

Course Syllabus
SWS 2008: Land and Life, Spring Semester [3 credit hours]

Instructor:	Dr. Samuel Smidt
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Office Location:	McCarty A, G153
Office Hours:	Scheduled by appointment or open door on-campus
Course Format:	Online only
Course Website:	https://elearning.ufl.edu/
Course Description:	This course introduces students to the supporting physical characteristics and functions of the land that make life possible. Land and Life is composed of five main topic areas: (1) fundamentals of land and life, (2) biological resources, (3) geological resources, (4) soils as a resource, and (5) urban land use. This course focuses on supporting ecological processes and ecosystem services within a natural environment and culminates with urban modifications to natural systems. There is no prerequisite and this course fulfills three credit hours of Biology Gen Ed credit.
Required Texts:	No textbook is required. You will be asked to download articles, book chapters, reports, and assignments throughout the semester.
Chat Sessions:	There are no chat sessions for this course.
Communication:	Direct communication will come through your official University of Florida email via Canvas. Group communication will also be posted through the Canvas site. Each student is responsible for these messages, and emails should be checked daily. I will respond to all emails in a timely manner during the week.
Canvas:	I will post all grades, lecture content, and resources to the course site.
Grading Policy:	Your final is a combination of module assignments, exams, discussion posts, and course conduct. I do not curve grades. I reserve the right to adjust grades at the end of the semester at the benefit to the student. I will not adjust grades lower than earned on graded items, unless first discussed with the student.
Late Homework:	I do not accept late assignments without prior consent. I do not offer make-up assignments without prior consent.
General Policies:	Assignments are to be your own work unless stated otherwise. Each module will last ~3 weeks. All relevant content will be made available to you at the start of each module. You must get my approval prior to any late submissions.
Course Evaluation:	At the end of the semester, students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course using a standard set of university and college criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at https://evaluations.ufl.edu . Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

Module 1

1. Describe land cover variations in response to environmental factors.
2. Connect human populations to their surrounding ecosystems.
3. Identify Earth’s interacting physical, chemical, and biological processes.
4. Explain the role of ecosystem services.
5. Investigate an environmental issue of interest.

Module 2

1. Describe how biological resources impact and are impacted by humans.
2. Explain how land cover is largely driven by human biological resource demand.
3. Identify threats to stable biological resources.
4. Investigate an environmental issue of interest.

Module 3

1. Identify how geological resources are formed.
2. Identify common consumption trends.
3. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of resource use.
4. Design an infographic on an environmental issue of interest.

Module 4

1. Describe how soils are formed, their function as a resource, and their value to society.
2. Identify common soil management goals and strategies.
3. Evaluate proposed solutions to an environmental issue of interest.

Module 5

1. Identify key characteristics of urban land use.
2. Identify how cities are working to integrate ecosystem services into planning strategies.
3. Discuss the infographics created by peers and provide feedback.

Course Grades

Modules 1-4 Assignment:	50 points each, 4 assignments, 40% of total grade	200 Points
Module 5 Assignment:	65 points, 1 assignment, 13% of total grade	65 points
Lesson Quizzes:	5 points per quiz, 23 quizzes, 23% of total grade	115 Points
Group Reflection:	15 points per reflection, 8 reflections, 24% of total grade	120 Points
	TOTAL	500 Points

Grade Description

Module Assignments:	Each module will have an extended assignment relevant to the topics covered within the module. Each assignment will be announced at the start of the module and due at the end. Each assignment has its own grading criteria that will be described at the beginning of each module. All assignment information can be found in the module script.
Lesson Quizzes:	Each lesson includes a brief 5-question quiz.
Group Reflection:	Students will be using Perusall to respond and comment to several prompts throughout the semester.
Final Exam:	There is no final exam.

Grading Scale

A : 93 – 100%	B+ : 88 – 89.9%	C+ : 78 – 79.9%	D+ : 68 – 69.9%	F : <60%
A- : 90 – 92.9%	B : 83 – 87.9%	C : 73 – 77.9%	D : 63 – 67.9%	
	B- : 80 – 82.9%	C- : 70 – 72.9%	D- : 60 – 62.9%	

Teaching Philosophy and Course Design

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1. This course follows a predictable 3-part pattern which repeats at the task, module, and semester scales. This is a “fractal” pattern to education. Part 1 is the introduction of new topics, concepts, or ideas. Part 2 is the expansion of these concepts in connection with other principles and topics. Part 3 is the application of new knowledge in a multidisciplinary framework.

 2. This course is designed to satisfy a list of major unit objectives or “big-picture” concepts. Each unit objective consists of minor objectives that are supported by module. Objectives are to be used as a guide for key course concepts.

Example:

Major Objective 1: Describe land cover variations in response to environmental factors, connect human populations to their surrounding ecosystems, and explain the role of ecosystem services.

Minor Objective 1.1: Identify land cover classifications, describe why land cover varies across regions, and identify key components to human civilizations.

Academic Integrity: As a UF student, you have committed to the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: “*We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.*” You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “*On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.*” Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. Violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information regarding the Student Honor Code, please see: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>.

Students with Disabilities: The Disability Resource Center coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Software Use: All faculty, staff and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual

violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

Attendance Policy:

Requirements for class attendance (online participation) are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Campus Helping Resources:

Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university's counseling resources. The Counseling & Wellness Center provides confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance.

*University Counseling & Wellness Center, 3190 Radio Road, 352-392-1575, www.counseling.ufl.edu

Counseling Services
Groups and Workshops
Outreach and Consultation
Self-Help Library
Wellness Coaching

*U Matter We Care, www.umatter.ufl.edu/

*Career Connections Center, First Floor JWRU, 392-1601, <https://career.ufl.edu/>.

Student Complaints:

Residential Course: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/>

Online Course: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process>

Course Schedule

WEEK #	START DATE	TOPIC	END DATE
1-3	5- Jan	Module 1: Introduction (Land and Life) Fundamentals of Land Fundamentals of Life Introduction to Ecosystems Introduction to Ecosystem Services	26- Jan
4-6	27- Jan	Module 2: Methods (Biological Resources) Basics of Biological Resources Vegetated Land Cover Cropland Resources Animal Resources Invasive Species	15- Feb
7-9	16- Feb	Module 3: Results (Geological Resources) Basics of Geological Resources Mineral Resources Energy Resources Resource Supply and Consumption Pros & Cons of Resource Use	15- Mar
10-12	16- Mar	Module 4: Discussion (Soils as a Resource) Basics of Soils Soil Formation Soil Quality Soil Management Soils around the World	1- Apr
13-15	4- Apr	Module 5: Conclusion (Urban Land Use) Urban Ecosystems Urban Land Cover Green Infrastructure Urban Agriculture Urban Planning	20- Apr