



**ENST 500: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Environmental Studies**

**Units: 4**

**Fall 2019, Tues 3:30-6:20 pm**

**Location: LVL 3Y**

David Ginsburg, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor (Teaching)

**Office: CAS 116c**

**Office Hours: MW 11:00am to noon**

**Email: dginsbur@usc.edu**

**Phone: 213-740-8576 (office)**

**Course Description**

This course will help students to develop advanced skills to address complex environmental issues that society faces today. Different approaches for studying environmental processes and resources will be examined.

**Learning Objectives**

- Recognize the relationships between physical and human interactions in the environment
- Evaluate scientific data in support of a particular topic or policy initiative
- Understand and assess scholarly articles related to course topics
- Formulate an integrated and interdisciplinary response to environmental problems by completing an individual report and group presentation on a specific conservation management and/or policy issue

**Recommended Preparation**

Course is geared towards students enrolled in their first semester of the ENST Masters Degree Program.

**Course Notes**

We will use Blackboard for communication, information and turning in assignments. Lecture slides will be made available after the lecture is given. Additional readings, assigned throughout the semester, will be announced in class, posted on Blackboard and via email messages sent to the class. Sometimes computers will be used in class to work with data files in MS Excel and/or to run simple simulations – students will be notified when computers are needed. This is a 4-unit, graduate level course, which requires in-depth reading and critical analysis outside of lecture.

**Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

- Sodhi, N.S. and Ehrlich, P.R. (2011) Conservation Biology for All, 2nd Edition, 358 pp., Oxford University Press. **Available online for free.** Referred to below as CBA. <https://conbio.org/publications/free-textbook/>
- Additional readings will be assigned throughout the semester and will be available on Blackboard

### **Description and Assessment of Assignments**

You will be graded on the basis of your performance on exams, written reports and assignments, as well as in-class participation and discussions. Lecture presentations will be posted on Blackboard for download and subsequent study after a given lecture. Midterm exam questions will be drawn from course readings, assignments, lectures and will include 4-6 short answer and essay questions.

**If there is a conflict with the assigned date for the midterm exam, you must email the instructor (DG) at least 1-week in advance** to see if alternative arrangements can be made. **Otherwise, no make-up exams or assignments will be allowed.** If a student misses an exam and/or assignment, they will receive a zero for that portion of the course. Although the take-home exam is “open book,” you may not work with other students in the course. Failure to comply with exam policies outlined here, and on the midterm itself, will result in a zero for that assignment.

Outlined below is a brief description of the course assignments and activities (additional details will be posted on Blackboard):

#### **Midterm exam**

Students are responsible for completing a take-home exam comprised of 4-6 short answer and essay questions.

#### **Conservation biology EIR review**

As a group, the class will analyze and review a conservation biology related Environmental Impact Report (EIR) from the Southern California area. Students will review existing data for an environmentally sensitive problem (e.g., disturbing endangered species habitat or fragile ecosystems) and evaluate how best to proceed (or, reject) a given project. This is a group project in which students will together to write a report and make a 15-min presentation about their findings.

#### **Final presentation**

Student groups will present a case study on a topic related to conservation biology and/or environmental management (TBA with instructor). The goal of this assignment is to understand and present a specific topic in detail to your peers. Presentations should run ~45 min total – both your presentation style and content will be evaluated.

#### **Species mitigation policy/restoration plan evaluation**

Individual students will complete a written summary (2 pages max), as well as an oral presentation (~20 min) on a species specific mitigation policy and/or restoration plan from Southern California assigned by the instructor (DG).

#### **Article discussions**

Individual students will read and evaluate scholarly articles related to topics discussed and presented in class. Each student will be assigned a lecture date in which they will select, distribute and prepare a ~20 min discussion on a given article. Each article discussion will include a set of 3-5 questions (which will be distributed a week in advance) for the class to complete and submit (individually) via Blackboard.

### Lecture presentation

Individual students will present a lecture to the class on a topic listed on the syllabus. Each student will be assigned a lecture date in which they will present a ~35 min lecture and lead a discussion on a given topic.

### Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	Grade %
Midterm exam (take home)	70	20%
Conservation biology EIR review	70	20%
Final presentation	60	17%
Species mitigation policy/restoration plan evaluation	50	14%
Article discussions	40	11%
Course lecture presentation	40	11%
In-class participation and discussions	25	7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>355</b>	

### Grading Scale

Your final grade will be determined using the following scale (which may be adjusted depending on the progress of the class):

>93 = A; 90-92 = A-; 87-89 = B+; 83-86 = B; 80-82 = B-; 77-79 = C+; 73-76 = C; 70-72 = C-; 67-69 = D+; 63-66 = D; 60-62 = D-; <59 = F

### Additional Policies

Routine attendance and active participation are an important part of each class session. For the best learning experience, you are expected to have read the course materials (see Course Schedule, below) by the date it is discussed in class. Roll will be taken periodically in the form of thought exercises, reading assignments and in-class questions. You are responsible for information, announcements, date changes and any other course material presented, regardless of your participation and/or presence in the classroom.

As mentioned above, **if there is a conflict with the given for the midterm exam, you must email the instructor (DG) one-week in advance to see if arrangements can be made.** Make-up exams are often sometimes more difficult (because the exam needs to be rewritten specifically for you!), so it is in your best interest to take the exam on the day it is scheduled. If you have an emergency on an exam day, you must get in touch with the instructor (DG) before the exam. Assignments will not be accepted late.

Additionally:

- Come to class prepared
- Be respectful of the instructor and other students in class
- Please leave cell phones outside the classroom or turned off
- If you have to miss class make sure you arrange to get notes and announcements

**Course Schedule:**

For the best learning experience, you are expected to have read the assigned material by the date it is discussed in class. Articles, supplemental readings and in-class data sets will be posted online. The readings and schedule of topics may be adjusted throughout the semester depending on progress of the class.

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Aug 27	Course overview		
Sept 3	Conservation biology	CBFA: Ch. 1	
Sept 10	Biodiversity	CBFA: Ch. 2	
Sept 17	Ecosystem functions	CBFA: Ch. 3	
Sept 24	Habitat change & fragmentation	CBFA: Ch. 4, 5	
Sept 25	Overexploitation	CBFA: Ch. 6	
Oct 1	Invasive species	CBFA: Ch. 7	
Oct 8	<b>MIDTERM</b> (Take-Home)		
Oct 15	Endangered species	CBFA: Ch. 12	
Oct 22	<b>Species mitigation policy/restoration plan presentations</b>		
Oct 29	Climate change and natural disaster	CBFA: Ch. 8, 9	
Nov 5	Extinctions	CBFA: Ch. 10	
Nov 12	<b>Conservation biology EIR presentations</b>		
Nov 19	Conservation management	CBFA: Ch. 11	
Nov 26	Final Presentations		
Dec 3	Final Presentations		

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

**Academic Conduct:**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

**Support Systems:**

*Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. [engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling)

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255*

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call*  
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. [engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp)

*Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: [sarc.usc.edu](http://sarc.usc.edu)

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086*

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. [equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu)

*Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

*Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)

*Diversity at USC*

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. [diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

*USC Emergency Information*

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

*USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.*

Provides overall safety to USC community. [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)