



SWS4932 Ecosystem Principles and Practices in Soil and Water Sciences

Fall 2025, 3.0 Credits

Hybrid - Wednesdays, Period 4

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Course Website: <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/>

Course Description

This course will explore the ecosystems of the world, in addition to the specific ecological communities of Florida. From marine systems to forests and tundras, we will dive into the many ecosystems that exist and their global distributions. Their structure and functions will be reviewed along with the applications of soil and water as resources in natural and agricultural environments. This will also include the impacts of disturbances and conservation practices within ecosystems. The hybrid format will consist of online, synchronous learning that is complimented with a once a week, in-person reflection of the modules, and some activities.

Gen Ed Requirements

This course will be reviewed for potential natural sciences approval for general education.

Course Learning Objectives

The course objectives are intended to introduce undergraduate students to the many ecosystems that exist throughout the world, concluding with a focus on ecological communities of Florida, in addition to emphasis on soil and water applications throughout the lectures. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Discover and recognize the applications of soil and water sciences within ecosystems;
- Differentiate between the many ecosystems throughout the world and the factors (soils, climate, wildlife and vegetation) that categorize each type of ecosystem;
- Classify the 26 ecological communities of Florida;
- Discuss and reflect topics with fellow students to apply ecosystem sciences to their daily lives and to devise a plan for restoration or conservation to a real-world issue.

Learning Materials and Supplies

No materials or additional fees required.

Instructor Interaction Plan

- The instructor will respond to emails and Canvas message within 48 hours, during weekdays.
- All discussions will take place in person on Wednesdays during Period 4 to ensure that the weekly module objectives were achieved and understood, along with in-class activities.
- While the Canvas Discussion board is encouraged to be utilized for general questions about the class or technical glitches, your attendance grade is based on the Wednesday class participation.
- Students have the entire week starting on Sunday (when the module opens) until 11:59pm on Saturdays to review the materials and complete their quizzes. If the student chooses to wait until the weekend to complete their quizzes, please note that assistance may be delayed.

Required Technology & How to Obtain Technology

Access to a computer with audio capabilities and a camera for proctoring.

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

Weekly Course Schedule

Module	Topic	Assessment	Due Dates
M0	Course Orientation	Syllabus Quiz	8/30/2025
M1	Review of soil and water sciences	Quiz M1	8/30/2025
M2	Fundamentals of ecosystems: Biomes, energy flow, trophic levels	Quiz M2	9/6/2025
M3	Freshwater ecosystems	Quiz M3	9/13/2025
M4	Marine ecosystems	Quiz M4	9/20/2025
M5	Forest ecosystems	Quiz M5	9/27/2025
M6	Grassland ecosystems	Quiz M6	10/4/2025
	[Assessment (covering M1-M6)]	Exam 1	10/11/2025
	Midterm GatorEval Survey		
M7	Alpine ecosystems	Quiz M7	10/18/2025
M8	Tundra ecosystems	Quiz M8	10/25/2025
M9	Desert ecosystems	Quiz M9	11/1/2025
M10	Agroecology and food systems	Quiz M10	11/8/2025
M11	Ecological Communities of Florida	Quiz M11	11/15/2025
	[Assessment covering M7-11]	Exam 2	11/22/2025
	Holiday Week	No Quiz	
M12	Disturbances and impacts; Conservation and protection	Quiz M12	12/3/2025
	Course GatorEval Survey		
	[Final Project]	Project	12/3/2025

Grading Policy

Assignment Type	Points/Assignment	Total Point Value	Percent of Final Grade
Quizzes (12 + 1 EC)	25	300 + EC	32%
Midterms (2)	150	300	32%
Attendance (12 Days)	15	180	19%
Group Project (1)	150	150	16%
EC = Extra Credit		1000 Total Points	100%

Online quizzes and exams will represent the highest percentage of your final grade. Every quiz will allow you *two* attempts and will consist of randomized questions from one student to another. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped at the end of the semester, or a missed quiz (if applicable). The syllabus quiz is not required but will provide extra credit if taken by the deadline. There will be two midterm exams, and no final exam. Students will have *one* chance to take each of their online exams, which will be timed and proctored.

Class attendance will be recorded for the one in-person class period per week. It is expected that students will discuss the weekly module, reflect on their learnings and use the opportunity to ask any questions relative to the topic. There will be some in-class activities that the instructor will give advanced notice of, especially if technology is required (such as a laptop or Smart phone device). Students will have *one* unexcused absence from the weekly in-class discussions. Students that attend all 13 in-person classes will receive extra credit on their lowest midterm score.

The group project will consist of identifying an ecosystem in peril and discussing how to address that problem with potential solutions. More details will be discussed on the project after add/drop week to form the five groups of four students. Students may elect to form their own groups, if desired.

Grading Scale

Grade	Points	Percentage	GPA Points
A	895 – 1000	89.5 – 100%	4.0
B+	845 – 894	84.5 – 89.4%	3.5
B	795 – 844	79.5 – 84.4%	3.0
C+	745 – 794	74.5 – 79.4%	2.5
C	695 – 744	69.5 – 74.4%	2.0
D+	645 – 694	64.5 – 69.4%	1.5
D	595 – 644	59.5 – 64.4%	1.0
E	0 - 494	0 – 49.4%	0

Attendance & Make-up Work

Attendance is required for all of the in-class session times on Wednesday during Period 4, but one unexcused absence is allowed. Therefore, 12 of the 13-classes are graded on attendance and participation. Please contact the instructor in advance if you have a legitimate reason for missing an upcoming exam or class activity (i.e., traveling for student club activities, student athletes attending a game/match, attending a professional conference in the Pacific time zone, sibling’s wedding planned for that weekend). If you have an illness or emergency, please inform the instructor as soon as possible for a makeup exam – either on Canvas or in-person. Quizzes must be taken every Saturday by 11:59pm.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies. [UF Attendance Policies](#)

Academic Honesty

University of Florida students are bound by the Honor Pledge. As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold 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 by abiding by the Student Honor Code.” 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."

It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission for you to collaborate on course tasks (e.g. assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information regarding the Student Honor Code, please see [Student Conduct Code Process](#).

Student Privacy Disclaimer:

[For online course with recorded materials a statement informing students of privacy related issues such as:

Our class sessions may be audio-visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.]

In-Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording

without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student

Course Evaluation Process

Student assessment of instruction is an important part of efforts to improve teaching and learning. 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. Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at: <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via the [GatorEvals site](#). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at [GatorEvals Public Data](#).

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.

Services for Students with Disabilities

A statement related to accommodations for students with disabilities such as:

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Campus 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.

Health and Wellness

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or <https://umatter.ufl.edu/> to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: Visit <https://counseling.ufl.edu/> or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit <https://shcc.ufl.edu/>
- *University Police Department*: Visit <https://police.ufl.edu/> or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; visit <https://ufhealth.org/locations/uf-health-shands-emergency-room-trauma-center>
- *GatorWell Health Promotion Services*: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit <https://gatorwell.ufsa.ufl.edu/> or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 <https://it.ufl.edu/helpdesk/> or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- *Career Connections Center*: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- *Library Support*: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- *Teaching Center*: 1317 Turlington Hall, 352-392-2010. General study skills and tutoring.
- *Writing Studio*: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- *Student Concern*: [Report Student Concerns or Conduct](#)

Student Complaints:

- Residential Course: <https://www.sfa.ufl.edu/written-student-complaints/>
- Online Course: <https://pfs.tnt.aa.ufl.edu/state-authorization-status/#student-complaint>

Additional Information

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

Privacy and Accessibility Policies

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