Instructor: Jim Riach  
Office hours: TBA  
Location: AHC5 366  
Preferred Contact: Canvas messages

Course Description
The course introduces the student to ecological principles and to the South Florida environment. Students will learn to apply the ecological principles to explain the processes that have influenced the existence of plants and animals within South Florida from ancient to present times. The main biological and physical features of South Florida as a whole and which distinguish its diverse environments will be described and explained. The course will analyze how humans have used and impacted the different environments of South Florida since the times of their earliest occupation of the region. Students will participate in discussions of current debates of environmental issues concerning the South Florida ecology.

After successfully completing this course, the students will be able to:
- Define, apply, and use ecological principles to explain processes that affect the distribution and abundance of plants and animals in South Florida;
- Identify the main biological and physical features of South Florida and its diverse environments;
- Explain how different environments within South Florida were formed and are changing due to natural and human-driven processes;
- Explain ongoing debates of environmental issues affecting South Florida;
- Determine if and how various economic and recreational human activities may be affecting the ecology and/or wildlife of South Florida; and
- Describe and analyze different views regarding how best to protect and/or restore the South Florida environment.

Canvas
All students will be assigned a CANVAS account for online access to the course, which will contain lecture supplements, professor access, assignment submission tools, and suggested links.

Required Texts


Grading
Exams (x2) 60%  
In-Class Activities (TBA) 20%  
Quizzes (x5) 15%  
Final Reflective Activity 5%  
Total Percentage Score 100%
Grades are based on the following percentages.

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\begin{align*}
A & = 94-100 \\
A- & = 90-93 \\
B+ & = 87-89 \\
B & = 83-86 \\
B- & = 80-82 \\
C+ & = 77-79 \\
C & = 70-76 \\
D & = 60-69 \\
F & = 0-59
\end{align*}
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Graded Activities

Exams
There will be three non-cumulative exams during the regular class period in the semester. **No exams will be given during final’s week.** Exams will cover material from the readings, lectures, and in-class activities. The homework and in-class activities help build the knowledge and skills necessary to do well in the exams. Several movies may be shown in class. Questions about the movies may appear on the exams. If you miss class on a day a movie is shown, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate and/or try to see it. Students will be provided with a list of the material from the textbooks that they will be expected to know for the exams. Even if the lectures do not cover all of this material, the students will still be responsible for knowing this material for the exams.

In-Class Activities
In order to engage learning and provide continuous assessments on learning, this course will combine conventional lecture with active learning strategies used during the class period throughout the semester. Some of these activities will involve individual work, while other will be group-based. The instructor will explain the intended learning objectives of the activities and detailed instructions for the activities. This approach to teaching makes the students more actively involved in their own learning process, reduces the monotony of lectures and the need to memorize unintelligible concepts, and enables students and the instructor to monitor whether the learning objectives are being met or not.

The instructor will advise students as to any additional materials they may need to bring to class for the activity and may hand out additional materials as needed. There will be activities for every module covered in the semester. Failure to participate in any graded activity due to unexcused absences will result in the student receiving a zero for the graded activity missed.

Quizzes
In order to help students prepare for the exams, students will take short individual quizzes comprised of multiple choice or short answer questions several times during the semester. The content to be covered in the quizzes and the date of these quizzes will be announced ahead of time.

Final Reflective Activity
During the modified schedule of final’s week, the class will meet to conduct an extended final reflective activity. The activity is intended to help students ponder on how experiences from the class may have influenced their knowledge and attitudes about South Florida’s environments and about learning strategies.

Optional Extra Credit
Students have the option to receive a maximum of 5% points of extra credit for the semester by completing one of the following options. No more than 5% points will be given regardless of how many additional service activities a student participate sin or how many seminars are attended.

- **Option 1:** Students complete **one environmental or ecological service assignment** and submit a 500-word (2 pages double-spaced with 12 point font) paper through turnitin describing the service performed and how it contributed to the learning experience of the course. The service activity can involve volunteering with events organized by any FIU student organizations or other non-FIU community organizations.

- **Option 2:** Students may substitute the service assignment by attending **at least two seminars** dealing with environmental or ecological issues affecting S. Florida and submitting one 500-word paper for each seminar describing the issues addressed, what was learned and how your attendance at the event contributed to the learning experience of the course.
Requirements for the extra credit:

- Service assignments or seminars attended must be related to S. Florida ecological or environmental issues.
- Students must provide the professor with a description of their selected extra credit. Only those service activities or seminars pre-approved by the professor will be accepted for a grade.
- Students are required to show proof of participating in the service activity or attending the seminar.
  - Examples of proof include:
    - Completed official registration and/or attendance documentation with the appropriate signatures provided by the event organizers (the FIU Nature Preserve does this by default)
    - E-mails sent to the professor by the event organizers vouching for the participation of the student in the event.
    - Photographs that show the student together with the organizers of the event and participating in the described activity together with other participants will also be accepted.
  - NOT accepted as proof are:
    - “Selfies” or photographs that only show the student without including images of the organizers or of the student participating in the actual event with other volunteers
    - Just the students word of having participated in the event.

Class Policies

Missed Work
Failure to take an exam, or a quiz, to submit any papers by their assigned deadline, or to participate in class activities will result in the student earning a zero for that work. Missed exams or paper deadlines may be made up under only very exceptional circumstances and with proper dated documentation provided within 48 hours of the date the work was to be completed. The student is responsible for contacting the instructor ahead of time if he/she knows that work will be missed. If the instructor deems it appropriate to allow the student to makeup the missed work, the content of any makeup work will be comparable to the one missed, but the format may be different and the work may be subject to point deductions.

Arriving to class late or leaving early
Students are expected to arrive on time to class and to remain in class until the end of the class period. If a student misses any graded activity as a result of arriving late or leaving early it will be considered an unexcused absence and they will receive a zero for the activity.

Laptops and Handheld Devices
Laptops and handheld devices can be a powerful learning tool if used properly in the classroom. However, they can also be a major source of distraction for students and the professor. The professor reserves the right to ask students to turn off and/or put away these devices if he deems it necessary to do so (such as during certain in-class activities). No electronic handheld devices of any kind are allowed during exams. If a student is caught using a handheld device during the exam, the exam will be taken from the student and the student will receive an F for the semester and will be referred to the Office of Academic Integrity for further action.

Attendance
Attendance is mandatory for the first two weeks of classes as per the mandate of the Office of the Provost. Attendance records for these two weeks will be submitted to the Office of the Provost. However, there is no separate grade for attendance. Nonetheless, unexcused absences will result in points being lost for in-class activities. For this reason, all athletes, cheerleaders, Golden Dazzler dancers, and any other students involved in official FIU events during the semester need to inform the instructor ahead of time in writing of any absences due to official FIU events. All students who need to miss class due to legitimate unavoidable circumstances need to notify the instructor before the absence to make plans for making up any missed work. Students who were absent to class due to unexpected emergencies should contact the instructor about the absence in writing within 48 hours in order to have a chance of making up any missed graded activity.
Proper Conduct in Class
While students are in the classroom, they are expected to act as respectful adults. Disturbing other students with chatter, the use of a laptop or handheld devices in class, or other disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated and students will be asked to leave the classroom and referred to the Office of the Provost for Academic Affairs for further action.

Academic Misconduct
All students are held to the following pledge
As a student of this university:
- I will be honest in my academic endeavors.
- I will not represent someone else’s work as my own.
- I will not cheat, nor will I aid in another’s cheating.

All matters relating to academic misconduct are referred to the Office of the Provost for Academic Affairs. Acts of academic misconduct may be alleged by faculty, staff or students.

Plagiarism
FIU defines plagiarism as the deliberate use and appropriation of another's work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student's own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is guilty of plagiarism. Any student helping another to plagiarize may be found guilty of academic misconduct.

All of the following are considered plagiarism:
- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without citing the original source
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- using a quote that is more than 40 words long
- incorrectly citing the source of a quotation
- changing words (using synonyms) without changing the sentence structure of a source without citing the source
- a paper in which more than 15% of the content is copied from a source (or one's own previous work), whether it is cited or not
- the use of one's own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously

All service assignments will be submitted to Turnitin to check for plagiarism. If the assignment is determined to have been plagiarized, the student will receive a zero for the assignment. For more information on plagiarism and how to avoid plagiarism you can visit the following website: http://www.plagiarism.org/plagiarism-101/what-is-plagiarism/

Special Notices
Disability Resource Center
If a student has a disability and needs assistance with class, please contact the Disability Resource Center (GC 190; 305-348-3532). It is the responsibility of each student to work with the Center and Instructor to make arrangements as needed for their accommodations.

Early Alert System
In order to help reduce the chances of a student doing poorly or failing the class due to preventable circumstances, the FIU has introduced the early alert system. According to this system, the professor will notify the academic advisors of students who earn zeroes or very low scores early in the semester. The advisors will then contact the students to follow up on the issue.
Class Schedule

August 20-24  Introduction to course and class

August 27-31  Natural ecosystems and native species
              Physiographic regions
              Florida's Uplands: 1-13

Sept 3        Labor Day Holiday

Sept 5-7      The past and the future
              Prehistoric biogeography
              Florida's Uplands: 127-143

Sept 10-14    Sea Level Rise
              Sept 12 - Quiz 1: intro, natural systems, past and future, sea level rise
              Pinelands
              Florida's Uplands: 15-35; and 109-112

Sept 17-21    Rockland hammocks
              Exam 1 Study sheet available
              Sept 21 - Quiz 2: pinelands and rocklands
              Florida's Uplands: 112-125

Sept 24-28    Review
              Sept 28: Exam 1

Oct 1-5       Video – Everglades to Hell and Back
              Interior wetlands
              Oct 3 - Quiz 3: wetland services
              Florida's Wetlands: 17-31

Oct 8-12      Interior Marshes
              Florida's Wetlands: 49-69

Oct 15-19     Interior swamps
              Coastal intertidal zones
              Florida's Wetlands: 71-77; and 87-113
              Oct 19 - Quiz 4: interior marshes, interior swamps, coastal intertidal zones

Oct 22-26     Mangrove swamps
              Florida's Wetlands: 115-129

Oct 29-Nov 2  Aquifers
              Video – Underground Rivers w/activity

Nov 5-9       Coastal waters: estuaries and seafloors
              Florida's Waters: 67-85
              Submarine meadows
Sponge, rock, and reef communities
Florida's Waters: 87-111

Nov 12        Veteran’s Day Holiday

Nov 14-16     Submarine meadows
               Sponge, rock, and reef communities
               Florida's Waters: 87-111

Nov 19        Quiz 5: Mangroves, aquifers, submarine meadows
               Exam 2 Study sheet available
               Nov 19: Deadline to submit extra credit reports

Nov 26-30     Review
               Nov 30: Exam 2

Dec 3-7       Modified class schedule TBA
               Final Reflective Activity

Note: The schedule in the syllabus is susceptible to change due to unforeseen circumstances that may develop throughout the semester.