



WIS2552 Biodiversity Conservation: Global Perspectives

Spring Semester, 2025

Online Asynchronous Format, 3-Credits

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Office hours by phone 9-10am EST, Monday & Tuesday

Course Description

The course is designed for students who wish to gain a global perspective of biodiversity patterns and issues. Students will learn about the origin, structure and measurement of biodiversity; the biology of species of different kingdoms; and patterns in species' distributions.

Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisite courses, requisite hours, or existing credentials required for enrollment in this course. This course is designed to accommodate all students, regardless of their prior knowledge or experience in the subject area. Students are encouraged to be self-directed and take responsibility for their learning. While no specific background is necessary, the following attributes and skills will enhance your success in the course:

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- After completing this course, students will be able to explain fundamental concepts and scientific principles of conservation, including genetics and ecology, and describe global patterns in biodiversity, both phylogenetic and geographical.
- After completing this course, students will be able to identify and interpret the evolutionary basis for the five-kingdom system of phylogeny and evaluate biological issues involving species from all five kingdoms.

- After completing this course, students will be able to analyze future biodiversity challenges and the role of human intervention in mitigating these challenges.
- Develop the ability to critically engage with and evaluate complex wildlife conservation issues, applying analytical thinking, evidence-based reasoning, and collaborative discussion techniques to contribute to informed, solution-oriented dialogues.

Learning Materials and Supplies

This course has no required textbooks for purchase. To ensure the affordability of course materials, we have carefully selected resources that are both high-quality and cost-effective for students. Our course has been awarded the Spring 2024 Affordable UF Badge for our efforts to minimize costs for students. WIS 2552 was also awarded Exemplary course through the University of Florida's internal online course review process.

- **Packback:** The primary tool we will use for class discussions is Packback, an AI-assisted discussion platform. This tool enhances student engagement and learning through dynamic discussions. You will be charged a fee of \$39 for access to Packback, payable the first time you log onto the platform through the Canvas course link.



Instructor Interaction Plan

- **Email and Canvas Messages:** Expect a response to your emails and Canvas messages within 24 hours during weekdays. I encourage you to plan ahead and not wait until the weekend to complete assignments, as response times may be slower over the weekend.
- **Assignment Feedback:** Grades for assessments will be released within 24 hours of the deadline.
- **Office Hours:** I will be available for office hours by phone from 9-10am EST on Monday and Tuesday. Please use this time to discuss any questions or concerns you may have.
- **Weekly Announcements:** I will post an announcement at least once a week to provide updates and general feedback to the class. These announcements will help keep you informed about course progress and any important information.
- **Discussion Monitoring:** I will actively monitor and read the discussions on Packback. I may post to the entire class, within groups, or message you individually to provide feedback on your participation and contributions.

- **Student Feedback:** Your feedback is highly valued. I invite you to provide feedback during midterm and end-of-term GatorEvals. This feedback helps me continuously improve the student experience within the course.

Required Technology & How to Obtain the Technology

To successfully participate in and complete this course, you will need access to specific technology and resources. Below is a detailed list of required technology and how to obtain them:

- **Computer and Internet:** You will need a reliable computer and a stable internet connection. This includes a method for output audio (speakers / headphones). This is essential for accessing course materials, submitting assignments, and participating in discussions. If you foresee difficulty in maintaining a stable internet connection, please contact the instructor early.
- **Software and Online Tools:** PDF Readers such as Adobe Acrobat Reader or another PDF reader for accessing course readings and materials. [Download Adobe Acrobat Reader](#)
- **Packback:** We will use Packback, an AI-assisted discussion tool, as our primary platform for class discussions. You will be charged a fee of \$39 for access to Packback, payable the first time you log onto the platform through the Canvas course link. More information on Packback can be found [here](#).

Each week, you will be asked to:

- Ask one new question about the course material that meets the community's minimum. Curiosity Score of 75 points (rated based on Presentation, Credibility, and Effort).
- Answer the professor posted question and at least one student posted question. Your response post needs to meet the community's minimum Curiosity Score of 75 points (rated based on Presentation, Credibility, and Effort).

Criteria: Points will be assigned on quality of content; questions and answers that meet the Curiosity Score minimums (75 points for questions, 75 points for answers) will receive full credit. Half credit will be assigned to those posts and answers that fall below 75 curiosity points. However, you should be aware that the community is moderated, and posts will be removed if they are not on-topic with the course material or if they substantially replicate a response previously made by another student. You will receive zero credit if your post is removed, either for being off-topic or for any other reason (e.g. if it is flagged for plagiarism, disrespectfulness towards others, etc.), but you have the opportunity to edit and repost for a chance at credit.

Required Technology & Digital Information Literacy Skills

Technical skills may include:

- **Canvas:** All course materials, assignments, and announcements will be posted on Canvas. Ensure you have access to Canvas and check it regularly. For technical support with Canvas, you can contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or visit [UF Helpdesk](#).
- **Basic Computer Literacy:** Comfort with using a computer, navigating the internet, and utilizing basic software applications (e.g., word processors, email).
- **Email:** Use UF email for communication and submissions requiring attachments.
- **Presentation and Graphic Programs:** Operate and use tools such as Microsoft PowerPoint. Here is a link for [Microsoft PowerPoint Training](#).
- **Download and Install software:** Using and downloading applications that may be required in the course to access material such as Microsoft applications or PDF Readers.

Digital information literacy skills may include:

- Using online search tools for specific academic purposes, including the ability to use search criteria, keywords, and filters
- Analyzing digital information for credibility, currency, and bias (e.g., disinformation, misinformation)
- Properly citing information sources

Communication Guidelines

- Use **Canvas Inbox (messaging tool) or email** for questions that are specific to your grades or submissions.
- **Email & phone correspondence** are for (1) setting a meeting time for office hours, (2) DRC accommodations; (3) emergency situations; or (4) highly sensitive situations.
- A respectful tone is used by all community members in all forms of communication. As outlined in the [Student Conduct Code of Conduct](#), the University of Florida prohibits harassment and discrimination.
- Remember that body language and tone (such as a joking or sarcasm) may be difficult to perceive by others online, which may lead to misunderstandings.
- Written communication, both formal and informal, uses the official language of instruction rather than popular online abbreviations and graphic elements such as those sometimes used in social media.
- Spelling, punctuation, and grammar are correct.

Technical Support

UF Computing Help Desk & Ticket Number: All technical issues require a UF Helpdesk Ticket Number. The UF Helpdesk is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/> | 352-392-4357

- **No-Cost or Low-Cost Technology Options:**
 - Institutional Hardware Loans: UF may offer hardware loans for students in need. Check the [UF Take-Home Equipment](#) for more information.
 - Computer Labs: Access to computer labs on campus may be available if needed. Check with the [UF IT Department](#) for locations and availability.

Weekly Course Schedule

All assignment deadlines will occur on the following due dates at 11:59 PM EST.

Module	Topic	Assessment	Due Dates
M0	Course Orientation	Syllabus Quiz Join Packback-Community M0 Introduce-Yourself Packback	[1/21/25]
M1	Scientific Method, Life, and Earth Age	Perusall M1 Packback M1 Quiz M1 Current Event 1	[1/23/25]
M2	Evolution, Biodiversity, and Dihybrid Cross	Perusall M2 Packback M2 Current Event 2 Quiz 2	[1/30/25]
M3	Population Genetics	Perusall M3 Packback M3 Current Event 3 Quiz 3	[2/6/25]
M4	Measuring Biodiversity and Higher Levels of Diversity	Perusall M4 Packback M4 Current Event 4 Quiz 4	[2/13/25]
M5	Niche, Ecology, Forms of Biodiversity, and Fungi	Perusall M5 Packback M5 Current Event 5 Quiz 5	[2/20/25]

	Exam 1 (covering M1-M5)		[2/20/25]
	Midterm GatorEval Survey		
M6	Kingdom Plantae, Vascular Plants, Conifers and Flowering Plants	Perusall M6 Packback M6 Current Event 6 Quiz 6	[2/27/25]
M7	Kingdom Animalia, Protosomes vs. Deuterostomes, Higher Invertebrates	Perusall M7 Packback M7 Current Event 7 Quiz 7	[3/6/25]
M8	First Tetrapods, Amphibians, and Reptiles	Perusall M8 Packback M8 Current Event 8 Quiz 8	[3/13/25]
M9	Birds, Mammals, and Human Evolution	Perusall M9 Packback M9 Current Event 9 Quiz 9	[4/3/25]
M10	Island Patterns and Zoogeographic Regions	Perusall M10 Packback M10 Current Event-10 Quiz 10	[4/10/25]
M11	Fragmentation	Perusall M11 Packback M11 Current Event-11 Quiz 11	[4/17/25]
M12	Biomes	Perusall M12 Packback 12 Current Event-12 Quiz 12	[4/24/25]
	Course GatorEval Survey		[5/1/25]
	Exam 2 (covering M6-M14)]		[5/1/25]

Grading Policy

All assignments will be auto graded, so feedback will be available to you in a prompt manner. However, your grade may be reviewed and adjusted after posting, as all submissions will be screened for quality and academic honesty.

Assignment Type	Percent of Final Grade
Packback Discussions (13)	25%
Perusall Interactive Readings (12)	25%
Quizzes (13)	10%
Current Event Assignments (12)	10%
Video Interactions	10%
Exam 1	10%
Exam 2	10%

Grading Scale

See the current [UF grading policies](#) for more information.

A	100-89
B+	88-85
B	84-79
C+	78-75
C	74-69
D+	68-65
D	64-59
E	58-0

Attendance & Make-up Work

Please be proactive and work ahead to avoid late submissions. Requirements for make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies [UF Attendance Policies](#).

Academic Honesty

University of Florida students are bound by the Honor Pledge. As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Student Honor Code." You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission for you to collaborate on course tasks (e.g. assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor

Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information regarding the Student Honor Code, please see [Student Conduct Code Process](#).

Student Privacy Disclaimer:

For online course with recorded materials a statement informing students of privacy related issues such as: Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

In-Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student

Course Evaluation Process

Student assessment of instruction is an important part of efforts to improve teaching and learning. At the end of the semester, students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course using a standard set of university and college criteria. Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at: <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the

evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via the [GatorEvals site](#). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at [GatorEvals Public Data](#).

Software Use

All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

Services for Students with Disabilities

A statement related to accommodations for students with disabilities such as: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Campus Resources

Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university's counseling resources. The Counseling & Wellness Center provides confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance.

Health and Wellness

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or <https://umatter.ufl.edu/> to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: Visit <https://counseling.ufl.edu/> or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit <https://shcc.ufl.edu/>
- *University Police Department*: Visit <https://police.ufl.edu/> or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; visit <https://ufhealth.org/locations/uf-health-shands-emergency-room-trauma-center>
- *GatorWell Health Promotion Services*: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit <https://gatorwell.ufsa.ufl.edu/> or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 <https://it.ufl.edu/helpdesk/> or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- [Career Connections Center](#): Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- [Library Support](#): Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- [Teaching Center](#): 1317 Turlington Hall, 352-392-2010. General study skills and tutoring.
- [Writing Studio](#): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- *Student Concern*: [Report Student Concerns or Conduct](#)

Student Complaints:

- Residential Course: <https://www.sfa.ufl.edu/written-student-complaints/>
- Online Course: <https://pfs.tnt.aa.ufl.edu/state-authorization-status/#student-complaint>

Privacy and Accessibility Policies

- For information about the privacy policies of the tools used in this course, see the links below:
- Adobe
 - [Adobe Privacy Policy](#)
 - [Adobe Accessibility](#)
- Instructure (Canvas)
 - [Instructure Privacy Policy](#)
 - [Instructure Accessibility](#)
- Microsoft
 - [Microsoft Privacy Policy](#)
 - [Microsoft Accessibility](#)
- Packback
 - [Packback Privacy Policy](#)
 - [Packback Accessibility](#)
- Perusall
 - [Perusal Accessibility](#)
 - [Perusal Privacy](#)
- PlayPosit
 - [PlayPosit Privacy Policy](#)
 - [PlayPosit Accessibility](#)
- Sonic Foundry (Mediasite Streaming Video Player)
 - [Sonic Foundry Privacy Policy](#)
 - [Mediasite Accessibility \(PDF\)](#)
- YouTube (Google)
 - [YouTube \(Google\) Privacy Policy](#)
 - [YouTube \(Google\) Accessibility](#)
- Zoom

- [Zoom Privacy Policy](#)
- [Zoom Accessibility](#)