

Biology 830P-07—Special Topics in Biology

Desert Biology (3 cr hrs)

Spring 2019

Instructor: Dr. Keith Geluso

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Office Hours: By appointment arranged in advanced (**just send me an email**) is likely best because for most this may entail a phone call as this is an online class. I'm in my office MWF 900-950 for walk-ins but phone calls are also welcome at this time. If someone is already in the office, I will let you know and have to call you back. I am open to phone calls during the evening, and possibly, on weekends to fit everyone's schedule; BUT FIRST just drop me an email so we can set up a time! Some days I may be unavailable and not check emails etc. due to field research or other obligations, so I may not check email for 24 hours.

Lectures: Online Class. Some lectures will be prepared by me and available for viewing via Voice Thread, but most of the class entails reading and preparing short (taped) mini-lectures and write-ups on areas of your interest regarding desert biology. As you will read below, this is **NOT** a lecture-driven class where you would be responsible for regurgitating large quantities of facts on exams. My graduate classes, especially special topic classes, were graduate-student driven; I will structure this class in such a manner.

Textbook: None. We will be reading, making presentations, and research proposal from journal articles in the primary literature, some that I select and most that you will select.

Prerequisites: None.

Course Overview: From plants to animals, from rivers that flow through arid lands to desert oases, from plant-animal interactions to ecosystem functions, from exotic species to keystone species, from climate to precipitation, we will survey different topics related to desert biology. I will select some topics but others will be of your interest. We will discuss potential topics in the first weeks of the class.

Course Objectives:

- Become familiar with different aspects of desert biology focusing on the American Southwest (but if you want to go beyond, by all means please feel free!)
- Demonstrate ability to use vocabulary needed to understand and converse about deserts
- Understand the role of humans in desert ecosystems
- Become readily familiar with finding papers in the primary literature
- Read, evaluate, discuss, and present information from journal articles
- Summarize information from primary literature with written and oral communication skills

Course Policies:

Participation: Students are expected to participate in all class readings, writing assignments, and oral presentations. Participation will be evaluated by me, the professor. Failure to contribute in a meaningful way will result in a grade reduction based on my professional judgment.

Absences: If you are ill or have another extenuating circumstance during the semester where you cannot participate in online-class activities please let me know. Neither absence nor notification of absence relieves the responsibility for meeting all course requirements. All readings, oral presentations, and written assignments are a course requirement. **Items missed due to unexcused**

absences cannot be made up. It is recognized that unavoidable situations do arise that are legitimate excuses for absence (i.e., lack of participation with the online structure of the course). Severe injury, hospitalization, death in the immediate family, and illness are all acceptable reasons for absences. Final determination of the acceptability of an absence is my prerogative. Please inform me ASAP of such absences.

Student code of conduct: As is standard procedure in all university classes, this course follows the rules and procedures outlined in the UNK Student Handbook. Cheating, plagiarism, harassment, and abuse of academic materials or equipment will not be tolerated and the consequences for violating the code can be severe, ranging from a zero on an assignment or exam to failing the course and expulsion from the university.

Disruptive behavior: If you are disruptive to the online class more than once during the semester, steps will be taken to permanently remove you from class.

Grades: Grades will be assigned using the grading scale: A+ (97-100), A (92-96%), A- (90-91%), B+ (87-89%), B (82-86%), B- (80-81%), C+ (77-79%), C (72-76%), C- (70-71%), D+ (67-69%), D (62-66%), D- (60-61%), and F (below 60%). Grade assignments are final unless a calculation error exists.

Grades will be determined by the following rubric (There is no extra credit; do not ask for it!)

Presentation #1 and write up	20% of total grade
Presentation #2 and write up	20% of total grade
Presentation #3 and write up	20% of total grade
Proposal	20% of total grade
Other assignments/Comment participation on Voice Thread	10% of total grade
Final Exam	10% of total grade

Assignments etc.: I will open up Canvas every two weeks at the same time for new assignments, except for the first week. This time will be no later than Mondays by 5:00 pm central time. This is actually the latest time it would open. If all ready to go it likely will be opened early or mid-morning on Monday. More details to come on specifics of assignments.

Due dates: We will have the same biweekly “due date” for all assignments, unless explicitly stated otherwise. All assignments, posts, presentations, etc. will be due at 11:59 pm Central Time on the last Sunday of the two week period, unless otherwise stated. The one major exception will be Week 1 where assignments will be due by Sun (13 Jan.) at 11:59 pm Central Time. Weeks 2 and 3 assignments will be due during the end of 3rd week of class on Sunday 27 Jan at 11:59 pm Central Time. (Note: Nebraska is a state that follows Daylight Savings time, so on 10 March, we will put our clocks forward to start Daylight Savings).

Late assignments: For each day late, 10% of the grade will be taken off. If an assignment is over 7 days late, you will receive no credit for it.

Students with Disabilities and/or Students Who are Pregnant: Students with disabilities or those who are pregnant are encouraged to contact David Brandt for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska at Kearney to provide flexible and individualized reasonable accommodation to students with documented disabilities or those who are pregnant. To receive accommodation services for a disability, students must be registered with UNK Disabilities Services Coordinator, David Brandt, in the Academic Success Office, 163 Memorial Student Affairs Building, 308-865-8214 or by email unkdso@unk.edu. For those needing accommodation due to pregnancy, you must contact Cindy Hayes in Student Health, 308-865-8218. The following link provides information for students and

faculty regarding pregnancy rights. <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/pregnant-and-parenting-students-rights-faqs-college-and-graduate-students>

Once you have an accommodation plan through David Brandt's office, you must review it with me as soon as possible, so I can make any arrangements necessary for your learning. No accommodations will be provided until an Academic Accommodation Plan is in place and signed by me. Please remember, plans are not retroactive and cannot be used for assignments or events prior to the date of our signing of the formal Academic Accommodation Plan; I require a signed copy on file in my office.

Reporting Student Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence or Sexual Assault: Reporting allegations of rape, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and stalking enables the University to promptly provide support to the impacted student(s), and to take appropriate action to prevent a recurrence of such sexual misconduct and protect the campus community. Confidentiality will be respected to the greatest degree possible. Any student who believes she or he may be the victim of sexual misconduct is encouraged to report to one or more of the following resources:

Local Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault Advocacy Agency 308-237-2599
Campus Police (or Security) 308-865-8911
Title IX Coordinator 308-865-8655

Retaliation against the student making the report, whether by students or University employees, will not be tolerated.

Veterans Services: UNK works diligently to support UNK's military community by providing military and veteran students and families with resources and services to help them succeed. Veterans Services assists with the GI Bill process and acts as a liaison between the student and the Veterans Administration. If you need assistance or would like more information, please contact Lori Weed Skarka at 308-865-8520 or unkveterans@unk.edu.

Virtual Classroom Protocol: Communication with instructor: All correspondences should be through email (at first). If you email me, I will generally try to respond within 24 hours on work days. On weekends, I may not check emails, so some replies will be addressed on Monday or at the latest Tuesday. If you would like to speak to me directly on the phone, it is often **BEST** to set up an appointment via email. Again, I am very open to phone calls; I find it much easier to talk rather than attempting to write everything out! If you are in town, on-campus, or nearby, please feel free to come talk in person. I will let you know in advance if I will be unavailable to respond to emails for multiple days in a row, for example, if I have to go out of town for field research.

Respect and Professionalism: Although this is an online course, many of our interactions will occur via Canvas, Voice Thread, and emails. Thus, we will have interactions with one another throughout the semester. It is important and required that you always be respectful of others in the virtual classroom. All thoughtful and professional opinions and comments are welcome. Students should try to have a positive attitude and willingness to listen to, and consider other opinions. Students who are unable to act in a professional manner will be docked for specific assignments and for overall participation.

Tentative Lecture/Class Schedule: At this time, I am not going to show a detailed schedule, as I need to make sure I know the final count in the class for scheduling presentation. Here is a general schedule.

Week 1

Assignment (see Canvas) due by Sunday 13 January at 11:59 pm (phone calls are due by following week)

Weeks 2 & 3

Only Geluso presentations (I will scatter other presentations throughout the semester)

Assignment (see Canvas)

Weeks 4 & 5

Student presentations (detailed list of which weeks your presentations is coming)

Weeks 6 & 7

Student presentations

Weeks 8 & 9

Student presentations

Weeks 10 & 12

Student presentations

Draft of Research Proposal **Due by 31 March at 11:59 pm**

Weeks 13 & 14

Student presentations

Weeks 15 & 16

Student presentations

Final of Research Proposal **Due by 30 April at 11:59 pm**

Finals Week

Final Exam will be due by **Wed. 1 May at 11:59 pm** (I will post by Sunday night, if not earlier)