SWS2008 Land and Life

Spring, 2026
Online Asynchronous, 3.0 Credits

Instructor, Evelyn "Prissy" Fletcher

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Zoom chat hours: Wednesdays, 12:00 – 12:30pm and Thursdays 6:00 – 6:30pm

Course Description

Course will focus on relationships between human activities and soil and environmental quality. Lectures will concentrate on fundamentals of soil and environmental science, using case studies to illustrate basic principles. Intended for non-majors. General Education - Biological Science.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Describe Earth's natural processes, including biological, chemical and physical;

2. Connect soil formations and geological processes with the land and ecosystem services;

3. Explain how humans interact with and utilize the land in their daily lives, including urban areas; and

4. Reflect on the impacts and challenges of the many uses of natural resources, in addition to consequences and solutions.

Course Prerequisites
None.

Course Overview and Purpose

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.

Textbooks, Learning Materials, and Supply Fees
None.

Required Technology
Access to a computer with video camera and audio capabilities and stable internet.

Instructor Interaction Plan
- The instructor will provide weekly updates and reminders of course activities.
- The instructor or TA will respond to emails and Canvas messages within 48 hours, excluding holidays and weekends, unless an exam is scheduled that weekend.
- All chat sessions will be available through Zoom for 30 minutes on Wednesdays and Thursdays.
- Meeting opportunities are also available as needed by using the Book w/ Me link or Canvas.

Communication Guidelines
Use the Canvas Inbox (messaging tool) for questions that are specific to the course. Emails sent directly to the instructor's UF email could result in delays due to inbox congestion.

Please be mindful of everyone's unique schedules and time preferences. "Night owls" cannot expect "early birds" to respond to late evening emails immediately, and vice versa. The instructor checks her emails daily during the work week, and often between the hours of 9am and 6pm.

Contact the instructor in advance if you have a legitimate reason (not medically related [i.e., traveling for student club activities, student athletes participating in a competition/game, attending a conference in the Pacific time zone, religious observations]). Accommodation for continuous extensions throughout the semester will be requested through UF CARE at the beginning of the semester, unless an emergency or illness occurs.

Quizzes and HW assignments that are submitted after the deadline will have a 5% deduction per day. Assignment submissions will stay open past the deadline for 5 additional days before closing permanently the following Wednesday. Exams will be open for a week to take at your convenience.

Weekly Zoom chats are optional but highly encouraged to ask questions or clarify assignment topics. Students may receive up to 1 extra credit point per week for attendance.

Class Demeanor/Expectations

Be respectful and kind in all communications to faculty, assistants, and your fellow students. Written communication, both formal and informal, should always be thoughtful and professional, including:

- Spelling, punctuation, and grammar are correct. Be clear and concise.
- Avoid the use of slang or abbreviations.
- Video interactions reflect a respectful tone in verbal communications and body language.
- Avoid using caps lock as IT CAN BE INTERPRETED AS YELLING (see my point?)
- Be cautious when using sarcasm as tone and inflection can be lost in translation.
- Never include personal information, such as medical documents, within correspondence.
- Be specific to the module or assignment that you are referring to when asking for help.
- Forgetting that an assignment was due will not be acceptable for accommodations.

General Education Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes

General Education Designation: Biological Sciences (B) ([area objectives available here](#)).

General Education Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)	Biological Science SLO	Objective Alignment	SLO Assessment
Content	Identify, describe, and explain the basic concepts, theories and terminology of natural science and the scientific method; the major scientific discoveries and the impacts on society and the environment; and the relevant processes that govern biological and physical systems.	Objectives 1-4	All assessments and student practice assignments offer opportunities for students to demonstrate content knowledge.
Critical Thinking	Formulate empirically-testable hypotheses derived from the study of physical processes or living things; apply logical reasoning skills effectively through scientific criticism and argument; and apply techniques of discovery and critical thinking effectively to solve scientific problems and to evaluate outcomes.	Objectives 1-4	Discussions, Essay, Infographics, Quizzes, and Assignments based on interactive simulations.
Communication	Communicate scientific knowledge, thoughts, and reasoning clearly and effectively.	Objectives 1-4	Discussions, Essay and Infographics, Videos, Presentations, and assignments based on interacting with online simulations, and peer reviews.

Assessment Schedules for Time Management

All modules will open after the completion of the previous one, assuming that all assessments have been completed. You can work on your assignments as early as you prefer but they must be completed by the associated deadline for each module. Writing assignments must also be completed by the end of each module to stay on track and to allow the instructor to review and provide proper feedback. Persuall group discussions will be based on topics within the modules, and more points are awarded as you interact with each other. Writing assignments and group reflections are due on Saturdays.

Quizzes have the greatest flexibility but encouraged to be taken upon completion of each lesson instead of taking them all at the end of the module. Two opportunities per timed quiz, open notes. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester. Quizzes are due on Fridays.

Weekly Course Schedule

Module	Week (2026)	Topic	Assessments	Due Dates
M0	1/11 – 1/17	Introductions & Syllabus	Syllabus Quiz, Introductions	1/16
M1 – L1	1/11 – 1/17	Fundamentals of Land	L1 Quiz, Group Reflection	1/30, 1/31
M1 – L2	1/18 – 1/24*	Fundamentals of Life	L2 Quiz	1/30
M1 – L3	1/18 – 1/24*	Introduction to Ecosystems	L3 Quiz	1/30
M1 – L4	1/25 – 1/31	Introduction to Ecosystem Services	L4 Quiz, Group Reflection, M1 Assignment	1/30, 1/31
M2 – L1	1/25 – 1/31	Basics of Biological Resources	L1 Quiz	2/13
M2 – L2	2/1 – 2/7	Vegetated Land Cover	L2 Quiz, Group Reflection	2/13, 2/14
M2 – L3	2/1 – 2/7	Cropland Resources	L3 Quiz	2/13
M2 – L4	2/8- 2/14	Animal Resources	L4 Quiz	2/13
M2 – L5	2/8- 2/14	Invasive Species	L5 Quiz, Group Reflection, M2 Assignment	2/13, 2/14
M3 – L1	2/15 – 2/21	Basics of Geological Resources	L1 Quiz	2/27
M3 – L2	2/15 – 2/21	Mineral Resources	L2 Quiz	2/27
M3 – L3	2/22 – 2/28	Energy Resources & Supplies	L3 Quiz	2/27
M3 – L4	2/22 – 2/28	Pros & Cons of Resource Use	L4 Quiz, Group Reflection, M3 Assignment	2/27, 2/28
M4 – L1	3/1 – 3/7	Basics of Soils	L1 Quiz	3/27
M4 – L2	3/1 – 3/7	Soil Formation	L2 Quiz, Group Reflection	3/27, 3/28
M4 – L3	3/8 – 3/14	Soil Quality	L3 Quiz	3/27
M4 – L4	3/8 – 3/14	Soil Management	L4 Quiz, Group Reflection	3/27, 3/28
	3/15 – 3/21	*SPRING BREAK*		
M4 – L5	3/22 – 3/28	Soils Around the World	L5 Quiz, M4 Assignment	3/27, 3/28
M5 – L1	3/22 – 3/28	Urban Ecosystems	L1 Quiz	4/17
M5 – L2	3/29 – 4/4	Urban Land Cover	L2 Quiz	4/17
M5 – L3	3/29 – 4/4	Green Infrastructure	L3 Quiz, M5 Assignment (P1)	4/17, 4/18
M5 – L4	4/5 – 4/11	Urban Agriculture	L4 Quiz	4/17
M5 – L5	4/12 – 4/18	Urban Planning	L5 Quiz	4/17
	4/19 – 4/25		M5 Assignment (P2)	4/25

Grading Policy

Course grading is consistent with UF grading policies.

Course Grading Structure

Assignment Type	Points/Assignment	Total Point Value	Percent of Final Grade
Orientation/Syllabus Quiz (1)	25	25	2.5%
Lesson Quizzes (23)	20	460	46%
Group Reflection (8) + Intro (EC)	30	240 (Up to 3 EC)	24%
Individual Assignments (5)	50 (+25 on M5)	275	27.5%
		1000 Total Points	100%

Grading Scale

Grade	Points	Percentage
A	4.0	89.5 – 100%
B+	3.5	84.5 – 89.4%
B	3.0	79.5 – 84.4%
C+	2.5	74.5 – 79.4%
C	2.0	69.5 – 74.4%
D+	1.5	64.5 – 69.4%
D	1.0	59.5 – 64.4%
E	0	0 – 59.4%

Academic Policies and Resources

Academic policies for this course are consistent with university policies. See
https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/

Campus Health and Wellness Resources

Visit https://one.uf.edu/whole-gator/topics for resources that are designed to help you thrive physically, mentally, and emotionally at UF.

Please contact UMatterWeCare for additional and immediate support.

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.

Privacy and Accessibility Policies

- Adobe
  - [Adobe Privacy Policy](#)
  - [Adobe Accessibility](#)
- Instructure (Canvas)
  - [Instructure Privacy Policy](#)
  - [Instructure Accessibility](#)
- Perusall
  - [Perusall Privacy Policy](#)
  - [Perusall Accessibility](#)
- YouTube (Google)
  - [YouTube (Google) Privacy Policy](#)
  - [YouTube (Google) Accessibility](#)
- Zoom
  - [Zoom Privacy Policy](#)
  - [Zoom Accessibility](#)

Technical Support

UF Computing Help Desk & Ticket Number: All technical issues require a UF Helpdesk Ticket Number. The UF Helpdesk is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/ | 352-392-4357

Additional information

[Optional: Instructors may choose to clarify in their syllabus their teaching philosophy, expectations for classroom behavior, utilization of e-learning, grading rubrics, and other information that will help students succeed in the course.]