

EY 600 Population and Community Ecology
Spring 2009

Lectures: TR 9:30-10:45 am 108 Natural Resources Building
Discussions: Sec R01 3:00-3:50 W B2 Engineering Sec R02 3:00-3:50 R E106 Engineering

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Course goal: To provide graduate students in the Graduate Degree Program in Ecology and departments throughout CSU the opportunity to learn classic and current theories of population and community ecology applicable to plants and animals. Lectures will emphasize the terminology and conceptual development of each field, observations and experiments that support theories, and current directions. Discussion sections will provide students opportunity to read a classic or review paper (our selection) and a current paper (their selection) from the primary literature each week, and discuss their merits and findings. Emphasis of discussions will be on the unique perspectives of students from a broad range of ecological disciplines, and constructive critique and debate on the issues presented by the papers.

Expectations based on prerequisites: This is a graduate level course with one course in general ecology, statistics, and calculus as prerequisites, so students are assumed to have a good basic background in these sciences, especially mathematics and ecology. Although a brief review of basic concepts will precede new material, students will be expected to read background information about topics unfamiliar to them in a good introductory ecology text, such as Begon et al. (2006), Krebs (2008), or Ricklefs and Miller (2000), all titled *Ecology*.

Textbooks: Gotelli, N. J. 2008. A primer of ecology, 4th ed. Sinauer.
Morin, P. J. 1999. Community ecology. Blackwell Science.

Assignments, Exams, and Grading:

Discussion section (20%): The course includes weekly discussions of the assigned readings. Half the grade (10%) will be based on student performance preparing and leading a discussion, and half on attendance and participation (10%). The following guidelines will be use in assigning grades for the latter:

To earn grade	Attendance (sessions)	Make substantive contributions
A	12-13	>2/3 of discussions
B	10-11	1/3-2/3 of discussions
C	<10	<1/3 of discussions

Exams (45%): Midterm exam (20%) - Tuesday, 10 March
Final exam (25%) – Tuesday 12 May 1:30-3:30 pm
Exams will consist of written short answers and long essays, and sets of problems requiring solution and interpretation

Assignments (15%): Weekly assignments will be given during the first five weeks of the semester, consisting of problem sets on population ecology. Due dates will be announced.

Paper (20%): A handout describing the term paper assignment will be distributed by early February, and a brief proposal of what you plan to present will be due 17 February. Papers are due in 9 weeks, on 21 April. Grades for late papers will be reduced at least one letter grade, and more if >5 days late (i.e., don't be late!).

Final grade: Final grades will be determined from an average of the exams, assignments, paper, and discussion, weighted as indicated above. Outstanding performance on assignments and tests will influence borderline cases. **Plagiarism or cheating are grounds for failing the course!!**