



School of Science
BIOL 220
Ecology
Fall 2025
3 Credits

Course Outline

INSTRUCTOR: Scott Gilbert, BSc., Ph.D.

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OFFICE: unknown

OFFICE HOURS: Tues / Thurs 10:30-11:30 am or by email appointment

LECTURE: Tues / Thurs 9:00-10:25

Room: A2210

Dates: Sept. 4 – Dec. 9

LAB: Thursday 2:30 – 5:30

Room: A2210

Dates: Sept. 4 – Dec. 4

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Biology 220 introduces the science of ecology by focusing on the interrelations between individual organisms, their populations and communities. The course begins by reviewing the factors that limit distributions and then considers population demography, life tables, regulation of natural populations and managing harvested populations. We briefly review some of the mathematical models to explain interspecific competition and predation. The course continues with an overview of community ecology and considers selected topics: succession, species diversity gradients, energy flow, biogeochemistry, and the role of predation, competition and disturbance in structuring communities. Finally, we conclude by considering the prospects for global change and the ecological processes that may shape these changes.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Prerequisite(s): BIOL 101 and 102 or equivalent; COMM 193 or COMM 204 recommended.

EQUIVALENCY OR TRANSFERABILITY

UBC BIOL 230 (3)

TRU BIOL 2170 (3)

UBCO BIOL 201 (3)

UVIC BIOL 215 (1.5)

SFU BISC 204 (3)

See <https://bctransferguide.ca/> for an up-to-date list of transfers within BC. Further information and assistance with transfers may be available from the School of Science.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- describe the ecological factors that affect the distribution and abundance of organisms;
- understand the interplay between evolution and ecology;
- construct simple life tables and interpret simple models of population growth, interspecific competition and predator-prey interactions;
- propose testable hypotheses along with experimental tests to resolve ecological questions.

COURSE FORMAT

Lectures: Three hours per week (2 classes of 1.5 hours, face-to-face). This is a fast-paced course and students are strongly encouraged to attend lectures so they can ask questions and participate in class discussions.

Labs: Three hours per week, face to face. The 11 activities will include 4 tutorials focused on numerical problem sets, 2 field data collection exercises with formal lab reports and 5 seminars that will focus on critiquing papers or discussing ideas in ecology. Several of the lab exercises involve collecting data or making observations and this would make it difficult or impossible for students who miss the lab to complete the lab assignment. There is a strong correlation between regular attendance and academic performance.

EVALUATION:

Short in-class quizzes	5%
Take home readings & questions	10%
Field / lab exercises (need 50% to pass)	30%
Midterm exams (2 @15% each)	30%
Final Exam	25%
Total	100%

Assignments

There will be weekly short take-home reading assignments and there will be a written assignment with each week's lab activity. Students must pass the field/lab portion of the course to receive a passing grade for the overall course.

Tests

Rather than a single mid-term examination we will have two shorter quizzes. The final 3-hour will be comprehensive and cover all topics taken up during the term. The date is unknown at time of writing.

COURSE WITHDRAWAL INFORMATION

The last date to withdraw without academic penalty is Oct. 31, 2025. Refer to the YukonU website for other important dates <https://www.yukonu.ca/admissions/important-dates>

TEXTBOOKS & LEARNING MATERIALS

Manuel C. Molles, Andrew Laursen. 2020. *Ecology: Concepts and Applications* 5th Canadian ed.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to contribute toward a positive and supportive environment and are required to conduct themselves in a responsible manner. Academic misconduct includes all forms of academic dishonesty such as cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, fraud, deceit, using the work of others without their permission, aiding other students in committing academic offences, misrepresenting academic assignments prepared by others as one's own, or any other forms of academic dishonesty including falsification of any information on any Yukon University document. Please refer to Academic Regulations & Procedures for further details about academic standing and

student rights and responsibilities. <https://www.yukonu.ca/policies/academic-regulations>

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

Yukon University is committed to providing a positive, supportive, and barrier-free academic environment for all its students. Students experiencing barriers to full participation due to a visible or hidden disability (including hearing, vision, mobility, learning disability, mental health, chronic or temporary medical condition), should contact Accessibility Services for resources or to arrange academic accommodations: access@yukonu.ca.

Lecture Topic Outline and Schedule – August 25 version

Date	Topic	Concepts	Chapter
Sept. 4 (Thursday)	Introduction, Hypothesis testing (<i>Lecture #1</i>)	def'n ecology, levels of organization, hypothesis testing, theme of temporal and spatial heterogeneity, proximate vs. ultimate explanations	Chapter 1
Sept. 9	Land and Water (<i>Lecture #2</i>)	Biomes, water & temperature as master limiting factors, soil horizons, hydrological cycle, flux, turnover time, oceanic zonation (horizontal and vertical), still waters, zonation, lake turnover, isothermal, limits to distributions, abiotic and biotic factors, allelopathy	Chap 2 (skip pp 29-36), Chap 3 (skip 55-64, 68-74)
Sept. 11	Natural selection and evolution (<i>Lecture #3</i>)	Evolution, genetic drift, natural selection, adaptation, fitness, phenotype, genotype, ecotypes, common garden expts., stabilizing selection, disruptive selection, directional selection	Chap 4
Sept. 16	Coevolution and speciation (<i>Lecture #4</i>)	Coevolution, Mullerian and Batesian mimicry, Mayr's biological species concept, 2 types of reproductive isolation – pre- and postzygotic isolating mechanisms, 3 types of speciation,	con'd
Sept. 18	Temperature relations (<i>Lecture #5</i>)	How do organisms respond to temperature? range of tolerance, heat budgets, ectotherms, endotherms, thermal neutral zone, 8 strategies for extreme conditions	Chap 5
Sept 23	Nutrient & energy relations (<i>Lecture #6</i>)	Energy sources, trophic classifications, light (PAR), 3 photosynthesis pathways by name, C:N ratios and challenges to herbivore diets, principle of allocation	Chap 7 (skip 181-183) (delay 187-191)
Sept 25	Behavioural ecology + optimal foraging (<i>Lecture #7 – on Moodle; no in person lecture this morning!</i>)	Kin selection, inclusive fitness, costs & benefits of group living, trade-offs. Foraging decisions, numerical & functional responses, optimal foraging theory and assumptions, diet width mode & predictions, 3 types of functional responses, Fundamental & realized niche	Chap 7 - read 187-191, Chap 8
Sept 30	Holiday – no class – National Day for Truth and Reconciliation		
Oct. 7	Life History Patterns (<i>Lecture #8</i>)	Life history classifications, r & K selection, principle of allocation, Grimes approach to plant life histories, disturbance, stress tolerance, Winemiller & Rose – 3 factors to classify life histories, climate change	Chap 9 up to page 246
Oct. 9	Intro to Populations & Estimating density (<i>Lecture #9</i>)	(see Sept 8 notes where we introduced limits to dist'n), what is an individual: unitary, modular organisms, genet, ramet; patterns of dist'n: random, regular clumped, def'n of pop'n, metapopulation, relative and absolute abundance	Chap 10
Oct 13-17	Thanksgiving Holiday Monday + Reading Week – no classes		
Oct. 21	Population Structure: Intro to life tables (<i>Lecture #10</i>)	mortality, static and cohort life tables, n_x , l_x , d_x , q_x , 3 types of	Chapter 11

		survivorship curves, fecundity schedules, net reproductive rate,	
Oct. 23	Pop'n structure (continued) (Lecture 11)	Generation time, T , actual or realized r , dispersal, jump dispersal, sex ratios & frequency dependent selection	Chapter 11
Oct. 28	Population Growth (Lecture #12)	Density dependent and independent birth and death rates, λ - geometric rate of increase, exponential growth using $dN/dt = rN$, eq'n for logistic pop'n growth, assumptions of models, realized r vs r_{max}	Chapter 12
Oct. 30	Competition – Intraspecific & Interspecific (Lecture #13)	Types of spp interactions, exploitation or resource competition, interference competition, impacts of competition on growth, survival and reproduction, Lotka-Volterra model of interspecific comp. and how to interpret LV graphs, comp. coefficients	Chap 9 – p 247-251; Chap 13 (skip 357-358)
Nov. 4	Competition – Interspecific (Lecture #14)	...competition continued with more on Lotka-Volterra graphical models	
Nov. 6	Intro to Herbivory & Predation (Lecture #15)	Types of predation, impacts of exploitation on individuals and populations, invasive spp and enemy release hypothesis, LV-predation equations, coupled oscillations, neutral stability, Huffaker's case history showing role of prey refuges, other ways to escape predators	Chap 14
Nov. 11	Exploitation, Predation and Harvesting populations (Lecture #16)	Recruitment curves, role of intraspecific comp in determining shape of curve, maximum sustainable yield, fixed quotas harvests, managing harvest effort	pp. 325-327
Nov. 13	Mutualism & Parasitism (Lecture #17)	Parasites can affect behaviour; winter ticks and moose, flour beetles and competition affected by parasites. Plant-ant protection mutualisms	Chapter 15 – up to page 407
Nov. 18	Remembrance Day holiday		
Nov. 20	Community structure and function (Lecture #18)	Emergent properties of communities, species abundance, spp diversity, role of disturbance, conclude spp diversity & disturbance	Chapter 16
Nov. 25	Food webs & keystone species (Lecture #19)	Review 2 nd midterm . Who eats who? Food webs. Why are food chains short (2 hypotheses), Keystone species vs dominant spp, ecosystem engineers	Chapter 17 (skip 17.2)
Nov. 27	Disturbance & Community Equilibrium (Lecture #20)	Disturbance & stability, comparison of community properties at equilibrium and non-equilibrium	Chapter 18 (skip p 490-492)
Dec. 2	Community succession (Lecture #21)	Primary & secondary succession, climax, patterns in succession, Connell & Slatyer model of succession. Facilitation, inhibition & tolerance, resilience and resistance – Park Grass expt	Chapter 18
Dec. 4	Community stability & Energy Flow & nutrients (Lecture #22)	Primary production, GPP, NPP, limits to NPP in terrestrial and aquatic systems,	Chapter 19
Dec. 9	Trophic cascades (Lecture #23)	Top down & bottom up control, trophic cascades, direct and indirect effects; carbon storage as a result of trophic cascades	Pp 447-456
Dec 10	Energy flow (Lecture #24)	Biogeochemistry, compartments, flux, pool or reservoir, residence time, phosphorus cycle, nitrogen cycle, carbon cycle.	Chapter 20 461-465; 468-470
Dec 11	Course review & highlights	Make up lecture for Nov 11 on a Wednesday.	

Biology 220 Laboratory Schedule - Draft – Aug 25, 2025

Sept. 4	#1 Lab Exercise: Hypothesis Testing in Ecology	Due Sept 11
Sept. 11	#2 Tutorial: Decomposition and Forest Soil CO ₂ Emissions	Stage 2 due _____
Sept. 18	#3 Seminar: Natural Selection question	Due before lab
Sept. 25	#4 Seminar: Human Impacts on Ecosystems ¹	Due before lab
Oct. 2	#5 Seminar: Critique of a scientific paper (snakes, loons or turtles) ²	Due before lab
Oct 9	Quiz #1	
Oct. 16	<i>Reading Week – no lab</i>	
Oct. 23	#6 Tutorial: Life Table	Oct. 28
Oct. 30	#7 Lab Exercise: Population estimate using mark recapture	TBD... in Nov
Nov. 6	#8 Seminar: Critique of paper salmon nutrients ³ , snail paper ⁴ or Eider ducks ⁵	Due before lab
Nov. 13	Quiz #2 date to be confirmed	
Nov. 20	#9 Tutorial: Harvesting Populations ⁶	Due before lab
Nov. 27	#10 Seminar: Critique of paper	Due before lab
Dec. 4	#11 Seminar: Keystone Species	Due before lab

1 Read 3 papers: Stokstad, E. 2014. The empty forest. (Vanishing Fauna/ Special Section). Science (345) 6195: 396-400;

Redford, K.H. 1992. The empty forest. BioScience (42) 6: 412- 422; and Dirzo, R., H.S.Young, M. Galetti, G.Ceballos, N.J.B. Isaac, B. Collen. 2014. Defaunation in the Anthropocene. Science (345) 6195: 401-406. Informal discussion of how to critique a paper using Marcogliese , Lucian A., Casselman, John M. and Hodson , Peter V. 1997. Dramatic declines in recruitment of American Eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) entering Lake Ontario -- Long-term trends, causes and effects. Plenary presentation at the 3rd National EMAN Meeting, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 22 January 1997

2 Choice of 3 papers: Diaz, Francisco R. and Blouin-Demers, Gabriel 2017. Northern snakes appear much more abundant in old fields than in forests. Canadian-Field Naturalist 131: 228-234 plus supplement; Dickson, Lynne 1992. The Red-throated Loon as an indicator of environmental quality. Canadian Wildlife Service, Occasional Publication No. 73; and Seburn, D.C., and H. McCurdy-Adams. 2019. Do turtle warning signs reduce roadkill? Canadian Field-Naturalist 133(3): 216–220.

3 Reimchen, Thomas E. 2017. Diverse Ecological Pathways of Salmon Nutrients Through an Intact Marine-terrestrial Interface. Canadian Field-Naturalist 131: 350-368.

4 Hershey, Anne 1990. Snail populations in Arctic lakes: Competition mediated by predation? Oecologia 82: 26-32.

5 Reed, J.A., D.L. Lacroix and P.L. Flint 2007. Depradation of Common Eider, *Somateria mollissima*, Nests on a Central Beaufort Sea Barrier Island: A Case Where No One Wins. *Can. Field-Nat.* 121: 308-312.

6 Readings from Pauly, D. V. Christensen, S. Gu  nette T.J. Pitcher, U.R. Sumaila, C.J. Walters, R. Watson and D. Zeller. 2002. Toward sustainability in world fisheries. Nature 418: 689-695