

BIOL 5961 – Graduate Seminar in Ecology and Sustainability

Fall 2015

Instructor: Dr. Laurissa Hamilton

Office and hours: N261, Monday & Wednesday 9:15 – 10:45 am & by appointment

Contact information: lhamilton@csustan.edu; 667-3489

Topic: Conservation oriented legislation

Location & Time: Mondays 6 – 7 pm in Biology Dept. library

Topic coverage:

Our overall goal is to investigate a selection of major laws and treaties that may be instrumental in the conservation of biodiversity. Since biodiversity is a general term and can be considered on different levels (e.g. species, genetic, ecosystem), we should start by considering possible definitions that have been applied in the legal framework. In particular, we should examine definitions for the term “species” since this term is used most often. Thus, one of our first tasks will be to examine relevant terms in pre-selected readings (2 students per reading). The next phase of the semester will consist of reviews of major laws or treaties that have been applied in species conservation. You may work as pairs on these presentations, and each pair will present on two occasions. Finally, during the last portion of the semester, each individual will be responsible for presenting the current status of his or her graduate research. These presentations should include an introduction (describing the basis for and context of your research and the question(s) you are investigating), your study methods, the results of your data analysis (as of the presentation date), and future directions in your research and analysis. A primary objective in these presentations is to allow you a chance to “trouble-shoot” your research projects with your peers and me. So, please, be sure to address any concerns or complications that have arisen in your research – it is my hope that these presentations will allow you a venue in which to receive feedback and suggestions.

Expectations:

Participation, Participation, Participation!!!!

The aim of graduate seminars is to familiarize graduate students with current topics and literature and also to become comfortable in investigating, presenting, and discussing scientific topics. Thus, you are expected to attend and actively participate in discussions at **every** seminar. When you are primary facilitator, you are expected to: 1) provide a downloadable link or a hard copy of your discussion paper(s) 2) present a 20 minute oral presentation of the paper(s), and 3) be sufficiently familiar with the topic / paper(s) and relevant background to facilitate 30 – 40 minutes of discussion and questions.

Discussion papers for the first round of presentations are due by our class meeting on **Tuesday, September 1st** and those for the second set of presentations are due by **Tuesday, September 22nd**.

All students in the seminar must have read the paper(s) prior to arrival and be prepared with questions and other discussion items. Non-presenters must arrive with 2 copies of a minimum of 3 questions regarding the paper / topic – one copy will be submitted to me at the start of class, and you may keep the second copy for application in the group discussion, if needed.

Lastly, it is our goal to raise the knowledge and awareness of everyone in the seminar. Thus, think of this as a cooperative effort. Any differences of opinion should be respected and be occasion for a healthy open discussion.

Grading:

Only letter grades (no +/-) are given in this class. Standard percentage will apply as follows: A = 90-100 %, B = 80-89 %, C = 70-79 %, D = 60 – 69 %, F = < 60 %). Only one excused absence will be allowed without penalty (e.g. with written, verifiable documentation). Beyond that, unexcused or multiple absences will deduct 10 % from your grade (per each absence). Non-participation in discussions deducts 5 % from your grade per class meeting (this includes non-submission of discussion questions @ the start of class). Late submission of discussion papers deducts 1% from your grade per day late (including weekends).

Tentative Schedule:

Date	Topic/Papers	Facilitator
Aug. 25	Introduction and Scheduling	Laurissa Hamilton
Sept. 1	See blackboard	All
Sept. 8	NEPA	Aricia & Jessica
Sept. 15	Clean Water Act	Diku & Erica
Sept. 22	ESA part I	Alfred & Celia
Sept. 29	ESA part II	Alfred & Celia
Oct. 6	Clean Water Act	Diku & Erica
Oct. 13	Holiday! Enjoy!!	Everyone
Oct. 20	CITES	Aricia & Jessica
Oct. 27	Research presentation	Erica
Nov. 3	Research presentation	Jessica
Nov. 10	Research presentation	Aricia
Nov. 17	Research presentation	Diku
Nov. 24	Research presentation	Alfred
Dec. 1	Research presentation	Celia
Dec. 8	Synthesis	Everyone

Suggested topics:

- 1) The Endangered Species Act
 - An Overview
 - Listing Decisions
 - Jeopardy decisions and section 7 consultations
 - Critical Habitat
 - Delisting Decisions / Criteria
 - The “God squad” and Habitat Conservation Plans
- 2) National Environmental Policy Act (including Environmental Impact Statements)
- 3) California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
- 4) Federal Clean Water Act
- 5) Marine Mammal Protection Act
- 6) Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

Things to consider and include in your presentations:

1. The goals and objectives of the selected law or treaty
2. Agencies or organizations responsible for enforcement
3. Potential penalties for noncompliance
4. Definitions of terms
5. Required data; potential limitations
6. Known applications
7. Success stories and / or criticisms
8. Amendments (if any)
9. Suggestions for improvement