

School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability
TROPICAL ECOSYSTEMS ERS 383/ BIOL 383
Course Outline: January to April 2018

Please read this course syllabus. It will answer many of your questions related to this course.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines the fundamental concepts of terrestrial ecosystems in tropical climates. This is NOT an ecology course. The course is divided into three major sections. The first section, *Fundamental Concepts in Tropical Terrestrial Ecosystems*, introduces tropical biomes and major tropical ecoregions. This section also includes a detailed characterization of vegetation, soils, carbon and nutrient cycling. The second section, *Major Tropical Resource Systems*, includes a detailed study of tropical forest and agroecosystems. The third section, *Conservation Issues & Management*, addresses issues of forest fragmentation and biodiversity within a framework of conservation and management.

Examples using case studies will be presented. This course is available on Learn (D₂L).



"We don't need to clear the 4 to 6 percent of the Earth's surface remaining in tropical rain forests, with most of the animal and plant species living there" –E.O. Wilson

COURSE GOAL & INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Goal:

- To introduce the fundamental concepts of terrestrial ecosystems in the tropics, outline major tropical resource systems, and define conservation issues and their management within the framework of global change

Learning Outcomes:

1. Fundamental Concepts in Tropical Terrestrial Ecosystems
 - Tropical biomes: what and where are the tropics located
 - Tropical ecoregions and landforms
 - Tropical biology and ecology: characterizing vegetation, soils, and carbon and nutrient cycling
2. Major Tropical Resource Systems
 - Tropical forest ecosystems
 - Tropical agroecosystems
3. Conservation Issues & Management
 - Forest fragmentation
 - Biodiversity

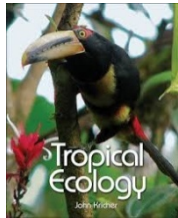
COURSE MEETINGS TIMES & LOCATION

Lecture Times	Location
Thursday 8:30 am to 11:20 am	EV2, room 2002

INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM

	<i>Professor</i>	<i>Teaching Assistants</i>
Name	Prof. Dr. M. Oelbermann	Christina Davis
Contact Information	Office: EV-2, room 2008 E-mail: moelbermann@uwaterloo.ca Phone: 519-888-4567 Ext. 37552	Via Learn
Office Hours	Mondays 11:30 – 12:00	Contact TA's

REQUIRED MATERIALS



The textbook available in UW Bookstore:

Kricher, J. 2011. *Tropical Ecology*. Princeton University Press. 632 pp.

Additional (*but not required for the course*) readings to supplement the textbook will be available on Learn. These readings will be relevant to the material discussed in class; help with the assignment and provide further insight for interested students.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Learning Outcome	Assessment Methods (Formative & Summative)	% of overall Grade	Teaching & Learning Methods
1. Fundamental Concepts in Tropical Terrestrial Ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussions • Midterm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lectures & DVD's covered in lectures 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 ▪ held in class 	0 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive lectures • Case studies • Video presentation • Textbook readings • Course website (Learn) • PowerPoint slides
2. Major Tropical Resource Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussions • Assignment (see assignment outline) 	0 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive lectures • Case studies
3. Conservation Issues & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Exam (lectures, DVD's and guest lecture in lectures 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11) 	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video presentation & Guest Lecture • Textbook readings • Course website (Learn) • PowerPoint slides

SUMMARIZED SCHEDULE OF COURSE ACTIVITIES

Module #	Lecture Day	Lecture #	Topic	Reading Material
1. Fundamental Concepts in Tropical Terrestrial Ecosystems	Jan. 4 th , 2018	1	- Introduction - Tropical biomes - Tropical ecoregions - DVD: Brazil Land of Fire and Flood	- Chapter 1 - Chapter 3: pp. 79-82 - Chapter 11
	Jan. 11 th , 2018	2	- Tropical vegetation - DVD: The Amazon	- Chapter 12: pp. 446-463 - Chapter 3
	Jan. 18 th , 2018	3	- Tropical soils	- Chapter 10: pp. 375-389
	Jan. 25 th , 2018	4	- Nutrient cycling - Carbon & climate change - DVD: Panama	- Chapter 10 - Chapter 9
2. Major Tropical Resource Systems	Feb. 1 st 2018	5	- Forest landscapes - Forest loss - DVD: Classic Rainforest	- Chapter 12 - Chapter 15
	Feb. 8 th , 2018	6	- Rainforest development & dynamics	- Chapter 6
	Feb. 15 th , 2018	--	- Midterm (in class) - Lectures & DVD's (lectures 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5)	
	Feb. 19-23, 2018	--	- Reading week	
	Mar. 1 st , 2018	7	- Forest management - DVD: Odzala	Not in textbook
	Mar. 8 th , 2018	8	- Humans & terrestrial Ecosystems - DVD: Trees for Life - Assignment due 11:59 pm on Learn	- Chapter 13 Homework: watch video on Youtube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3r2BW34eRT8
	Mar. 15 th , 2018	9	- Sustainable tropical agroecosystems - Guest Lecturer	- Chapter 13: pp. 491-494
	Mar. 22 nd , 2018	10	- Agroecosystems & Biodiversity - DVD: When Two Worlds Collide	- Not in textbook
3. Conservation Issues & Management	Mar. 29 th , 2018	11	- Forest fragmentation - Tropical biodiversity - Final exam review	- Chapter 14 - Chapter 15: pp. 530-533

DETAILED SCHEDULE OF COURSE ACTIVITIES

A note on the DVD's:

The DVD's have been carefully selected to match with the lecture material. You may find some of the cast in the DVD's a little outdated in their appearance. The material presented in these DVD's however is still relevant to current issues relating to tropical ecosystems.

MODULE I: TROPICAL BIOMES

LECTURE 1

Introduction

- Introduction to ERS 383/BIOL 383: Tropical Ecosystems
- Course syllabus
- Course expectations

What & Where are the Tropics (Chapter 1)

- Historical perspectives on tropical ecosystems
- Location of the tropics
- Tropical climates and seasons

Tropical Ecoregions (Chapter 3 pp. 79-82; Chapter 11; Chapter 12 pp. 446-463)

- Tropical rainforests (Chapter 3, pp. 79-82)
- Tropical and neo-tropical savannas
- Tropical dry forests
- Tropical wetlands and riverine ecosystems (Chapter 12 pp. 446-463)

DVD: Brazil – Land of Fire and Flood: Go up river and deep into the jungle – far from Brazil's cities and stadiums – where families of giant otters, tufted capuchin monkeys and mischievous coati (South American raccoon cousins rally their wits to survive in a breathtakingly beautiful yet dangerous land. Follow their olives through an exciting year, from first steps in a brave new world, to ingenious resilience during drought and monsoon (minutes).

MODULE 2: TROPICAL BIOLOGY & ECOLOGY

LECTURE 2

Characteristics of Tropical Vegetation (Chapter 3)

- Stratification and stature
- Roots, trunks, bark and crowns
- Leaves
- Flowers, fruits, seeds and vegetative reproduction
- Climbers, lianas, stranglers and epiphytes
- Deciduous behavior

DVD: The Amazon – Land of the Flooded Forest: Journey into a tropical jungle where terrestrial rains annually transform the dry forest floor into a watery world. Watch river dolphins navigate the flooded treetops and the masterful hunting techniques of the electric eel and notorious piranha (60 minutes).

LECTURE 3

Tropical Soils (Chapter 10 pp. 375-389)

- What is soil and tropical soil mineralogy
- Tropical soil chemistry, physics, biology and soil organic matter
- What are tropical soils?
- Soil formation & factors influencing soil formation
- Types of tropical soils
- Undisturbed and disturbed tropical soils
- Processes of tropical soil degradation
- The paradox of exuberant vegetation and poor soils: the case of tropical forest removal

LECTURE 4

Nutrient Cycling (Chapter 10)

- Nutrient cycling and the soil community
- Factors affecting nutrient cycling
- Rapid nutrient recycling
- Tropical soil types and nutrient cycling
- Nitrogen and phosphorus

Carbon & Climate Change (Chapter 9)

- Primary and net productivity
- Carbon in pioneer and successional species
- What is a carbon sink?
- Seasonal fluxes and carbon losses
- Climate change and tropical forests

DVD: Panama – Venture beyond the dense and green curtain, into the rainforest that thrives in splendid isolation on a Panamanian island. Marvel at the complex interactions among the exotic species that live, feed, breed and die here (50 minutes).

MODULE 3: TROPICAL FOREST ECOSYSTEMS

LECTURE 5

Tropical Forested Landscapes & Landforms (Chapter 12)

- Montane and neotropical montane forests
- High elevation tropical ecosystems
- Mangroves
- Tropical dry forests

The Driving Forces Behind Tropical Forest Cover Loss (Chapter 15)

- Global forest cover: then and now
- Removal of valuable hardwood tree species
- Fuel wood and paper industries
- Grazing land and agriculture
- Subsistence farming
- The influence of governments
- The effects of deforestation: local, regional and global
- What can be done to reduce tropical forest removal

DVD: Classic Rainforest – The tropical rainforests of the world are home to nearly half of the animal species on earth. More than 2500 mm of rainfall each year sustain this lush environment where some of the most fascinating examples of natural adaptation can be found. Journey to the dense rainforests of Costa Rica and watch as leaf-cutting ants carry sections of leaves many times their weight to underground fungus gardens; a basilisk lizard walks on water, and howler monkeys bark in the sun. (56 minutes).

LECTURE 6

Rainforest Development & Dynamics (Chapter 6)

- Secondary succession in the tropics
- Early succession in the tropics
- Effect of ENSO on second-growth rainforests
- Resilient pastures: secondary succession in Amazonia
- Disturbance impacts and regeneration pathways
- Fire as disturbance in the tropics
- When succession does not succeed
- Forest gaps and tree demographics

DVD: Brazil Land of Fire and Flood – This series follows the intimate lives of an exceptional set of animal characters as they live through the vast floods of the wet season to the ravaging fires of the dry season. From the early days of a baby tufted capuchin, one of the cleverest monkeys in the world, to the giant river otter family forced to go head to head with the local jaguars, Wild Brazil brings some of the country's most iconic species to the screen, showcasing never-before-filmed behavior and providing an intimate window on this vibrant country (278 minutes).

LECTURE 7

Tropical Forest Management (not in textbook)

- Historical overview of logging in the tropics
- Conventional timber harvest
- Sustainable timber harvest
- Plantation forest: good, bad or indifferent?

DVD: Odzala – Islands in the Forest: Hidden deep inside the Republic of Congo lays Odzala National park, a dense, isolated rainforest that humans seldom visit. From forest elephants and lowland gorillas to water buffalo and cattle egrets show their coexistence around a swampy watering hole called a bai (53 minutes).

MODULE 4: TROPICAL AGROECOSYSTEMS

LECTURE 8

Humans as Part of Tropical Ecosystems (Chapter 13)

- Human impact on ecology: traditional agriculture in tropical environments
- Hunting and gathering: the first human societies
- Emergence of tropical crops
- From simple beginnings: the discovery of agriculture
- Agriculture in the neotropics
- Agroforestry and hillside farming

- Ethnobotany
- Semi-commercial farming systems: tropical beverage crops
- Conventional agroecosystems: the commercialization of agriculture using plantation crops

DVD: Trees for Life – Discover how women in Mali enhance their livelihoods by integrating trees on their agricultural fields and homesteads (8 minutes).

Homework: Watch youtube video “Growing Hope in Sunyani West District Ghana” in preparation for the guest lecturer. The link is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3r2BW34eRT8>

LECTURE 9

Sustainable Tropical Agroecosystems: An Old Idea Made Modern (Chapter 13, pp. 491-494)

- The principles of complex agroecosystems & examples of complex agroecosystems in the tropics
- A detailed look at agroforestry systems
- Historical perspectives on agroforestry
- Types of agroforestry systems
- Why do we need agroforestry: what are the benefits
- What is the role of multipurpose trees
- Can agroforestry stop deforestation
- Coffee and cacao agroforestry systems

Guest Lecturer Dr. N. Thevathasan: Ghana case study using agroforestry land-use systems to enhance income and food security.

LECTURE 10

Tropical Agroecosystems & Biodiversity (not in textbook)

- Ecological role of biodiversity in modern agroecosystems
- What happens if biodiversity is lost in modern agriculture?
- Biodiversity in complex agroecosystems
- Biodiversity in cacao agroecosystems: a case study from Costa Rica

Tropical Agroecosystems & Climate Change (not in textbook)

- Potential impacts of climate change on agriculture in the tropics
- Biophysical responses to increased atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations
- Adaptation to climate change and the limits of adaptation in the tropics
- Agroforestry as an adaptive agroecosystem: a case study from Costa Rica

DVD: When Two Worlds Collide -- In this tense and immersive tour de force, audiences are taken directly into the line of fire between powerful, opposing Peruvian leaders who will stop at nothing to keep their respective goals intact. On the one side is President Alan Garcia, who, eager to enter the world stage, begins aggressively extracting oil, minerals, and gas from untouched indigenous Amazonian land. He is quickly met with fierce opposition from indigenous leader Alberto Pizango, whose impassioned speeches against Garcia’s destructive actions prove a powerful rallying cry to throngs of his supporters. When Garcia continues to ignore their pleas, a tense war of words erupts into deadly violence (1 hr & 47 minutes).

MODULE 5: CONSERVATION ISSUES IN TROPICAL ECOSYSTEMS

LECTURE 11

Forest Fragmentation (Chapter 14)

- Fragmentation
- Case studies of fragmentation: effects on wildlife
- Fragmentation, edge effects and matrix suitability
- Connectivity corridors
- The meso-American biological corridor: case study

Biodiversity (Chapter 14) & Conservation (Chapter 15, pp. 530-533)

- Approaches to understanding biodiversity
- Dealing with potential loss of biodiversity
- Biodiversity hotspots
- Ecosystem services

STUDENT CONDUCT AND APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

I encourage students to study together, however each student is expected to individually fulfill the requirements of the assignment, presentation, and exams. It is the responsibility of each student to be aware of what constitutes responsible behaviour in class, what constitutes plagiarism, and your rights and responsibilities with respect to these issues.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY:

Students should be aware that this course contains the intellectual property of their instructor, TA, and/or the University of Waterloo. Intellectual property includes items such as:

- Lecture content, spoken and written (and any audio/video recording thereof);
- Lecture handouts, presentations, and other materials prepared for the course (e.g., PowerPoint slides);
- Questions or solution sets from various types of assessments (e.g., assignments, quizzes, tests, final exams); and
- Work protected by copyright (e.g., any work authored by the instructor or TA or used by the instructor or TA with permission of the copyright owner).

Course materials and the intellectual property contained therein, are used to enhance a student's educational experience. However, sharing this intellectual property without the intellectual property owner's permission is a violation of intellectual property rights. For this reason, it is necessary to ask the instructor, TA and/or the University of Waterloo for permission before uploading and sharing the intellectual property of others online (e.g., to an online repository).

Permission from an instructor, TA or the University is also necessary before sharing the intellectual property of others from completed courses with students taking the same/similar courses in subsequent terms/years. In many cases, instructors might be happy to allow distribution of certain materials. However, doing so without expressed permission is considered a violation of intellectual property rights.

Please alert the instructor if you become aware of intellectual property belonging to others (past or present) circulating, either through the student body or online. The intellectual property rights owner deserves to know (and may have already given their consent).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. The University's guiding principles on academic integrity can be found here: <http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity>. ENV students are strongly encouraged to review the material provided by the university's Academic Integrity office specifically for students: <http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/Students/index.html>

Students are also expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for their actions. Students who are unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who need help in learning how to avoid offenses (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. Students may also complete the following tutorial: <https://uwaterloo.ca/library/get-assignment-and-research-help/academic-integrity/academic-integrity-tutorial>

When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline: <https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71>. Students who believe that they have been wrongfully or unjustly penalized have the right to grieve; refer to Policy #70, Student Grievance: <https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70>

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: [AccessAbility Services](#), located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with [AccessAbility Services](#) at the beginning of each academic term.

MENTAL HEALTH: The University of Waterloo, the Faculty of Environment and our Departments/Schools consider students' well-being to be extremely important. We recognize that throughout the term students may face health challenges - physical and / or emotional. **Please note that help is available.** Mental health is a serious issue for everyone and can affect your ability to do your best work. Counselling Services <http://www.uwaterloo.ca/counselling-services> is an inclusive, non-judgmental, and confidential space for anyone to seek support. They offer confidential counselling for a variety of areas including anxiety, stress management, depression, grief, substance use, sexuality, relationship issues, and much more.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES: Students need to inform the instructor at the beginning of term if special accommodation needs to be made for religious observances that are not otherwise accounted for in the scheduling of classes and assignments.

GRIEVANCE: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. See Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm. When in doubt please contact your Undergraduate Advisor for details.

APPEALS: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 – (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals) www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm

COMMUNICATIONS WITH INSTRUCTOR AND TEACHING ASSISTANTS: All communication with students must be through either the student's University of Waterloo email account or via Learn. If a student emails the instructor or TA from a personal account they will be requested to resend the email using their personal University of Waterloo email account.

TURNITIN: Text matching software (Turnitin®) may be used to screen assignments in this course. Turnitin® is used to verify that all materials and sources in assignments are documented. Students' submissions are stored on a U.S. server, and are subject to the USA PATRIOT ACT, 2001; therefore, students must be given an alternative (e.g., scaffolded assignment or annotated bibliography) if they are concerned about their privacy and/or security. Students will be due notice, in the first week of the term and/or at the time assignment details are provided, about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin® in this course.

RECORDING LECTURES:

Use of recording devices during lectures is only allowed with explicit permission of the instructor of the course. If allowed, video recordings may only include images of the instructor and not fellow classmates. Posting of videos or links to the video to any website, including but not limited to social media sites such as: facebook, twitter, etc., is strictly prohibited.

CO-OP INTERVIEWS AND CLASS ATTENDANCE: Co-op students are encouraged to try and choose interview time slots that result in the least amount of disruption to class schedules. When this is challenging, or not possible, a student may miss a portion of a class meeting for an interview. Instructors are asked for leniency in these situations; but, a co-op interview does not relieve the student of any requirements associated with that class meeting.

When a co-op interview conflicts with an in-class evaluation mechanism (e.g., test, quiz, presentation, critique), class attendance takes precedence and the onus is on the student to reschedule the interview. CECA provides an interview conflict procedure to manage these situations.

Students will be required to provide copies of their interview schedules (they may be printed from WaterlooWorks) should there be a need to verify class absence due to co-op interviews.