Utah State University
Department of Wildland Resources
WILD 5710 – Forest Vegetation Disturbance Ecology and Management
Fall 2017

Course description: Examines causes, effects, and management options for selected biotic and abiotic agents of disturbance in wildland ecosystems. 3 credits. [From course catalog.]

Class times: M, W 8:30 – 9:20 NR 217
W 2:30 – 5:29 BNR 113

Instructor: Dr. Larissa Yocom
Office: NR 236
Email: larissa.yocom@usu.edu
Phone: 435-797-4155
Office hours: M 9:00 – 11:00, or make an appointment, or stop by

Prerequisites: Prior coursework in ecology

Text: There is no required textbook for this course. Required readings will be posted to Canvas.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Disturbances such as wildfire, insect outbreaks, wind, landslides, and drought are important processes that shape ecosystems in both subtle and dramatic ways. This course will focus primarily on wildfire, but will also cover other key disturbances that impact the western U.S. and ecosystems worldwide. Course topics will include disturbance mechanisms, immediate and lagged effects on ecosystems, variability in disturbance regimes over time and space, and vegetation responses and succession. The course will also cover management actions designed to build resilience to disturbance, respond to disturbance, and mimic disturbance. The course includes a weekly 3-hour lab; this time will be used to go on field trips for much of the semester.

STUDENT LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

IDEA Objective # 2: Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories.
   1. Mechanisms and effects of disturbance, ecosystem responses, succession
   2. Management as it relates to disturbance

IDEA Objective #8: Developing skills in expressing oneself orally or in writing.
   1. Term paper on selected course topic
   2. Presentation to the class on selected course topic
   3. Written exams
   4. Participation in discussion and other activities
IDEA Objective #9. Learning how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems.
   1. Research into topic of choice
   2. Evaluation of quality of sources
   3. Development of skills in pulling out key information from sources

COURSE WORK

Readings
The readings for the class have been selected to give you important background information on each topic, and will complement the material covered in lectures and on field trips. The readings are not optional.

Quizzes (80 points)
Students will take 8 short quizzes on the reading material throughout the course (80 points total). These quizzes will not be announced and will take place at the beginning of the class. The purpose of these quizzes is to motivate you to do the reading so that you are prepared for class.

Exams (100 points)
Students will take two exams (50 points each) during the semester. These will be open-book essay-style exams, each covering material from approximately half of the semester.

Term Paper (126 points)
Students will write a term paper on the topic of their choice. This will be an in-depth, semester-long project with multiple due dates and multiple opportunities to earn points throughout the semester. The term paper is described in a separate document.

Presentation (40 points)
At the end of the semester, students will give a presentation on their term paper topics to teach everyone else in the class the material on which they are now experts.

Participation (80 points)
Students are expected to participate in class. Participation has three parts: attendance, being an active participant in class, and turning in field trip or lab products.

   Attendance: If you cannot attend class or a field trip for some reason, please notify me ahead of time. If you miss class or a field trip, you will still be responsible for knowing the material covered.

   Participation: Your participation grade will include a subjective assessment based on my perception of the quality and quantity of your participation throughout the semester (asking questions, participating in discussions and other activities, making comments and answering questions). Research has shown that students learn more and develop critical thinking skills when they participate in discussion, which is why participation is included as a course requirement.

   Field trip or lab outputs: Field trips and labs will consist of field activities, labs, data analysis, and computer models. There will be products from some of these labs that you will be required to turn in, and these will make up part of your participation grade.
**Required meetings (10 points)**
Each student is required to make **two** 5-minute visits (5 points each) to my office during the semester. If the visit lasts longer than 5 minutes, that’s fine. I’d like the chance to learn a little bit more about you and check in with you about the course and your term paper. The first visit must take place during the first 3 weeks of class, and the second visit must take place during the last 8 weeks of class. You are welcome to come by during office hours, just stop by, or make an appointment. Of course, you’re welcome to come by more than twice if you need to or want to.

**In summary, points are earned as follows:**

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<td>Quizzes</td>
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<td>Exam 1</td>
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<td>Exam 2</td>
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<td>Term Paper</td>
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<td>Presentation</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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<td>Required Meetings</td>
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**Late work policy**
All assignments are due on the designated dates. You may submit assignments up to **3 days** past the due date, but you will **lose 10% of the available points per day**. If you have circumstances that prevent you from turning assignments in on time, please contact me.

**Grades are given as follows:**

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<td>B+</td>
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**Statement on plagiarism and cheating:**
Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Any instance will result in failure of the assignment and depending on the circumstances, failure in the course.

**Disability Statement**
USU welcomes students with disabilities. If you have, or suspect you may have, a physical, mental health, or learning disability that may require accommodations in this course, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) as early in the semester as possible (University Inn # 101, 435-797-2444, drc@usu.edu). All disability related accommodations must be approved by the DRC. Once approved, the DRC will coordinate with faculty to provide accommodations.