

Duties and Expectations of Instructor(s) and Teaching Assistants
LIFE 320 Ecology - Boone
February 2024

Course Description

I teach a large lecture course for LIFE 320 in the fall, meeting three days a week at 8 am (MWF) plus an Honor's section that meets on T. We address core ecological theory in the first part of the course (e.g., climate and biomes, evolution, speciation, niches, disturbance). In the second part of the course, aspects of populations and more specific topics are addressed (e.g., population distributions, modeling, and metapopulations, reproductive ecology, conservation genetics). In the final part of the course, we address ecosystem science (e.g., nutrient cycling, feedback and effects, primary production). The course typically has between 170 and 215 students, combining those in LIFE 320 001 and LIFE 320 221, the Honor's section.

Note: Through long-standing agreement, ESS identifies a candidate for the fall offering and provides tuition and stipend for the student.

Required skills and subject matter expertise for Teaching Assistants

- 1) A general ecology student without specific skills would be suited to the course;
- 2) The student should be available for all lectures;
- 3) A friendly, caring demeanor toward students is required.

Desired skills and subject matter expertise for Teaching Assistants

- 1) A deep understanding of ecological theory would be helpful;
- 2) Advanced organizational skills and a detail-oriented nature would be helpful given enrollment.

Instructor Responsibilities

- 1) Boone lectures in the class, unless traveling (always minimized during course offerings);
- 2) Prepares exams and assignments, with input from the TA;
- 3) Grades a portion of the written exams, especially a portion of the essay questions;
- 4) Organizes offerings of in-class exercises and larger assignments;
- 5) Grades an initial essay from each student and guides peer review of a second (and third?) essay;
- 6) Is the primary manager of Canvas content, although the TA has full editing permissions;
- 7) Manages all tasks associated with an Honor's student section; the TA is not involved in that effort;
- 8) Assigns final grades.

Graduate Teaching Assistant Job Duties

Duties	Time Expectation (per week on avg)
Attend lectures	3
Present lecture material for 2 days when Boone must travel	0.5

Lead on grading multiple-choice and short answer questions on two midterms and the final. Essays with well-defined answers may be graded as well.	3
Ensures that dates indicated on Canvas are updated regularly	1
Enter scores for each weekly exercise into Canvas	1
Provide a review session for students prior to each exam	1
Enter exam scores, by question, into a spreadsheet and overall scores into Canvas	1
Learn material in the course and read our volume to respond to student queries	4
Provide office hours for students help	2
Assist Boone in making any adjustments needed to participation scores	0.5

Instructor Narrative to Review Committee:

I remain pleased to be able to continue using paper exams that include a variety of response types, rather than bubble-sheets. Assistance in grading those exams is a significant component of the TAs efforts. When more students are in the course, however, I include fewer essay questions on the exam to speed grading for both of us.

Disclaimer: The responsibilities outlined in this document may be subject to minor change, but any changes will be discussed, and expectations agreed upon, prior to the start of the semester. If actual work duties or time estimates during the semester do not meet agreed upon expectations, the TA is responsible for communicating with the instructor. In turn, the instructor is expected to respond with a course correction.