



Biology of Sea Turtles -- ZOO4405

Spring 2024

Contact information

Dr. Karen A. Bjorndal

Carr Hall, room 320

352-392-1126

bjorndal@ufl.edu

Class schedule Tuesday, Period 4 (10:40 – 11:30)

Thursday, Periods 4 & 5 (10:40 – 12:20)

Class location 222 Carr Hall

Office hours Tuesday Period 5 (11:45-12:35) in 320 Carr Hall or by appointment

If you are experiencing any problems with the class, please see me as soon as possible – before or after class, during office hours, or by appointment.

Objectives

This 3-credit course will focus on the current major issues in sea turtle biology, conservation, and management. Each Tuesday, we will discuss readings, explore recent research, and identify research needs. Readings for class discussions will be both classic papers and recent literature. Each Thursday, there will be lectures by the instructor or guest speakers or the class will work on pre-designated group research projects.

Required Textbook

Witherington, Blair & Dawn. 2015. *Our Sea Turtles: A practical guide for the Atlantic and Gulf, from Canada to Mexico*. Pineapple Press, Sarasota, Florida. Copies of the textbook are on course reserve at Marston Science Library, available two hours during the day or overnight.

Basis of Grade

If you have any questions about your grade, please see me as soon as possible.

The course grade is based on the following breakdown of 100 possible points:

Class participation including attendance (34%)
Written discussion questions (20%)
Group Presentation for discussion session (10%)
Group Research Project (32%)
Assorted individual assignments (4%)

Thus, 58% of the grade is based on individual work and 42% on group work. No exams are given.

Class participation: Grade is based on attendance and quality of participation in class discussions. Punctual attendance at each of the 28 class periods is worth 0.5% of the grade for a total of 14% of the grade. Substantive participation in each of the 10 class discussions during which the student is not a presenter is worth 2% of their grade for a total of 20% of the grade. Each student is ranked either high, low or none for their contributions during discussions. High participation requires at least one substantive contribution during the class discussion.

Presentation for discussion session: Instructor assigns two students to each of ten discussion groups. Each group selects a topic with two to three readings designated by the instructor. Each group creates a 5-10 minute Powerpoint introduction to the assigned topic and then leads the class discussion for a class period. Grade is based on quality of the Powerpoint presentation, the oral presentation, and the ability to maintain high level of discussion. In addition to my assessment, each student gives me anonymously a ranking of Excellent, Good, Average, Poor, Very poor with an explanation of why the rank was assigned for the other students in their Discussion group.

Written discussion questions: Each student not leading the discussion session writes two substantive questions based on the readings and submits them before each of the discussion sessions. If there is more than one assigned reading, only one question may be based on each reading. Each student will write questions for ten discussion sessions for a total of 20 questions. Grade is based on both content and written communication. For each pair of questions, grades are assigned as:

Excellent = 2.0 points

Good = 1.5 points

Average = 1.0 point

Poor = 0.5 point

Examples of Not Substantive and Substantive Questions

Not substantive question includes those that can be asked without having read the readings

How can we decrease the amount of plastic debris entering the oceans?

Substantive question

Nelms et al. noted “turtles in early life history stages, that are small in size may be at higher risk of mortality from plastic ingestion due to their smaller less robust digestive tracts” and Schuyer et al. noted “turtles in the oceanic life stage were significantly more like to ingest debris than turtles of an unknown stage.” However, based on their literature reviews, we do not have as much data on this life stage, so how can we get more data, and do you think these findings would change if we had more data?

Group Research Project: Instructor assigns four students to each of five research groups and assigns one of five research projects created by the instructor to each group. Grade is based on quality of research results, oral presentation of results, and written presentation of results in a poster. In addition to my assessment, each student gives me anonymously a ranking of Excellent, Good, Average, Poor, Very poor with an explanation of why the rank is assigned for the other students in their Research Group.

The final poster is worth 20 points (20% of course grade) and is graded by each student, the instructor, and a guest faculty member as follows:

Informative title: 2 points

Objectives: 3 points

Introduction: 3 points

Materials and Methods: 2 points

Results: 3 points

Discussion: 3 points

Overall clarity: 4 points

Only the scores from the instructor and guest faculty member are used in assigning the grade to the poster. Students grade each poster and describe the strengths and weaknesses of each poster as an educational experience.

Use of Masks

All people are welcome to wear masks in class. Thank you for respecting each person's decision whether to wear a mask.

Course Policies

Class discussions

This class cannot be a success if you do not attend. You should contribute to class discussions and be courteous to others in the classroom and respect each other's viewpoints. You are encouraged to ask either factual or interpretative questions and discuss the assigned reading material. You are expected to have completed reading assignments before class and be prepared to discuss the material.

Class attendance

You are expected to attend all classes and arrive promptly. Please refrain from side discussions and distracting behavior (turn off cell phones). If you miss class due to an illness, family emergency, or approved University activity, you will need to provide documentation.

Critical Thinking

Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint, or belief.

Academic Honesty

Quoted from the UF Website:

“Preamble: In adopting this [Honor Code](#), the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. Student and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

“The Honor Pledge: 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."

University Support Services

Resources are available on campus to help students meet academic goals and solve personal problems. Resources include:

1. [UF Counseling and Wellness Center](#), personal counseling (including mental health issues) and career counseling.
2. [Career Connections Center](#), career development assistance and counseling.
3. [CLAS Academic Advising Center](#) and [CALS Academic Advising Center](#) provide advice on course selection and course planning to meet graduation requirements.

Your well-being is important to all of us at the University of Florida. The **U Matter, We Care** initiative (www.umatter.ufl.edu/) is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

Disability Notice

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester before the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Accessibility Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.

Instructor Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and constructive 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 constructive manner is available at

<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals or in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Text on In-Class Recording Provided by the University of Florida

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.