

EEB 2208E (Introduction to Conservation Biology)

Notes on transition to online teaching

Below is an update of changes to EEB 2208E for the second half of the spring semester 2020, following the shift to online teaching. I HAVE NOT updated all of the documents on the class web site as I think it is more important to spend time generating materials that you can learn from, but this document is designed to provide a single place where you can find information on all the course changes.

If anything else changes, or as new information becomes available, I will update this document so that it always provides the latest information. (Updated: 22 April.)

Lectures. Information will continue to be provided in 3 formats: (1) the lecture notes on the web site, (2) the PowerPoint slides posted on huskyct, and (3) the material I talk about in lectures.

(1) The **notes** have been linked to lecture topic names on the web site since the class started, so nothing will change, except that it is probably even more important that you look at these now that we will not be meeting in person.

(2) The **PowerPoint slides** will also be posted as before, except that I will get them up on a more regular schedule than previously as you will not be seeing them in lecture. As before, though, I would caution about relying too much on the PowerPoints. The written information in the notes will be more useful in understanding the material – but connecting the ideas there up with the examples, graphs, and pictures in the slides should help. PowerPoint material will also appear in the lecture videos (see below), though I am making minor changes to the organization and formatting as I convert to video, to facilitating learning via this different format.

(3) Finally, I am making **video versions of the lectures**. I will not be lecturing in real time, but will develop the videos and post them separately, broken into shorter units – probably 5-10 per topic/lecture – to make upload/viewing easier. These will be posted on huskyct in a folder labelled “Lecture videos”.

My goal is to have videos available at least 2 days before each lecture and you should plan to watch all of the videos for a given lecture before the scheduled time of the lecture. I do not, however, have good bandwidth at my house and uploading videos is proving challenging, so please bear with me. If I am unable to post them before the scheduled lecture time, I will notify everyone via email. Currently, videos for all lectures except the last two are posted.

(I also apologize for the unpolished format of videos – I am prioritizing making the information available fast, rather than making it pretty ☺).

Questions about lectures. Although I will not lecture during the scheduled class period, I do plan to be on huskyct during that time and available to answer questions. Because of my limited bandwidth, and the potential problems of live-streaming with such a large class, I have decided

to address questions via the Discussion Boards. For each lecture I will create a new discussion board so that we can keep things organized.

I am also happy to answer questions via email. But, I encourage you to post your questions on the discussion boards, so that the information in my answers will be available to all. You might also find them to be a useful way to connect with other students and set up online study groups. Obviously, if you have questions about confidential matters, you should feel free to use email.

During the first online lecture (Monday, 23rd March), I will focus initially on questions about the transition to online teaching. After we have covered that topic, I will take questions about the lecture material. Everyone should review the written lecture notes and watch the video before class. If you are unable to participate during regular class time, I recommend that you post any questions before class, and return to the discussion board to review answers and other discussion afterwards.

Please be sure to post your questions on the correct board for the lecture you are asking about, to start a new thread for a new question, and to use informative subject lines. Everyone should feel free to respond to questions and discuss class material on these boards – I will try to stay on top of responses, but this is a good time to help out your peers if you can.

Office hours. Jacob will be setting up office hours when he will be available to talk with you. There will be two times each week and he will send everyone an email with the details of how to connect with him via WebEx. I am also happy to meet online with anyone who has questions – just email me and I will set something up.

Homework assignments. Due to ongoing uncertainty, which I suspect is complicating many of your lives, and the fact that internet service is spotty for some, I've extended the deadlines for all homework assignments. Homework will continue to become available on Wednesdays at lunchtime, but will now be due the following **Tuesday at 8 pm**. Otherwise homework will not change, with the exception that I may have to revisit homework 12 depending on what happens with the poster sessions.

Discussion assignments. Since we will not be meeting in class, your responses to the discussion questions should be submitted online. I have set up assignments on HuskyCT so that you can enter your responses in the text box in same way that you enter homework answers. These will be due at **2 pm on the Wednesday** that we would have discussed the paper.

All discussion papers are posted on huskyct. The links from the web site will also work without you hitting a paywall as long as you first log into the UConn network via the VPN (info on this is on the class web site – above the syllabus table; you can also find information on the UITS web site). **YOU SHOULD NEVER HAVE TO PAY FOR ACCESS TO A PAPER FOR THIS CLASS - ACCESS IS AVAILABLE TO ALL THROUGH THE UCONN LIBRARY AS LONG AS YOU HAVE AN INTERNET CONNECTION AND A NETID.**

In-class discussions. Trying to run discussions on-line will, I think, be difficult, and potentially disadvantageous to anyone who cannot get access during the class periods. Consequently, I will

pose questions for each paper on discussion boards where you can respond and discuss among yourselves. No one is required to do this, but I strongly encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to learn from each other – it will help prepare you better for jobs, which is ultimately more important than getting a couple of extra points. I will monitor these discussions and add comments when I think they will be helpful.

Poster prospectuses. Each poster group is still responsible for submitting a short prospectus. There are three parts (work plan, reference list, sketch of poster). Details of what is required are in the poster project document on the web site (p. 3), except that you will need to submit the prospectus online. Your group should create a single pdf file that has all 3 parts included (if you sketch the poster on paper, you can just take a photo, put the photo into a word-processing document along with the other information, and then save it all as a pdf).

Each person in the group should separately submit a version of their group's plan (i.e., your group mates cannot submit for you). You will do this using the same approach used when submitting mind maps (see instructions for homework 4). Documents must be uploaded in huskyct; emailed documents will not be accepted. There is no need to sign the document. I have extended the deadline for this assignment until **Sunday 29th March at 8 pm.**

Poster sessions. Summary: All posters will continue to be due on **Monday 20th April at 2 pm.** Throughout I have attempted to keep the poster project as similar to what was originally planned as possible. The online version should require no more of your time than the in-class version would have. Additional activities should only come in the form of navigating huskyct, and all of the required functions are things you should have encountered during the homeworks and other class activities. The primary differences are (a) you will need to build your poster in PowerPoint rather than on poster board, and (b) you will need to do peer-review of other posters on the discussion board, rather than on paper in the classroom. The main loss will be the inability to mingle with other students and to talk directly to poster creators about their projects – you have the opportunity to make up for this by reviewing other group's posters on the discussion board.

Detailed information: You should **submit your poster as a pdf version of a single PowerPoint slide.** Just as would be true in person, everything on the slide must be easy to read without having to get close or zoom in excessively. If you size the PowerPoint slide to match the size of a physical poster then the font size guidelines in the poster project document will work. If you don't know how to do this, there is a template PowerPoint slide in the Poster project folder in huskyct, which you can just download and modify.

If you have already built your poster, but not sized it appropriately, that is fine - just make sure that everything can be easily read when the poster is made to fit a computer screen (e.g., during "slide show" mode in PowerPoint or "Fit Width" view in the Zoom tab in Adobe Acrobat if viewing the pdf version). It should also be possible for someone to read all of the content within about 5 minutes. For additional instructions on poster content and creation, see the Poster project guidelines on the class web site (especially the checklist of tips on the last page).

Posters must be submitted via huskyct and cannot be accepted via email. I have created a discussion board where all posters should be submitted. I will create a thread for each poster, and

one person from each group should respond by attaching the group's pdf to the initial message in that thread. Note that it is very important that your file is a pdf as other file types - especially large PowerPoint files - may cause upload problems. You are responsible for ensuring that your file is the right type, and is not too large to upload properly. The discussion board for posters will become available during the week before the poster sessions and I strongly recommend that you plan to post your file early in case you run into problems.

I will post an example on the discussion board and provide detailed instructions on how to post your poster, which you should follow carefully to avoid confusion. Most important is that you put your poster in the thread that has your poster number and topic in the subject line (how to do this will be in the instructions on the discussion board). Doing this will enable other students to find your poster and comment on it during the virtual poster session next week.

For the poster session, each student will be assigned three posters that they need to comment on. I will post a list on huskyct saying who needs to comment on which poster and instructions for what your comments should address. You will then need to find the threads for your assigned posters and go and comment on them. Ordinarily we would do this during the two class periods, so this is something you should easily be able to do within a typical class session.

There will be no new lecture videos during the week of the poster sessions, and you should spend your class time on reading posters and providing comments, just as you would have done if we were on campus. **Peer reviews of posters are due before 8 pm on Saturday 25th April** (note that I originally said Friday 25th, but have extended to the Saturday because of my mistake).

I strongly encourage you to look over posters other than just those you are required to comment on. Poster projects are often really informative and you will likely learn a lot from reading your fellow students' work. Feel free to also engage with each other on the discussion board - this is a great way for you to ask a poster's creators questions. **Questions on the final will be linked to topics covered in the posters, so looking over posters in advance will also help you prepare for the final.**

Poster grading will be essentially the same as what we would have done in class with one exception (see next paragraph). I will read all posters and assign a grade worth 15% of the class total. I will use the guidelines in the poster project document as the primary basis for my grading, but will also take note of each group member's responses to any questions posted on the discussion boards. We will also read your assigned discussion posts and assign a grade worth 10% of the class total based on your ability to make thoughtful, constructive, and fair comments on how the group could have improved their poster.

NOTE THAT I CAN'T MAKE YOUR DISCUSSION BOARD COMMENTS ANONYMOUS TO THE POSTER PRESENTERS IN HUSKYCT WITHOUT ALSO MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO GRADE THEM. Consequently, I will not ask you to grade each other's posters, which is the reason for a change in the grading structure. This change is why 10% of the class grade will be based on your discussion board posts about other groups' posters, rather than the original 5%. A side benefit of this change is that it gives you

Course web site: <https://elphick.lab.uconn.edu/intro-to-conservation-biology/>

more individual control over your final class grade because a smaller percentage is based on the group effort.

You will still be able to comment on the relative contributions of everyone in your group, as originally planned, but this will be done via email to provide anonymity - the form for this will be sent around after the poster session.

If you have final questions about the poster projects please post them on the poster project discussion board that you used to find group members, or send me an email.

Final. I am still working out how to administer the final online while ensuring access to all, a fair method of truly assessing your knowledge, and without making unnecessary impositions in terms of privacy or access to technology. The basic exam format will not change, and will still continue to take the form used in the midterm and homework assignments, in which I set up a scenario and ask true/false questions. The exact structure of the questions, however, will have to change because huskyct cannot accommodate the grouped sets of questions that I have used previously.

I do not plan to use webcam-based monitoring or lockdown technology, and the final will be open book. The exam will be focused on testing your understanding and ability to apply ideas introduced in the class than on whether you can simply reproduce information that is in my notes. This is the approach that I usually take in exams anyway, but I will lean much more heavily on providing you with scenarios that you have not encountered before and asking you to apply knowledge from the class to answer questions about those novel scenarios. I will also use ideas that arise in the poster session as the basis for many scenarios – so looking at other peoples' posters once they are posted online may be helpful.

If you have questions about any part of this, email me at chris.elphick@uconn.edu.