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This intensive field course is equivalent to an upper-level undergraduate class. We will cover introductory tropical biology and ecology as well as primate and bird behavior with a focus on Panamanian flora and fauna. Emphasis will be placed on the main species present at Reserva Natural Esteban Alfonso: mantled howling monkeys (*Alouatta palliata*), tropical kingbirds (*Tyrannus melancholicus*), masked tityras (*Tityra semifasciata*), and blue-gray tanagers (*Thraupis episcopus*).

Our days are typically spent rising before dawn to get to our study sites (forest, beach, etc.) to begin observations of howling monkeys, birds, or other field activities. We usually return early afternoon for lectures and discussions. After a general introduction to the topics and research methods, students will work closely with faculty to develop a group project (*please note*: We will guide you towards it, no prior research experience is necessary). After the project is approved, students will collect data to address their research question. Also, students will hand-write summaries of their research findings that will include introduction, methods, results, and discussion sections. Every student in each group will verbally present some of these components of the research project to the class. Students will learn a lot about primate and bird behavior, and field work in general.

This coursework is intensive but fun. There is not much “free time” to “play around” or do much more than fulfill the course requirements (see “Daily Routine” toward end of syllabus); however, our time in Panama includes some cultural activities. The main prerequisites for this course are a serious commitment to learning, an open mind for having new experiences, and a pleasant and cooperative personality.

I hear, and I forget
I see, and I remember
I do, and I understand

— Chinese proverb

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

The educational endeavor is a two-way street. To insure a productive and stimulating learning environment, students and instructors must meet certain expectations. It is our expectation that students will go to our study sites daily, be prompt and attend lectures regularly, prepare for each class, follow directions exactly for completing assignments and submitting them on time, participate meaningfully and respectfully in class, ask questions, monitor their performance, and seek assistance whenever they need help. Students are expected to be aware of all the provisions set forth in this syllabus.

Students can expect from us a genuine interest in and enthusiasm with field work and the course material, organized lectures and presentations, current information on the subject, thoughtful evaluation of assignments, timely return of graded assignments, access for consultations, and guidance in completing course requirements. Please come see us if you have any concerns during the course. *We are here to enhance your learning.*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

What is expected of you? What will your grade be based on? At the end of the course, it is our responsibility to evaluate your demonstrated accomplishments and learning in this course and to assign you a grade. Final grades are based on the total points you accumulate among these components: class participation, a hand-written research paper, an exam, a computer-generated research paper, an oral presentation of a journal article, and an oral presentation of your research project. Each of these is described in more detail the next section.

Course components and the point value of each are as follows:

Activity	Points
Class participation	30
Group hand-written research paper	30
Final Exam	20
Computer-generated research paper	10
Oral presentation of journal article	5
Oral presentation of research project	5
Total	100

Grading Scale and Description

Criteria used for evaluating your coursework and learning achieved.

Percentage	Grade	Quality Points	Achievement Definition	Performance Criteria
93–100	A	4.0	Outstanding	Firm command of knowledge domain High level of skill development Exceptional preparation for later learning
90–92	A-	3.7		
87–89	B+	3.3		
83–86	B	3.0	Exceeds Expectations	Good command of knowledge domain Advanced development of most skills Has prerequisites for later learning
80–82	B-	2.7		
77–79	C+	2.3		Command of the basic concepts of knowledge
73–76	C	2.0	Satisfactory Achievement	Demonstrated ability to use basic skills Lacks a few prerequisites for later learning
70–72	C-	1.7		
67–69	D+	1.3	Below Satisfactory Achievement	Lacks knowledge of some fundamental ideas
63–66	D	1.0		Some important skills not attained Deficient in many of the prerequisites
60–62	D-	0.7		for later learning
59 or Below	F	0.0		Most of the basic concepts and principles not learned Most essential skills cannot be demonstrated Lacks most prerequisites needed for later learning

CLASS PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE

You are expected and required to go to the field every day and to participate and attend scheduled classes. Your participation in the field, at lectures, and during evening discussions is essential. Most of your learning will be facilitated by your presence and participation at our field study sites and in class.

Although we are responsible for “teaching” most of the course material, learning in this class will be a team effort in an international setting. Each of us needs to help all of us learn. As such, we urge you to participate

in class discussions. The more involved you are in class, the more fun it is for you, for us, and for your classmates. Class participation grades will come from your comments and questions in the field and during lectures and discussions. There is usually a positive correlation between class participation and high grades. Class participation comprises thirty points (30%) of your grade.

HAND-WRITTEN RESEARCH PAPER

You will conduct group field-based research projects, for which you will collect data. You will write about your project in a scientific research paper, which will include the following sections: Introduction, Methods, Results (including figures), Discussion, and Literature Cited. You will need to use at least three (3) original references from appropriate texts and scientific journals to complete the background information or “Introduction” section of your paper. You will need to cite properly each of the references in your paper. For single authored papers, the proper citation format is (Borgella, 2004). For two-authored papers, the citation is (Borgella & Paciulli, 2004) or (Paciulli & Borgella, 2002); although citations in your literature cited section are arranged alphabetically, authors solely determine the actual order of authorship on their papers. For papers with more than two authors, the proper citation format is (Paciulli et al., 2004). This project is worth thirty (30) points of your grade. The grading rubric for the thirty (30) points is as follows:

Hand-written research paper grading rubric	
Description	Points
Introduction (background information on topic)	7
Research question / problem stated clearly	2
Methods (thoroughly described)	7
Results (including tables; graphical representation of data & figures)	7
Discussion (interpretation of results, etc.)	7
Total points for research project paper	30

Exam

A final exam will test your knowledge and understanding of information from the field, required readings, class discussions, and lectures. The exam is worth twenty (20) points of your grade.

Computer-generated research paper

In addition to submitting the hand-written research paper before you leave (as stated above), you must also submit a typed version of your research paper. The computer-generated research paper is due within one week of the last day of class, please submit it by sending an email attachment to both of us. This version of the paper is worth ten (10) points of your overall grade.

Oral presentation of journal article

You will choose or be assigned one research article and be responsible for writing a brief summary of the article. Instead of turning in the article summary, you will present it orally to the class. In the summary, you will mention the title and authors of the paper and when it was published as well as describing the background information and context of the research (from the introduction), and state the research question. You will describe the methods used to obtain the data and report the main findings of the research. You will describe how the results are discussed within the context of the body of knowledge at the time of publication. Also, you will mention any research problems, the implications or applications of the research, recommendations for future research, etc. that the authors discuss. You will also critically assess the paper. The oral presentation of the journal article is worth five (5) points of your overall grade.

Oral presentation of research project

Your group will present your research project and findings to the class in the form of an oral and overhead presentation. Your presentation should have four main sections: a brief Introduction (that should end with the main issue & research question), Methods, Results (with figures), and a Discussion. You will be allotted four overheads to use for your presentation. The oral presentation of your research project is worth five (5) points of your grade.

Class notes & missed class

Everyone is required to 1) take notes and keep a separate class notebook and 2) collect data and keep a separate field data notebook for this course, in which the main points from 1) the lectures and discussions and 2) the field should be written down. It may happen that you miss a lecture or do not quite get an assignment, even though you are actually present. For a missed class please ask one of the other students what you missed.

Late assignments

Two skills that are important to acquire in academia are time management and responsibility. Because there is no way you can “make-up” a missed class discussion or participation points, and because we have so little time here, we will not accept late assignments.

Code of Student Conduct

Although we do not expect this to be an issue, we fully endorse the Code of Student Conduct. This code stipulates that each of you will be supportive and participate in a positive cooperative learning environment, and forbids scholastic dishonesty. To be clear, scholastic dishonesty includes cheating on a test, plagiarism, and turning in academic work that someone else has completed, while claiming it to be your own. Plagiarism is a common error in undergraduate courses, in particular, in a course like this (i.e., one that includes a lot of writing). Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s work without giving the author credit. Some people regard plagiarism as stealing. Please don’t do it. If you are uncertain what is or is not plagiarism, please ask us. Again, although we do not expect plagiarism or cheating to be a problem in this course, you should know that The Code of Student Conduct specifies that scholastic dishonesty will be sanctioned and result in a grade of F. Disciplinary sanctions may occur when the matter is referred to the Dean of Students for review and possible resolution. Sanctions for academic dishonesty may affect your academic transcript. We will be checking papers for plagiarism so please do not do it. It is not worth it!

Special circumstances

If you have any special health needs or concerns or medical information needed for emergencies to share with us, please make an appointment to see one of us so that we know how to best help you.

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

Rite-in-the-Rain data book
Rite-in-the-Rain pen
Watch with a timer that will sound every few minutes
Binoculars, Compass
Flagging
XXXX

Suggested Items

Raingear
Personal toiletries
XXXX

TEXTS FOR COURSE:

- Espino, Ovidio Diaz (2001). [How Wall Street Created a Nation: J.P. Morgan, Teddy Roosevelt, and the Panama Canal](#). Four Walls Eight Windows. ISBN: 1568581963.
- Kricher, John (1999). *A Neotropical Companion: An Introduction to the Animals, Plants, and Ecosystems of the New World Tropics* (Second Edition). Princeton University Press. ISBN: 0691009740.
- Milton, Katharine (1980). *The Foraging Strategy of Howler Monkeys*. Columbia University Press. ISBN: 0231048505.

Other helpful resources:

- J. Brown and A. Gibson (1983). *Biogeography*. CV Mosby USA. 643 pp. ISBN 0878930736
- G. Cowlshaw and R.I.M. Dunbar (2000). *Primate Conservation Biology*. University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 0226116360.
- P. Feinsinger (2001). *Designing Field Studies for Biodiversity Conservation*. Island Press, New York. 212 pp.
- B. Manly, F.J. Lyman L. McDonald, D.L. Thomas, T.L. McDonald, W.P. Erickson 2002. *Resource Selection by Animals: Statistical Design and Analysis for Field Studies*. Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- L.A. McDade, K.S. Bawa, H.A. Hespeneheide, & G.S. Hartshorn (eds.) (1994). *La Selva: Ecology and Natural History of a Neotropical Rainforest*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago. ISBN: 0-226-039528.
- D. McCullough (2004). *The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal 1870-1914*. Simon & Schuster. ISBN: 0743262131.
- G.P. Quinn and M. J. Keough (2002). *Experimental Design and Data Analysis for Biologists*. Cambridge University Press. 537 pp. ISBN 0-521-00976-6
- N. Rowe (1996). *The Pictorial Guide to the Living Primates*. Pogonias Press. ISBN: 0964882515.
- R.S. Ridgely and J.A. Gwynne (1992). [A Guide to the Birds of Panama](#), 2nd Edition. Princeton University Press. ISBN: 0691025126.

Daily Routine:

5:00 AM — Breakfast
5:45 AM — Leave for the field
11:00 AM — Lunch in the field
2:00 PM — Leave the field
2:30–4:00 — Reading, writing
4:00 PM — Lecture
5:30 PM — Dinner
6:15 –7:15 PM — Journal presentations
7:15–8:15 PM — Reading, writing
8:15–9:00 PM — Free time
9:00 PM — **LIGHTS OUT**

We know that we will have an exciting and wonderful winter break that will be packed with learning for you and us. Please get to know us and let us get to know you. Also, please do not hesitate to come see one or both of us about any concerns you have about this course. Our job is to facilitate your learning and we love our job!

Please note: This schedule and syllabus are tentative. In other words, both are subject to change.

Daily Schedule - See attached [Detailed Schedule](#)