

**BIOL/EVPP 318 & 518: CONSERVATION BIOLOGY
SPRING 2021
MW 9-10:15 AM Online 3 credits**

Instructor: Dr. Travis Gallo

Office: 3018 David King (not on campus this semester)

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Office hours (by phone): Wednesday 11am-1pm, call or text 940-367-0741
(office hours appointments preferred)

Course Description:

This course focuses on the scientific foundations of conservation. We will address major threats to biodiversity and discuss approaches for overcoming these threats in ways that balance the needs of people and nature. Students will gain a greater understanding of the major principles and contemporary issues in Conservation Biology. This interactive class emphasizes student involvement and participation. Although there will be regular lectures by the instructor and guest speakers, the focus of the course will be on student-led in-class discussions.

Assigned Readings:

Course materials include articles from the primary literature and occasionally from other media sources. All readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Textbook (optional):

Edited by Navjot S Sodhi and Paul Ehrlich. [Conservation Biology for All](https://conbio.org/publications/free-textbook/). Open Source:
<https://conbio.org/publications/free-textbook/>

Discussions:

Each week we will have an in-class discussion focused on papers from the scientific literature. Typically, a team of 4-5 students will be assigned to lead each discussion section. The lead students are expected to submit 3-5 discussion questions on the reading for posting on canvas no later than 9:00 am on Monday. Students not leading discussion must come to each discussion section. Those students not leading the discuss will post their overall thoughts about their in-class discussion board by 11:59pm on Friday each week. At the start of the discussion, the lead students will provide a thorough yet concise (no more than 5 minutes!) overview of the paper. In the summary, you should: 1) review the major points of the paper, 2) highlight novel results and conclusions, 3) relate the paper to other readings or discussions in class or your own knowledge, and 4) raise questions or objections you have with the methods, results, and/or conclusions. Following the summary, the lead students should then be prepared to actively generate and facilitate discussion for the rest of the allocated time. 50% of your grade will be leading a discussion, and the other 50% will be participating in non-led discussions (attendance and discussion board post).

One-pager Policy Handout:

Each student will be required to write a 1-page policy brief on the topic of your term paper. More details on this assignment will follow.

Midterms and Final Exam:

We will have two midterm and a final exam. The midterm will cover all material up to the previous class period. The final exam will be designed to encourage students to review and synthesize all course material. Exam questions will be taken from lectures, readings, and discussions. Everything discussed in class is fair game, even if I do not post it on Blackboard. An alternative exam date will only be approved if you speak with me at least several weeks in advance with a valid reason.

Graduate Student Project:

Graduate students will be assigned an additional writing project worth 100 points to fulfill the requirements for 518. This project will consist of a ~2000-word report on a hidden figure in Conservation, Ecology, and Natural History. More details will be discussed during the first week of classes. This assignment will be due the last day of classes.

Grading

Point allocation for evaluation of students (**all late assignments will incur a 10% drop in grade per day**):

	TOTAL POINTS
Discussions Lead	50 points
Non-led Discussion Participation	50 points (10 x 5 points each)
1-page Policy Brief	50 points
Exam I	50 points
Exam II	50 points
Final	100 points
TOTAL	350 points

Cutoffs for grades will be based on the following percentages: 100-98 = A+; 98-93 = A; 92-89 = A-; 88-87 = B+; 86-83 = B; 82-79 = B-; 78-77 = C+; 76-70 = C; 69-60 = D; ≤ 59 = F.

Lecture Slides:

I will do my best to post a PDF of the lecture slides by midnight the night before class. Please note that portions of the posted lecture slides will be missing information that can be filled in during lecture.

COVID-19:

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed all of our lives. Many of us are balancing multiple responsibilities, like school work, child/family care, and jobs. These stacked responsibilities can create scheduling difficulties. Some of us don't have an ideal space to take online courses or do our work. And the heightened vigilance surrounding not getting sick creates an emotional and physical burden on our everyday lives. These additional stresses can make us prone to getting sick or making a 'mistake' in our social distancing practices. I understand, and I want to whole heartedly stress that self-care and your health should be your top priority. Therefore, I will try to build flexibility in the class.

- 1) All lectures will be recorded. If you can't make it for any reason. You can watch the lecture later.
- 2) Attendance is not required (**applies only to Lecture**). I want you to come to class and sit in on the live lectures. But I understand how fluid this all is for everyone.

3) While attendance at Discussion is required, I will work with you if you are having difficulty attending. Please stay in communication with me.

With that said, the class will build on itself, and it will be easy to get behind. If you fall behind, stay in communication with me and work with me and I will help you catch up. The only thing I ask of you is to not abuse this sympathy for our collective shared circumstance. I too am dealing with two children at home, home schooling, a working partner, and a fear of myself or family member getting sick. Let's work together and support each other so that we can learn as much as possible given the current circumstances.

Mental Health:

Diminished mental health, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with optimal academic performance. The source of symptoms might be strictly related to your course work; if so, please speak with me. However, problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis can also contribute to decreased academic performance and I recognize that.

Counseling and Physiological Services (CAPS) <http://caps.gmu.edu> provides mental health services to support the academic success of students. Their free and confidential psychological services include group counseling, skills-based workshops, case management, crisis consultations, time-limited individual counseling as well as faculty and staff consultation. They also have great online resources under the Well-Being tab. CAPS is operating during the COVID-19 pandemic and providing confidential resources and online telehealth meetings.

In the event I suspect you need additional support, I will express my concerns and the reasons for them, and remind you of these resources that might be helpful to you. It is not my intention to know the details of what might be bothering you, but simply to let you know I am concerned and that help, if needed, is available.

Getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do -- for yourself *and* for those who care about you.

Special Needs:

If you have special needs for lectures, assignments or tests, please contact me as soon as possible after the first day of class to explain these needs. Please also speak with me anytime if something should develop later in the semester.

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Responsible Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

Academic Integrity:

It is expected that students adhere to the George Mason University Honor Code as it relates to integrity regarding coursework and grades. The Honor Code reads as follows: “To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal and/or lie in matters related to academic work.” More information about the Honor Code, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity website at <http://oai.gmu.edu>.