

Syllabus BIOL 5333 – 060 (80674)

Landscape Ecology

Fall 2025

Meeting Times: All-online (but with deadlines)

Location: All-online. Take the course wherever you are!

First Day of Class: Monday, August 26st

Last Day of Class: Friday, December 5th

Date to Withdraw Without Penalty (Census Date): Monday, September 8th

Please note that this course is all-online and has no face-to-face component.

Instructor:

Dr. Joshua Banta

Director, Center for Environment, Biodiversity, and Conservation

Professor, Department of Biology

Office: Hudnall, Pirtle, Roosth Building (HPR) Room 129. NOTE: Since this is an all-online class, office hours will be held over the phone, not at my office.

Phone: (903) 565-5655

Email: jbanta@uttyler.edu

Office Hours: MWF 10:00 – 11:00 am or by appointment. NOTE: Since this is an all-online class, office hours will be held over the phone, not at my office. Simply call my phone number.

Course Description: An introduction to the study of large-scale ecological patterns and processes. Course will emphasize how spatial complexity emerges and is maintained in ecological systems, the analysis of spatial pattern, scaling issues, the ecological consequences of spatial pattern and applications for conservation and ecosystem management.

Student Learning Objectives: By the end of the class, you should be able to...

- 1) Understand how scale influences the interpretation of ecological pattern and process.
- 2) Understand the interrelationships of biological, chemical, and physical factors at the landscape scale.
- 3) Describe and understand how landscape-scale information can be used to guide conservation and ecosystem management.

Required Materials:

- A reliable high-speed internet connection that you can access on a regular basis.
 - If you do not have a reliable high-speed internet connection:
 - The computer labs will be open on campus.
 - The computer lab in the library has the best hours. It is open every day of the week. Most weekdays it is open from 7:30AM until midnight! The schedule is here: <https://ask.library.uttyler.edu/faq/190062>
 - The Biology Department has its own computer lab, located in the Biology, Education, and Psychology (BEP) building in room 139. It is available for your use on Mondays from 8:00AM – 10:50AM and at other times when it is not in use. You may be asked to leave if you use it outside of Monday mornings and someone else has the room scheduled. I will not be present.
 - If the computer lab is locked, see Alan Lizarraga (BEP 134) for access. Email: alizarraga@uttyler.edu
- Access to a laptop or desktop computer or a tablet on a regular basis.
 - You must be able to access reliable, high-speed internet on your laptop or desktop computer or tablet on a regular basis, with generous data usage (no low data caps!).
 - It is not permitted to take this course using only your smartphone.
 - See above about the computer labs on campus, if needed.
- Headphones or speakers that work on your laptop or desktop computer or tablet.
 - The speakers may be built into your device (internal), or you may need to add external headphones or speakers on your own.
 - The bottom line is that you will need some way to hear sound from your device that accompanies the videos you will watch.
 - I have a limited number of headphones I can lend to you if you need them (on a first-come, first-served basis until they run out).
- If you cannot access these materials, you **cannot** take this course. Changes to the assignment deadlines will **not** be made if you lack (even temporarily) access to these materials, except in some exceptional situations specifically related to COVID (see the COVID section below). Missing deadlines will result in zeros on the assignments and these zeros cannot be changed.

Grading:

Quizzes, 10% of final grade when added together

Discussion Board, 50% of final grade when added together

Research paper, 40% of final grade

Total: 100%

90 – 100% = A

80 – 89.999% = B

70 – 79.999% = C

60 – 69.999% = D

59.999% or lower = F

Topics (subject to change):

Introduction: What is Landscape Ecology?

Scale

Models

Causes of Landscape Patterns

Quantifying Landscape Patterns

Neutral Models

Landscape Disturbance Dynamics

Organisms and Landscape Pattern

Species Distribution Models

Ecosystem Processes in the Landscape

Applied Landscape Ecology

Attendance and make-up policy: “Attendance” in this all-online course means handing in multiple assignments, every week, by the deadlines, and “attendance,” in this sense, is mandatory. **No late work will be accepted.** Even though this course is entirely online and self-paced, there are strict deadlines to follow that require your regular participation. The deadlines are **not** flexible. You are expected to plan ahead and do your work ahead of time. You are expected to **not** wait until the last minute. Problems with your tablet/laptop/desktop or internet connection or Canvas, problems with scheduling for your job(s) or other classes, car problems, problems with child care, or personal or medical problems will not be accepted excuses for missing the deadlines. In general **no** excuses will be accepted, except under extraordinary circumstances at my sole discretion. Missing the deadlines means you will receive zeros on the missed assignments and these zeros cannot be changed. **There will be no make-up assignments or extensions.**

Correspondence: You are required to activate the email address that is listed for you on Canvas and to check it regularly. You must check this email address at a minimum every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning, for the entire duration of the semester, for any correspondence from me. You are also required to check the Canvas site for this course every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning as well, for the entire duration of the semester, for any announcements. You will be held responsible for any information, including deadlines, that I communicate to you via your email address listed on Canvas and/or through the announcements on the Canvas course site. The information could come from one or both places (email and/or Canvas announcements), so you must check BOTH places on the schedule indicated above.

Due Dates and Deadlines: You are required to have this course visible in your calendar on Canvas. To do so, make sure the box for the course has a check mark. You will be held responsible for all the due dates and deadlines for this course that are indicated in your Canvas calendar.

Quizzes: The quizzes will be embedded into pre-recorded videos on Canvas. In other words, you will take the quizzes as you watch videos. The quiz questions will automatically pop up on your screen as you go along. The due dates of the quizzes will be indicated in your Canvas calendars. The videos with the embedded quizzes will be available at least one week before the due dates. The quizzes will tentatively be due every Monday and Wednesday evening throughout the entire semester.

Discussion Board: You will be required to post items to the Discussion Board on Canvas. The assignments and the deadlines will be indicated in your Canvas calendars. The Discussion Board posts will tentatively be due every Monday and Wednesday evening throughout the entire semester. Further details will be provided separately.

Research paper: The instructions will be posted on Canvas later in the semester. This paper and associated assignments will be worth 40% of your final grade. The paper will be due as indicated in your Canvas calendar and will be submitted through Canvas. Drafts of the entire paper or individual sections may be due earlier and count towards the overall research paper grade. Papers or assigned drafts that are not submitted through Canvas will not be counted and will receive zeros that cannot be changed. Instructions will be provided later. The final draft of the research paper is due by Monday, December 8th at 11:59pm.

Copying: You can discuss your assignments with your friends or classmates whenever you want and you can discuss anything you want. But **you**, alone, are expected to write everything that you submit, by yourself, and everything that you submit must be in your own words. It is not allowable to hand in something as a group, or for all members of a group to each hand in the same thing. **Any** copying whatsoever from others, whether they are part of your study group or not, is entirely **prohibited**. You are **not** allowed to pass around your submitted assignments or drafts to anyone else to look at, **for any reason**, and you are also not allowed to look at submitted assignments or drafts of anything written by anyone else. These prohibitions apply to any materials submitted by students in previous years’ classes as well. These prohibitions also apply to any material from **any** source (newspaper, TV, website, professional journal, magazine, etc.) Simply putting everything in quotation marks does **not** get around any of these prohibitions, **because quoting is not allowed either, no matter what the source is!** If you hand in the same assignment as someone else, or if it is copied from someone else, even a little!, or if the assignment contains any quoting from any source, with or without quotation marks, you will receive a

zero for the assignment and the person you copied from will receive a zero as well. I will not seek to determine who copied from whom; all persons with similar content will have the same penalty.

Citations: When writing your research paper, you will be consulting other sources. There will be strict rules about what other sources are allowed and how to cite these sources in your paper. The rules about copying will apply as well, and so will the penalties, and this includes the rules forbidding quoting, even with quotation marks. More detailed rules for the research paper will be provided later. Failure to follow the rules for citations will result in a zero for the research paper.

Appeals: If you think something was scored incorrectly, you will need to follow the following procedure:

- Write a few sentences explaining why you think you should have received a different score.
- Appeals will only be accepted through Canvas, and must be turned in no later than one week after the assignment was graded. Go to the course site and select “Modules” ➔ “Appeals.”
- Failure to follow these rules means that your appeal will not be considered.
- The only reasons I will give back points are if: (1) I made a math error; or (2) I decide that your answer was factually correct and followed all applicable rules indicated in the syllabus and elsewhere. By “factually correct,” I mean that your answer was really true about the world. Please also note that I, alone, will determine what is true.
- The following are **not** valid reasons for getting points back: you feel that I explained something badly, you misunderstood what I was saying, or you feel that my PowerPoint slides or other materials were wrong or unclear.
- Please note that I cannot discuss anyone else’s scores with you because of privacy reasons, even if you say that you have their permission, and even if they say that I have their permission. I lack the legal expertise to allow someone to waive their privacy privileges, even if they want me to, and even if they have already shared their scores with others on their own.
- Appeals can result in a lower score, the same score, or a higher score than you originally received. Specifically note that I reserve the right to **lower** your score if I re-evaluate it and deem it appropriate.
- The rules about copying apply to appeals as well.

Turnitin: All assignments and appeals that you hand in will be checked for copying using a program called TurnitinTM. This software checks the internet as well as every other student’s work who has ever taken this course or any other course. It also checks against any papers that are secretly traded or sold over the internet. The bottom line is that if you copy someone else’s or somewhere else’s writing, even a little, the software will catch you and it will give me the names of the other persons and/or the other copied sources.

COVID: Illnesses involving yourself and/or others will generally **not** be considered excuses for missing the deadlines to turn in assignments, in which case you will receive zeros on those assignments and those zeros cannot be changed. This is because I expect you to do the work ahead of time and not to save it for the last minute. However, if you are unable to meet the requirements for the course specifically because of some specific disruptions related to COVID, I may give you a grade of “incomplete” for the course, at my discretion. For this to be possible, you will need to discuss the situation with me as soon as you can.

If I allow it, then the procedure will be as follows:

- When conditions improve, you will be able to continue making progress in the course, on your own, until you have completed all of the required assignments.
- You will have a year to finish the incomplete assignments.
- If you do not finish the assignments by that point, your “incomplete” grade for the course will be changed to the grade you earned up to that point, with zeros factoring into your grade for everything else that is left unfinished, and you will no longer be given the opportunity to finish the rest of the work or to change your course grade beyond that point.

The **only** COVID-related disruptions I may consider are:

- You or someone you care for gets COVID (and let's all wish this doesn't happen!!!), and this renders you unable to keep up with the course.
 - In this case, I will require a doctor's note that references the date of your positive COVID test or diagnosis and/or the date of the positive COVID test or diagnosis of the person you are caring for.
- COVID disrupts your access to consistent, reliable, high-speed internet and/or to consistent, regular usage of an internet-enabled tablet, laptop, or desktop computer on which to access high-speed internet.

Privacy: Students do **not** have the right to be “anonymous” whether classes are in person or online, or for all-online classes. All discussion will take place within Canvas, and your names will be displayed.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

For this course, AI is not in this course at all. For this course, I expressly forbid using ChatGPT or any other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for any stages of the work process, including brainstorming. Deviations from these guidelines will be considered a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code and academic honesty values.

Grade grubbing: Grade grubbing will not be tolerated. I have quoted some relevant passages below about grade grubbing. They come from an excellent website that I recommend you read:

<https://www.math.uh.edu/~tomforde/GradeGrubbing.html>

Grade Grubbing (also called "grade begging" or "grade lawyering") is the act of a student going to a professor and asking for a grade to be raised for no legitimate reason. Often the student argues that they feel their work was "not graded fairly", or they made only a small mistake and should get more points, or they knew what they were doing even though they gave the wrong answer. Grade grubbing often involves asking for detailed justification of why certain points were taken off, questioning subjective aspects of grading (e.g., Why is this problem worth 5 points and this one worth 7 points?), and wearing down the professor by arguing, begging, and pleading until they finally relent and increase the student's grade.

...In addition, grade grubbing presents a very negative image of you: it indicates that you do not care about learning the material, and that all that matters to you is your grade in the class, even if you get that grade unfairly or when you do not deserve it.

Grade grubbing greatly affects the way your professors view you and the way they will treat you in the future. If you challenge your grade without a good reason, you will probably not be remembered fondly when you ask that professor for a recommendation...

...If an obvious error has been made in grading, such as points added incorrectly or a clearly correct answer was inadvertently marked wrong, then by all means talk to the professor and they will likely change your grade immediately. Likewise, if you don't understand why you lost points, or want clarification (not justification) of the grading, most professors are happy to talk with you. **And, if you want to discuss the material, learn what you did wrong, or discuss how to do better on future work, most professors will probably be thrilled to speak to you about this.**

However, if you are going to approach a professor who has spent their life studying, teaching, and doing research on a particular topic, and then argue that their decision of how to grade or award points should be changed to what you say it should be, then you better be prepared with a strong and convincing argument.

Source: <https://marktomforde.com/academic/undergraduates/GradeGrubbing.html>

Student Resources and University Policies: These can be found on the Canvas course page under “Modules” → “Course Information.”