

ECOLOGY LIFE 320

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TEXT: *Elements of Ecology* T.M. Smith and R.L. Smith

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the fundamental principles and concepts of ecology. After completing this course, you should have acquired a general understanding of the physical, chemical and biological factors that influence the distribution and abundance of organisms in nature.

GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

After a brief introduction and discussion of physiological ecology, we will spend much of the remainder of the semester studying ecology at different levels of biological organization (populations, communities, ecosystems). We will then demonstrate how basic ecological principles may be applied to the study of practical ecological problems (e.g., loss of species diversity, global warming, and water/air pollution).

Although the course will be primarily a lecture format, I strongly encourage your input at any time during class. This will provide me with an additional opportunity (other than exams!) to evaluate your understanding of the ecological principles presented in lecture, as well as your progress towards meeting the course objectives. Many of the topics we will cover this semester are controversial, both among ecologists (e.g., the relative importance of interspecific competition in structuring communities) as well as the general public (e.g., preservation of habitat for maintenance of biotic diversity; human effects on global climate). Thus, there should be ample opportunity and material for in-class discussion.

