What is Ecology?

Ecologists study the interactions of organisms with their environment (both physical and biotic) and attempt to understand how these interactions affect the distribution and abundance of organisms.

Ultimately, ecologists seek to understand the principles that determine the structure and function of ecological systems.

These principles provide the basis for identifying and perhaps solving important environmental problems.

There are some important prerequisites for this course: General Biology, General Chemistry, and mathematics at least at the pre-calculus level, and Genetics. You must have completed these courses with a grade of C or better.

Why these pre-reqs?
The environment is complex!

You need a basic background in biology and chemistry to fully understand ecological principles.

Biology - including ecology - is also becoming more quantitative - hence the math pre-req.

In addition, ecological principles are best understood in an evolutionary context, which requires a basic understanding of Genetics.
**Required Textbook**


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**Do I really need to come to class?**

**YES!** This is a 3 credit course that meets on Tuesday – Thursday from 11:00 – 12:15.

You should come to class prepared – at least skim the material in the textbook and read any specific reading assignments. Be ready to participate.

- Get excited about ecology! It’s cool!
- Ask questions.
- Answer questions.
- Participate in group work

Your questions and insights will help your classmates to learn and me to teach more effectively.

The discussions that take place in class will contribute to your learning - really! I promise!

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**OFFICE HOURS**

**MONDAY**
10:00 - 12:00
2:00 - 04:00

**WEDNESDAY**
No Office Hours

**THURSDAY**
2:00 - 4:00

**FRIDAY**
By Appointment
Graded Work

3 Exams @ 100 points (drop lowest)  200 Points
In-Class Work  100 Points
Final Examination  150 Points
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS  450 POINTS

Grading Scale

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<th>% of Points</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>90 - 100</td>
<td>A</td>
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But what about those exams???

Scheduling
Your exams are already scheduled! Look in the Lecture and Exam Schedule. We will probably play around with the lecture schedule - but exam dates will not be changed.

Make-Up Exams?
No! If you take all three semester exams, your lowest grade will be dropped. If you miss an exam, that will be your drop grade.

Exam Questions
Mixed - Exams will consist of a combination of fill-in-the-blank questions and short answer or essay questions, as well as some multiple choice questions.
How will we know what to study?

That’s easy! Study everything! :> OK – not exactly! I will post Learning Objectives on the BlackBoard site. You will be expected to access the appropriate learning objectives and download or print them for your own use.

I may find it necessary to correct or modify objectives after they are posted - if I do I will notify everyone via email and by posting an announcement on BlackBoard.

Just remember that the objectives for an exam are not intended to represent a list of questions that will be asked on exams.

A Few Helpful Hints

Study actively! If all you do is read over your notes, old exams and learning objectives, you are not studying actively.

Active studying occurs when you are doing something! For example, write out material from memory or discuss material with other students. You should test yourself and/or each other to be sure you are clear about concepts and processes.

Read the textbook (!) and be sure you understand and can clearly explain and/or describe the relationships between the examples given and the processes or concepts being illustrated.

You should clearly understand graphs and figures (including the nature of the data presented) and be able to explain them.

You should try to draw graphs from memory – for example, write down a list of dependent and independent variables and try to fill in the graphs without looking at your notes or book. This exercise will help you identify weaknesses and gaps in your understanding of concepts.
That’s kind of a long story! You’ll probably want to read this again before each exam!

Exam questions will often ask you to explain, describe or discuss important concepts or processes. The correct answer will generally not consist of one term or a single concise phrase that could be considered right or wrong. A correct answer will instead almost always include many features, all of which must be present for you to get full credit. For example:

- technical terms which have been used appropriately and in the correct context.
- logical development of ideas and content.
- conciseness: your answer will contain only the essential, critical elements necessary to answer the question.

Also (although this may sound really, really mean) your answer may contain all the important words or phrases but still not receive full credit. Points could be deducted because:

- You said something incorrect although the remainder of your answer was complete.
- Your answer was not logically presented; thus while the required elements were in there (somewhere), you didn’t present and link the concepts in a way that would show that you have a clear understanding of the process or principles involved.
- Your answer was not clearly worded. I won’t grade you on grammar, but I will also not give you the benefit of the doubt if your wording is confusing – you are responsible for making it clear that you understand the concepts.
- You might have used the “bracketing technique.” in other words, writing everything that you think might possibly include the answer. Even if you said nothing incorrect, lots of extraneous material included in an answer indicates that you do not clearly understand the concepts or processes.
- Your answer (or part of it) might be illegible. It is your responsibility to make certain that all parts of your answers are legible to the average professor! I can’t grade what I can’t read!
Learn the value of academic integrity and protect your integrity – always.

Academic honesty is a critical foundation of teaching and learning. You depend on me to prepare classes carefully, to present authentic information and guidance, and to assess your work fairly. You expect that if you successfully complete this course, you will have the basic knowledge and skills that others in our field will expect you to have. In turn, I expect you to honestly present to me what you know and what you are able to do.

If either of us cheats or behaves dishonestly, the entire academic enterprise becomes a fraud. If that dishonesty becomes rampant in academia, your course work and your degrees become meaningless.

Academic honesty is also a fundamental expression of mutual respect in an academic community. We should all require ourselves to exhibit kindness and courtesy and integrity in our dealings with one another.

UST has a policy governing academic dishonesty. Please read it carefully and be sure you understand it. The penalties for academic dishonesty are very serious and include dismissal from the university without possibility of returning. You can find the policy in the Student Handbook and the UST Catalog.