

BOT2011 Plant Diversity (Natural Sciences – B)

Course Syllabus

Contact Information

Instructor

Dr. Stuart McDaniel

Phone Number

Content

Email

stuartmcdaniel@ufl.edu

Office Hours

Content

Teaching Assistant

Content

For questions about course content, your grade, or other personal issues, email the instructor team. Expect a response within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends.

Course Information

BOT2011C - Plant Diversity is a survey of major plant groups with regard to structure, life histories, and uses accompanied by a laboratory showing the diversity of plants in the world.

Credit Hours: 4

Course Description

The earth today contains a tremendous diversity of photosynthetic organisms - what processes explain how they evolved and why they persist? In this class, we survey the biological diversity of modern algae and land plants, with an eye toward understanding why studying plant diversity is important in our modern society. We consider first the traditional classification of plants, and how this system has been revolutionized by phylogenetic analyses of genetic and

now genomic data. We then turn to study the evolutionary processes that generate biodiversity and the ecological processes that shape this diversity. Finally, we turn to critically evaluating perceived threats to biodiversity, including invasive species, nitrogen deposition, global warming, and transgenic crops. Throughout the semester we read a mix of journal articles from the primary literature as well as popular science pieces. In the labs, students will see examples of the species we discuss in class and learn to identify key traits and species. After completing the course students will develop a timeline of the main events in the history of photosynthetic organisms, an overview of their diversity, and a conceptual understanding of the processes that generate and maintain this diversity.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Arrange a timeline of the main events in the history of photosynthetic organisms.
2. Describe the morphological and phylogenetic diversity within plants.
3. Explain the processes that generate and maintain this diversity.

Course Requirements

Required Textbook

***Demons in Eden: The Paradox of Plant Diversity*, Jonathan Silvertown, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008.**

Please purchase your textbook through Perusall. You can access Perusall to purchase this text through the "Chapter 1 Reflection - An Evolving Eden" assignment in Module 1.

Additional resources: You may find *Principles of Life, second edition*, by Hillis et al. (Sinauer / Macmillan), or *Biology of Plants*, by Raven et al., (Freeman / Macmillan) to be a useful supplement, as well as *Stern's Introductory Plant Biology*, James Bidlack

and Shelley
Jansky, McGrawHill Press, 15th Edition, 2020.

Prerequisites

Introductory college biology/botany course or equivalent.

Minimum Technology Requirements

The University of Florida expects students entering an online program to acquire computer hardware and software appropriate to their degree program. Most computers are capable of meeting the following general requirements. A student's computer configuration should include:

- Webcam
- Microphone
- Broadband connection to the internet and related equipment (cable/DSL modem)
- Microsoft Office Suite installed (provided by the university)

Individual colleges may have additional requirements or recommendations, which students should review before starting their program.

It is the responsibility of the student to maintain a functioning computing system and internet connection that can meet the minimum technical requirements of the course.

Computing/internet connectivity issues will not be acceptable excuses for missed deadlines unless they are brought to the attention of the instructor at least 48 hours prior to the deadline and accompanied by the ticket number from technical support. See the "Getting Help" section for more information on technical support.

Minimum Technical Skills

To complete your tasks in this course, you will need a basic understanding of operating a computer and using word processing software.

Materials/Supply Fees

There is no supply fee for this course.

Zoom

Zoom is an easy-to-use video conferencing service available to all UF students, faculty, and staff that allows for meetings of up to 100 participants.

You can find resources and help using Zoom at the [University of Florida's](#)

[Zoom](#) [Links to an external site.](#) website.

Course Policies

This course is designed to be as flexible as possible to accommodate the variation of schedules typical of a remote student. For that reason, all content for each week will open on Sunday at 12:00 a.m. and all assignments will be due eight days later on Monday at 11:59 p.m. except for initial discussion posts.

Beware! With flexibility comes the temptation to put off assignments until the last minute. Please do not wait until the last minute! Mastering the content of this course will require that you take careful notes during lectures and while reading, to prepare for each week's quiz. It is very important that you follow the sequence of the instructional materials and assignments in order to be successful.

As this is an online class, you are responsible for observing all posted due dates and are encouraged to be self-directed and take responsibility for your learning.

Requirements for make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found on [UF's](#)

[Attendance Policies](#) [Links to an external site.](#) website.

Grading Policy

The instructor team will make every effort to have each assignment graded and posted within one week of the due date. Grading turnaround time is subject to change via announcement.

Any requests for regrades or investigation of grading discrepancies must be submitted via email to the instructor team within one week of receiving a grade.

Course Grading Policy

Type of Assessment	Number of Assessments	Percentage of Final Grade	Lowest Grade(s) Dropped
Assignments	20	32%	3
Discussions	10	30%	1
Labs	11	24%	2
Quizzes	13	12%	3
Pre and Post Test	2	2%	0

Grading Scale

Point Range (%)	Letter Grade
100 - 90.00%	A
89.99 - 86.66%	A-
86.65 - 83.33%	B+
83.32 - 80.00%	B
79.99 - 76.66%	B-
76.65 - 73.33%	C+
73.32 - 70.00%	C
69.99 - 66.66%	C-
66.65 - 63.33%	D+
63.32 - 60.00%	D
59.99 - 56.66%	D-
56.65 and below	E

UF Policies

University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first

register with the [Disability Resource Center](#) [Links to an external site.](#) (352-392-8565) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter that must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

University Policy on Academic Conduct

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states, "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 Honor Code." On all work submitted for credit by students 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." The [Student Honor Code and Student Conduct](#)

[Code](#) [Links to an external site.](#) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Plagiarism

The [Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code](#) [Links to an external site.](#) states that:

"A Student must not represent as the Student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
- Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
- Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.

- Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author."

Netiquette and Communication Courtesy

It is important to recognize that the online classroom is in fact a classroom, and certain behaviors are expected when you communicate with both your peers and your instructors. These guidelines for online behavior and interaction are known as netiquette.

<u>Security</u>
• General Guidelines • Email • Discussion Boards • Zoom

Remember that your password is the only thing protecting you from pranks or more serious harm.

- Don't share your password with anyone.
- Change your password if you think someone else might know it.
- Always log out when you are finished using the system.

Getting Help

Technical Difficulties

For help with technical issues or difficulties with Canvas, please contact the UF Computing Help Desk at:

- <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu> [Links to an external site.](#)
- 352-392-HELP (4357)
- Walk-in: HUB 132

Any requests for make-ups (assignments, exams, etc.) due to technical issues should be accompanied by the ticket number received from the UF Computing Help Desk when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You should email your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

Health and Wellness

- **U Matter, We Care:** If you or someone you know is in distress, please email umatter@ufl.edu, call 352-392-1575, or visit [U](#)

[Matter We Care](#) [Links to an external site.](#) to refer or report a concern, and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

- **Counseling and Wellness Center:** Visit the [UF Counseling & Wellness Center](#) [Links to an external site.](#) website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services and 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 the [UF](#)

[Student Health Care Center](#) [Links to an external site.](#) website.

- **Hitchcock Field and Fork Pantry:** If you are struggling with food insecurity, please visit the [Hitchcock Field & Fork](#)

[Pantry website](#) [Links to an external site.](#)

- **University Police Department:** Visit the [UF Police Department](#) [Links to an external site.](#) website or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- **UF Health Shands Emergency Room/Trauma Center:** For immediate medical care in Gainesville, call 352-733-0111, or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the [UF Health Shands Emergency Room/Trauma Center](#) [Links to an external site.](#) website.

Academic and Student Support

- **Career Connections Center:** For career assistance and counseling services, visit the [UF Career Connections Center](#) [Links to an external site.](#) website or call 352-392-1601.
- **Library Support:** For various ways to receive assistance concerning using the libraries or finding resources, visit the [UF George A. Smathers Libraries Ask-A-Librarian](#) [Links to an external site.](#) website.

- Teaching Center: For general study skills and tutoring, visit the [UF Teaching Center](#) [Links to an external site.](#) website or call 352-392-2010.
- Writing Studio: For help with brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers, visit the [University Writing Program](#) [Writing Studio](#) [Links to an external site.](#) website or call 352-846-1138.

Course Evaluations

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 on the

GatorEvals [Providing Constructive Feedback](#) [Links to an external site.](#) FAQ page. 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](#) [Links to an external site.](#) website. Summaries of course evaluation results are available

to students at the [GatorEvals Public Results](#) [Links to an external site.](#) page. More information about UF's course evaluation system

can be found at the [GatorEvals Faculty Evaluations](#) [Links to an external site.](#) website.

Tips for Success

Taking a course online can be a lot of fun! Here are some tips that will help you get the most of this course while taking full advantage of the online format:

- Schedule "class times" for yourself. It is important to do the coursework on time each week. You will receive a reduction in points for work that is turned in late!
- Read ALL of the material contained on this site. There is a lot of helpful information that can save you time and help you meet the objectives of the course.
- Print out the Course Summary located in the Course Syllabus and check things off as you go.

- Take full advantage of the online discussion boards. Ask for help or clarification of the material if you need it.
- Do not wait to ask questions! Waiting to ask a question might cause you to miss a due date.
- Do your work well before the due dates. Sometimes things happen. If your computer goes down when you are trying to submit an assignment, you'll need time to troubleshoot the problem.
- To be extra safe, back up your work to an external hard drive, thumb drive, or through a cloud service.

Privacy and Accessibility Policies

For information about the privacy policies of the tools used in this course, see the links below:

- **Adobe**
 - [Adobe Privacy Policy](#) Links to an external site.
 - [Adobe Accessibility](#) Links to an external site.
- **Instructure (Canvas)**
 - [Instructure Privacy Policy](#) Links to an external site.
 - [Instructure Accessibility](#) Links to an external site.
- **Microsoft**
 - [Microsoft Privacy Policy](#) Links to an external site.
 - [Microsoft Accessibility](#) Links to an external site.
- **Perusall**
 - [Perusall Privacy Policy](#) Links to an external site.
 - [Perusall Accessibility](#) Links to an external site.

- **Sonic Foundry (Mediasite Streaming Video Player)**
 - [Sonic Foundry Privacy Policy](#) Links to an external site.
 - [Sonic Foundry Accessibility](#) Links to an external site. (PDF)
- **YouTube (Google)**
 - [YouTube \(Google\) Privacy Policy](#) Links to an external site.
 - [YouTube \(Google\) Accessibility](#) Links to an external site.
- **Zoom**
 - [Zoom Privacy Policy](#) Links to an external site.
 - [Zoom Accessibility](#) Links to an external site.

Course Orientation

Course Orientation

- **Complete One Item**

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- [Start Here: Essential Course Overview](#)

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[Start Here: Essential Course Overview](#)

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[Manage Start Here: Essential Course Overview](#)

- [Student Support and Resources](#)

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[Student Support and Resources](#)

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[Manage Student Support and Resources](#)

- [Introduce Yourself!](#)

Discussion Topic

[Introduce Yourself!](#)

ContributeMust contribute to this module item to complete it
Published. Click to unpublish Introduce Yourself!.

Manage Introduce Yourself!

- [Syllabus Quiz](#)

Quiz

[Syllabus Quiz](#)

Jan 14, 2026

11 pts

SubmitMust submit this module item to complete it

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Manage Syllabus Quiz

- [Have a Question? Post Here!](#)

Discussion Topic

[Have a Question? Post Here!](#)

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Manage Have a Question? Post Here!

Module 1: Convergent Evolution

Module 1: Convergent Evolution

Prerequisites: Course Orientation

- [Complete All Items](#)

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- [Module 1: Instructional Materials](#)

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- [Module 1 Assignment: Adaptations](#)

Assignment

[Module 1 Assignment: Adaptations](#)

Jan 20, 2026

2 pts

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Manage Module 1 Assignment: Adaptations

- [Module 1 Discussion: Convergent Evolution](#)

Discussion Topic

[Module 1 Discussion: Convergent Evolution](#)

Jan 20, 2026

2 pts

Published. Click to unpublish Module 1 Discussion: Convergent Evolution.

Manage Module 1 Discussion: Convergent Evolution

- [Module 1 Quiz](#)

Quiz

[Module 1 Quiz](#)

Jan 18, 2026

1.5 pts

[Published. Click to unpublish Module 1 Quiz.](#)

[Manage Module 1 Quiz](#)

- [The Experimental Test \(no need to study\)](#)

[Quiz](#)

[The Experimental Test \(no need to study\)](#)

Jan 18, 2026

36 pts

Submit Must submit this module item to complete it

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Module 2: Introduction to Taxonomy and Phylogenetics

Module 2: Introduction to Taxonomy and Phylogenetics

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[Phylogenetics.](#)[Add Content to Module 2: Introduction to Taxonomy and Phylogenetics](#)

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- [Module 2 Discussion: The Whittaker Five Kingdom System of Classification](#)

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[Module 2 Discussion: The Whittaker Five Kingdom System of Classification](#)

Jan 22, 2026

2 pts

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- [Module 2 Lab Journal Submission](#)

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[Module 2 Lab Journal Submission](#)

Jan 25, 2026

2 pts

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- [Module 2 Quiz](#)

Quiz

Module 2 Quiz

Jan 25, 2026

1.5 pts

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Module 3: Biogeography and Speciation

Module 3: Biogeography and Speciation

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- [Module 3 Assignment: Physical Biogeography](#)

Assignment

Module 3 Assignment: Physical Biogeography

Jan 29, 2026

2 pts

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- [Module 3 Reflection 1: Phylogeography and Pre-zygotic Isolating Mechanisms](#)

Assignment

Module 3 Reflection 1: Phylogeography and Pre-zygotic Isolating Mechanisms

Feb 1, 2026

1 pts

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[Manage Module 3 Reflection 1: Phylogeography and Pre-zygotic Isolating Mechanisms](#)

- [Module 3 Reflection 2: Life History Trade-offs](#)

Assignment

Module 3 Reflection 2: Life History Trade-offs

Feb 1, 2026

1 pts

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- [Module 3 Discussion: A Paradox](#)

Discussion Topic

Module 3 Discussion: A Paradox

Feb 1, 2026

2 pts

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Module 4: Cyanobacteria

Module 4: Cyanobacteria

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- [Module 4 Assignment 2 : Cyanobacterial Bloom](#)
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2 pts
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Module 5: Endosymbiosis

Module 5: Endosymbiosis

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- [Module 5 Peer-review Grade](#)
Assignment
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- [Module 5 Lab Journal Submission](#)

Assignment

[Module 5 Lab Journal Submission](#)

Feb 15, 2026

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- [Module 5 Quiz](#)

Quiz

[Module 5 Quiz](#)

Feb 15, 2026

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Module 6: The Diversity of Algae

Module 6: The Diversity of Algae

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1 pts

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- [Module 6 Assignment 1: Life Cycles of Brown Algae](#)

Assignment

[Module 6 Assignment 1: Life Cycles of Brown Algae](#)

Feb 20, 2026

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- Manage Module 6 Assignment 1: Life Cycles of Brown Algae
- Module 6 Assignment 2: Phylogeny of Heterokonts
Assignment
Module 6 Assignment 2: Phylogeny of Heterokonts
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- Module 6 Quiz
Quiz
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Feb 21, 2026
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Mid-course Survey

Mid-course Survey

Prerequisites: Module 6: The Diversity of Algae

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- Mid-Course Survey**

Quiz

Mid-Course Survey

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Module 7: Symbiosis and Parasitism

Module 7: Symbiosis and Parasitism

Prerequisites: Mid-course Survey

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Module 7: Symbiosis and Parasitism

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2 pts
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- **Module 7 Assignment 2: Drawing Phylogeny**
Assignment
Module 7 Assignment 2: Drawing Phylogeny
Feb 26, 2026
2 pts
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- **Module 7 Peer-reviewed Activity: Chloroplast in the Oomycetes**
Assignment
Module 7 Peer-reviewed Activity: Chloroplast in the Oomycetes
Feb 25, 2026
1 pts
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- **Module 7 Group Work Assignment**
Discussion Topic
Module 7 Group Work Assignment
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- **Module 7 Lab Journal Submission**
Assignment
Module 7 Lab Journal Submission
Mar 1, 2026
2 pts

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- [Module 7 Quiz](#)

Quiz

[Module 7 Quiz](#)

March 1, 2026

1.5 pts

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[Manage Module 7 Quiz](#)

Module 8: The Maintenance of Species Diversity

Module 8: The Maintenance of Species Diversity

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[Manage Module 8: Instructional Materials \(with no labs\) \(real one\)](#)

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Voluntary Research Participation

Voluntary Research Participation

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- [Research on the course activities](#)

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Module 12: The Evolution of the Angiosperms

Module 12: The Evolution of the Angiosperms

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End-of-course Survey

End-of-course Survey

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Module 13: Plant Domestication

Module 13: Plant Domestication

Prerequisites: End-of-course Survey

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