

ECOL 6000 Population and Community Ecology

Fall 2016

Time: 3 Hours. Tu Th 2.00 – 3.15 pm.
Place: Science Learning Center, Room 345

Instructors: John Drake, Ph.D. and Andrew Park, Ph.D.
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Office hours: By appointment

Overview

The “**Population and Community Ecology**” course is offered at both the 4000 and 6000 levels. This sheet describes additional assignments required of students registered at the 6000 level, that go beyond the requirements outlined in the main class syllabus.

Objective

Students enrolled for credit at the 6000 level (MS degree) are undertaking professional preparation that goes beyond what is typical at the undergraduate level. Three additional assignments are therefore designed both to increase the difficulty level at which students have mastered subject matter content and to introduce students to professional activities and teach skills needed to perform these activities. These are:

1. Students enrolled in ECOL 6000 will have additional required questions on homework assignments and exams that are optional or extra credit for other students.
2. One service that practicing scientists routinely perform is to provide peer reviews of applications submitted for grants to do research, manuscript submitted for scholarly publication, technical books, and reports from governments or other organizations. Peer review is a valuable service provided by professional scientists to improve the quality of scientific reporting. Students enrolled in ECOL 6000 will perform a mock peer review of a manuscript. Instructors will be provide (via website) a set of manuscripts on September 1st. Students will select a manuscript to read and critically evaluate, and then provide their review in the form of a letter outlining the strengths and weaknesses. Typically, comments are divided into two sections: major issues and minor issues. Such a review could range from a mere two paragraphs to 3-4 pages. It should be critical but fair, thorough, and dispassionate. It is helpful to describe changes that would fix any problems identified. Student reviews will be evaluated on their quality: clarity, cogency of their argument, and constructiveness. ***Manuscript reviews are due on 4th October.***

3. An appreciation of the breadth and depth of population and community ecology, together with a demonstrated ability to critically discuss a sub-field is a valuable skill for graduate students. To fulfill these criteria, students are asked to write a review of any of the books in the Princeton Monographs in Population Biology series (<http://press.princeton.edu/catalogs/series/monographs-in-population-biology.html>). The review (~1000 words) is a description, critical analysis, and an evaluation on the quality, meaning, and significance of the book, not a retelling. It should focus on the book's purpose, content, and authority. A critical book review is not a book report or a summary. It is a reaction paper in which strengths and weaknesses of the material are analyzed. It should include a statement of what the author has tried to do, evaluates how well the author has succeeded, and presents evidence to support this evaluation. ***Book reviews are due on 17th November.***