WILD 3820
Forest Plants: Identification, Biology, and Function
Credits: 3
Instructor: James A. Lutz

Course Objectives
After taking this course, students should be able to enter a forest ecosystem in western North America and identify the principal plant species. Students should have the vocabulary and techniques to differentiate among the plants covered in the course and understand aspects of their evolution, taxonomy, and ecological function.

1) Identification: The course covers approximately 132 species (generally 11 per week for each of the 12 weeks) that are either widespread throughout western North America or which are narrowly distributed, but either important or unique, as well as the plant characters that allow identification of these 132 species.

2) Taxonomy: The course covers the plant families and phylogeny of the 132 plant species.

3) Function: The course introduces woody plant physiology and adaptations to forest conditions.

4) Indicators: The course provides an introduction to indicator species or groups of species that will allow students to identify various moisture and nutrient conditions.

The course involves a considerable amount of memorization. The overarching goal is to prepare students for resource management careers in the West. Although the class does not specifically cover plant species found outside the West, the plant families represented serve as a good background for work or research anywhere in the northern temperate regions of the world.

Course Fee
The course fee of $28 covers lab materials and supplies (principally preparation of specimens).

Required Text

Web Site: http://website-wild3820.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/

The web site, fully open access, hosts the written course materials (other than the "Woody Plants of Utah" text) and the detailed topics to be covered in lecture and lab. Prior to each class, the lectures will be updated for the current year and the PDF of the PowerPoint will be posted (on the 'Schedule' tab of the website). If the files on the website have the suffix of the current year, the files have been updated (usually by the Saturday before class). Prior to that time the lecture from the previous year is posted for your information. Prior to each lab session, PDF files for the lab PowerPoint and a key will be posted.
Assignment Details
Each week students are expected to read the section on the assigned plants in the book ("Woody Plants of Utah") and read the detailed web pages for those species from the course web site.

Evaluation
Performance is evaluated with quizzes, a lab final exam on plant identification (during the last lab session, in "dead week"), and a concepts and terminology exam during finals week. The course has 100 total points. The point distribution is:

1) Biweekly quizzes (6) – 7 points each, 42 points
2) Lab final (plant identification) – 38 points
3) Final exam (concepts and terminology) – 20 points

Your overall numerical score for the course is the sum of those components. Your grade for the class will be no lower than the following conversion: A, 93-100; A-, 90-92; B+, 87-89; B, 84-86; B-, 80-83; C+, 77-79; C, 74-76; C-, 70-73; D, 64-69; F, <63. However, your final grade will likely be higher than a straight conversion (i.e., the class is 'curved'). In 2014, final course grades were 7 points higher than the straight conversion, and in 2015, final course grades were 10 points higher than a straight conversion. Because the class is curved, the straight conversion underestimates your likely final evaluation (and therefore I do not provide 'snapshots' of grades during the semester).

When students have pre-approved reasons for missing quizzes, any make-up quiz must be completed later that same week (before the quiz is handed back to the class).

Students with Disabilities
The Americans with Disabilities Act states: "Reasonable accommodation will be provided for all persons with disabilities in order to ensure equal participation within the program. If a student has a disability that will likely require some accommodation by the instructor, the student must contact the instructor and document the disability through the Disability Resource Center, at least two weeks before the start of the course. Any request for special consideration relating to attendance, pedagogy, taking of examinations, etc., must be discussed with and approved by the instructor. In cooperation with the Disability Resource Center, course materials can be provided in alternative format--larger print, audio, diskette, or Braille."

Plagiarism
"Plagiarism includes knowingly representing by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials" (Student Code page 10). I expect that all the work you do in this class will be your own.

Attendance
I expect students to attend all lectures and the full lab section. Although I do not take formal attendance I infer whether you were in class or not, based on whether you take the quizzes and pick up your quizzes. If you use a laptop in lecture for anything but taking notes (Facebook, email, etc.), please sit in the back so as not to distract others. Quizzes and exams are closed book.