

ECOL 3220 -- The Biology & Conservation of Marine Mammals
Maymester 2010
Course Syllabus

ECOL 3220 is an inquiry-based course, i.e., students are expected to actively contribute to and participate in the learning process, as opposed to the more traditional and passive lecture format. Instructional methods will include a combination of in-class presentations, demonstrations, hands-on activities, film, class discussions and self-study using print and Web-based instructional materials. Students are expected to contribute to class discussions and will have the opportunity to play the role of both student and instructor at various times during the course.

Class Meetings. 8:00AM to noon each weekday from 11 May thru 2 June, except 31 May (Memorial Day). Given the limited duration of Maymester courses, class time is at a premium and must be used wisely. Students should plan to be in the classroom and ready to work at 8AM every day. Meeting times may vary slightly depending on class activities scheduled on certain days.

Attendance. This is an elective Summer course that you signed up for, so we're assuming that you want to be here. Given that a lot of the learning in the course is self-directed and that a significant portion of the grade is based on class participation, attending each class meeting is a good strategy for success.

Tests / Class Projects. There are no formal exams in this class, but a couple of short quizzes will test important factual knowledge and let the instructors know if you're paying attention. The quizzes will be graded and will count towards your final grade.

A paper of **no more** than three (3) double-spaced typed pages on a topic related to marine mammals of your choosing is required. The format of this paper is NOT that of a traditional term paper. Rather, it should be formatted like a magazine or newspaper article, i.e., very refined in scope, well-written, concise and fact-based. It may be a persuasive piece intended to advance a particular perspective or a more typical factual piece of the "who, what, when, where and why" variety. In either case, the paper must be based on sources of documentation that you can produce and cite. The instructors will act as your "editors" and can challenge your sources and content until the paper is publication quality, both in form and content. The instructors will assist you in selecting a topic and provide guidance to reference materials and relevant professional literature. More info and the timetable for producing the paper will be given in the first class.

A series of four debates on important and controversial topics in marine mammal science will be presented by the students. The purpose of the debates is to allow students to examine the topics from all perspectives, evaluate the scholarship and sentiment associated with each and present a compelling argument for or against each topic. Both the participation in preparation for the debates and the presentation of the position in the debate will be graded. The instructors will assist you in researching the topics and defining the scope of your arguments. More information on the debates will be presented on the first day of class.

Students are expected to keep a journal of their experiences during the course. A journal is intended to be a personal record of your impressions, thoughts, feelings, understandings, observations and questions during the course. Be prepared to start logging journal information from Day 1. More information about how to keep the journal will be given during the first class session.

Grading. The course grade will be based on five criteria, each of equal value (20%): the quizzes, the paper, the debates, the journal and overall class participation.

Field Trip. We will be taking a week-long, two-site field trip during the course. The first site is Charleston, SC, where we'll have a curator-hosted tour of the largest whale fossil collection in the world at the Charleston Museum. Also near Charleston, we'll visit the National Marine Mammal Tissue Bank and the NOS Cetacean Life History Program. Both play important roles in the study and conservation of marine mammals.

The second site is the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography near Savannah. Activities will include a series of presentations and a full day of on-the-water activities to familiarize students with the natural history of marine mammals, the ecology of the Georgia coast and the conduct of marine mammal research. More information about this trip will be forthcoming.