SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURAL & MECHANICAL COLLEGE

Department of Biological Sciences

ECOLOGY 404B: DIGITAL FIELD NOTES FROM A CHANGING PLANET
Fall 2025 | Fully Asynchronous | "Where Bayous Meet Bytes"

Instructor Information
✿ Dr. Mary K. Beals, Ph.D.

🌿 Fisher Hall 224A | (225) 771-3012

📧 mary.beals@sus.edu (response time: <48 hrs)

☕ Office Hours: By appointment (or whenever the coffee's fresh!)

Eco-Cafés: 1st Tuesday each month (Zoom link on Padlet)

Course Description
Explore Louisiana's ecological systems through virtual fieldwork, AI tools, and real-world problem solving. This course emphasizes populations, communities, ecosystems, and human-environment interactions—balancing scientific principles with creativity, storytelling, and applied problem-solving.

Required Textbook & Materials
• Molles Jr., M.C. & Simon, A.S. Ecology: Concepts & Applications (9th ed.) – McGraw-Hill Connect eBook.
• Technology Tools: Canvas, Padlet, NotebookLM, Flipgrid

Course Goals & Objectives
By the end of this course, students will:
• Understand ecological concepts at the individual, population, community, and ecosystem levels.
• Apply ecological principles to real-world environmental challenges.
• Use AI tools, simulations, and digital platforms for ecological inquiry.
• Develop creative science communication skills (memes, podcasts, infographics).
• Engage in informed discussions about ecological and environmental issues.

Grading & Evaluation

Category	%	Examples
Exams	30%	Online, short-answer
Labs / Field Missions	30%	Eco-detective assignments
Creativity	20%	Memes, infographics, haikus
Engagement	20%	Padlet & discussion boards

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Grading Scale: A = 90–100 | B = 80–89 | C = 70–79 | D = 60–69 | F < 60

Course Policies & Expectations

Late Work – Students may use 2 Grace Tokens for deadline extensions (redeemable via meme submission). After tokens are used, late work will not be accepted.

AI Usage Policy – AI is welcome as a partner in your learning. You must:
• Acknowledge AI support with a citation (e.g., "ChatGPT drafted this outline; analysis is mine").
• Demonstrate your own critical thinking in all submissions.
• Avoid presenting AI-generated work as solely your own (violates SU's Academic Integrity policy).

Inclusivity – All voices are valued. Respect is required in discussions.
Technology & Netiquette – Students must use SU Canvas and SUBR email. Be professional, respectful, and thoughtful in digital communications.

Institutional Policies

Academic Dishonesty

Southern University and A&M College's Student Code of Conduct (Code 1.1) identifies academic dishonesty as any deliberate attempt to gain an unfair advantage in academic work. Examples include cheating, falsification of information, fraud, plagiarism, and unauthorized access to academic records...

Academic Grievances

Southern University and A&M College students may seek redress in academic decisions when they believe the decision is unfair or ungrounded. The academic grievance procedure provides prompt and equitable resolutions...

ADA Compliance/Disability Services

Southern University Baton Rouge is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities in compliance with the ADA...

Contact Information:
Southern University Office of Disability Services
Jada J. Netters, Coordinator
P.O. Box 11298
Baton Rouge, LA 70813

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Phone: (225) 771-3546
Email: ods@subr.edu
Website: www.subr.edu/ods

Disruption of the Academic Process

The University's Student Code of Conduct (Codes 1.6 and 2.2) broadly defines disruption/obstruction as any major/minor action which obstructs an official University function, such as teaching, research, or administration...

Statement of Non-Discrimination / Title IX

In compliance with Title IX, Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and other laws, Southern University forbids discriminatory or harassing conduct...

Standards for Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

The Higher Education Act of 1965 requires that institutions establish reasonable standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress as a condition of aid eligibility...

Student Email Policy

The University's email policy describes the appropriate use of university email facilities, associated responsibilities, and rights of all users of official Southern University email accounts...

Tobacco-Free Campus Policy

The Southern University System (SUS) maintains a 100% Tobacco-Free Policy. Smoking and tobacco use of any kind is prohibited on all SUS campuses and properties...

Course Evaluations (Watermark)

Course Evaluations & Surveys by Watermark is an easy-to-use course evaluation system that integrates directly with Canvas...

Follett Access Textbook Program

Follett Access is a partnership between the Southern University System and the SUBR Bookstore that allows you to rent textbooks at reduced cost...

Mental Health Resources

Mental health resources and support are available from the University Counseling Center (UCC). Free counseling and crisis intervention are provided in a safe, confidential setting...

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Incomplete Grades Policy
Work that is of passing quality but, because of extenuating circumstances, is not complete, may be graded 'I'-Incomplete...

Late Enrollment Disclaimer
A student enrolling in the course late will be responsible for completing all assignments and exams on time. The academic calendar is published long in advance of the start date...

Course Schedule (Fall 2025: Aug 18 – Dec 10)

Dates	Module	Key Activities
Aug 18–24	Bayou Beginnings	Padlet intro, NotebookLM practice
Aug 25–Sep 7	Survival Mode	Heat-resistant crawfish debate
Sep 8–21	Population Thrillers	Predator-prey simulations
Sep 22–Oct 5	Species WWE	Invasive species role-play
Oct 6–15	Ecosystem Heist	Digital field lab
Oct 16–17	🍂 Fall Break 🍂	No work—go touch grass!
Oct 18–Nov 1	Planet on Fire	Climate change podcast analysis
Nov 2–Dec 10	Final Eco-Fiesta	Capstone projects + optional Zoom party

Student Statement of Understanding (Course Contract – Fall 2025)
I, _____, acknowledge that I have received the syllabus for Ecology 404B and understand the course structure, expectations, grading, and SU academic policies. I agree to:
• Uphold academic integrity, including honest disclosure of AI use.
• Participate actively in online and creative course activities.
• Complete assignments on time, using Grace Tokens when needed.
• Communicate respectfully with peers and the instructor.
• Seek help when I encounter challenges.

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Signature & Date: _____

Keep in mind this document is subject to change as needed without warning.