

BSc 489 Independent Studies in Galapagos Islands Ecology



Red-billed Tropicbird

Alton L. Biggs, Instructor

Course Syllabus for Independent Studies in Galápagos Islands Ecology: BSc 489

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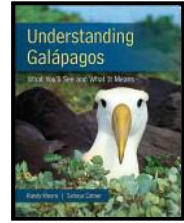
Office hours: TW 9:00 - 11:00

I. Course Description and Learning Outcomes

- A. This course is offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce for students who wish to have an immersion experience in one of the iconic locations that has inspired evolutionary biologists and ecologists for centuries. The class has an enrollment limit of 18, including the instructor, who will have direct oversight during the course.
- B. The course consists of visiting the Bellavista Cloud Forest outside Quito, Ecuador and living in the Galápagos for 9 days (*see attached itinerary*). A typical day aboard ship begins with breakfast at about 7:00 a.m. Then there will be a morning excursion ashore. On returning to the ship the group will eat lunch, followed by a break to swim, snorkel or rest. An afternoon excursion ashore occurs before dinner and then the group will have time to relax and talk about the day. Before dismissal for the evening, you will have a briefing with your instructor and our Galápagos National Park guide. At that time, we'll discuss what we did or learned that day, and our plans for the following day. You can learn more about our ship (*Yate Yolita II*) at <http://www.yolitayacht.com/> and hotel (*Rincón de Puembo*) at <http://www.rincondapuembo.com/en/>.
- C. Learning Outcomes
 1. Students will demonstrate a knowledge of the endemic, native, and introduced flora and fauna of the Galápagos Islands.
 2. Students will demonstrate a knowledge of the problems produced by invasive and non-native species in the Galápagos Islands.
 3. Students will demonstrate a knowledge of how species found in the Galápagos Islands support the theory of evolution by natural selection.

II. Textbooks Required:

- A. Moore, Randy and Sehoya Cotner. 2013. *Understanding Galápagos: What You'll See and What It Means*. Dubuque, IA: McGraw-Hill. ISBN 978-0-07-353228-8. This book is available online at sites such as amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com. Purchase either new or used.
- B. Darwin, C. 1839. *The Voyage of the Beagle: Charles Darwin's Journal of Researches* (Penguin Classics). New York: Penguin. ISBN 014043268X. You will enjoy reading the entire book, but are required to read only *Chapter XVII – Galápagos Archipelago* before the first day of class. This book is available on-line at <http://www.literature.org/authors/darwin-charles/the-voyage-of-the-beagle/>.
- C. Other readings will be supplied or found online.



III. Course Methods

- A. Instructional methods will include individual readings and onsite learning in the Galápagos Islands.
- B. Tentative Schedule
 1. *Photos and course evaluation are due on August 30.* Review and label your photos and videos. You must submit on a flash drive(s) (preferred) or disk(s) with at least 20 photos in each of four folders: 1) Animals, 2) Plants, 3) People/Culture, and 4) Places/Scenery. Your People/Culture photos must include at least one photo of each of your classmates, our guide(s), and every member of the crew. The maximum allowable number of photos to submit in these files is 200. In a separate folder (Folder 5) labeled “My Best,” submit your 20 best photographs, regardless of their theme or subject. Do not email all of your photos to us. Your grade will be lowered if this assignment is turned in late.
 2. *Schedule your final exam for no later August 30.* The exam may be taken orally by telephone conversation or in person. We can call you, or you can call us. We'll discuss everything in the course. If you will not be in Commerce after our return from Ecuador, mail your assignments to Alton Biggs, 2006 Creekview Drive, Commerce, Texas 75428-3947 or call (903) 886-2240.
- C. Taking Photos in Galápagos:
 1. Documenting your observations and adventures is an important assignment. You may want photographs of yourself lounging on the ship, snorkeling with sea lions, near animals or plants on the islands, and similar activities.
 2. Everyone is “on call” to photograph classmates, instructors, crew, and others during our adventure.
 3. Do not take any photos in individual cabins or hotel rooms without the residents' explicit permission. However, anything is fair game outside the cabins – for example, when people are eating, snorkeling, hiking, or lounging/sleeping on the deck.
 4. *Throughout the trip, be sure to take photos of your classmates, and ask them to take photos of you.* You will enjoy looking at these photos for years to come.



Photos of the animals and plants may make you say “Wow,” but photos of you and your classmates in Galápagos will make you smile.

- D. Academic dishonesty in any portion of the academic work for this course shall be grounds for awarding a grade of F for the entire course and filing a report to the Department Head and Dean of the College of Science, Engineering and Agriculture. Don't cheat.
- E. Discuss complaints about teaching or grading first with the professor or lab instructor involved. If you do not reach a satisfactory resolution, you may then discuss the matter with the Biological and Environmental Sciences Department Head who will attempt to mediate. Failing an informal resolution, the Dean of the College of Science, Engineering and Agriculture will facilitate the filing of a formal grievance.
- F. Your grade (90-100% = A; 80-89% = B; 70-79% = C; 60-69% = D; <60% = F) in this course will be based on the following:
 - 1. Daily quizzes: 25%
 - 2. Trip attendance, participation, and behavior: 25%
 - 3. Photographs, video project, and other data: 25%
 - 4. Final Exam (includes a discussion of the readings, trip, contemporary research, photos, videos and other data): 25%.

IV. Course Procedures and Rules

- A. Students must actively participate in all class-related activities, including discussions, field trips, briefings, class meetings, presentations, cultural events, and other activities in the Galápagos.
- B. Document your experiences by taking many photos, and share those photos with your classmates and instructors via short videos that you'll develop in a project.
- C. Complete, and be prepared to discuss, all of the required readings.
- D. *Be on time for all meetings and activities*, and behave appropriately throughout the trip and any follow on meetings.
- E. Tenets of Common Behavior
 - 1. “All students enrolled at the university shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” (See current Student Guidebook)
 - 2. Keep in mind that when you arrive in Ecuador, you will be subject to the laws of that country. If you break Ecuadoran law and are arrested, there is little that we can do, except inform the American Embassy in Quito. You are expected to behave with decorum and in a manner that will bring admiration for the University and the United States.
 - 3. Your partner is your roommate while we are in Ecuador. You are responsible for ensuring that you *and your roommate* 1) are on time for all events, including all departures, meals, meetings, and other events, 2) comply with all course and Galápagos National Park policies, and 3) behave appropriately while we are in Ecuador.

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Your Safety: During this trip, you will travel aboard commercial airlines, vans, and small ship. Although remote, there are inherent risks in any such trip. Neither Texas A&M University, nor its instructor accepts any liability for student safety, except in the case of negligence. The ship aboard which we will travel is properly registered. A safety drill and briefing occur immediately after we set sail from the dock. The crew is well trained and prepared for emergencies, but students must be aware of and follow all rules and directions given by the instructor, the National Parks guide, and the ship's crew.



Your Passport: Bring your passport (and a copy packed in your baggage) to the airport. No passport, no trip. *No joke.* Email a copy of your passport to yourself before we leave.

Insurance: Students are responsible for ensuring that they have adequate insurance to cover any delay in air passage, delay or loss of luggage, or illness during the duration of the course. Several companies provide travel insurance for such trips. The University requires CISI Insurance (<http://www.culturalinsurance.com>).

Internet Access: Internet access is only available only on the mainland and at Puerto Ayora on Santa Cruz Island.

Let Your Instructor Help You. If you have problems, concerns, or questions, talk to your instructor. I have been to Galápagos many times, know its people and places, and I am eager to help you.

****Disclaimer: The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the schedule of the class. The instructor will announce in class or via email any alterations. Students who do not attend class or their email assume responsibility for missing adjustments to the course.**

V. Obligatory Statements

- A. Plagiarism is a criminal activity. You must cite all sources of information. Copying of material, whether parts of sentences, whole sentences, paragraphs, or entire articles, will result in a score of zero for your assignment and can result in further disciplinary action.
- B. Technology Requirements: The following information has been provided to assist you in preparing to use technology in your web-enhanced course.
The following technology is required to be successful in this course.
 - Internet connection – high speed recommended (not dial-up)
 - Word Processor (Microsoft Office Word – 2003 or 2007)
 - Access to University Library site
 - Access to an Email
 - Additionally, the following hardware and software are necessary:

- Our campus is optimized to work in a Microsoft Windows environment. This means our courses work best if you are using a Windows operating system (XP or newer) and a recent version of Microsoft Internet Explorer (6.0, 7.0, or 8.0).
- Courses will also work with Macintosh OS X along with a recent version of Safari 2.0 or better. Along with Internet Explorer and Safari, the Firefox browser (3.0) on both Windows and Mac operating systems is supported.
- It is strongly recommended that you perform a “Browser Test” prior to the start of your course.

C. Communication and Support

Texas A&M University-Commerce provides students technical support. The student help desk may be reached by the following means 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you experience issues while taking your exams or at any other point, feel free to contact the support desk. Phone: 1-866-656-5511 (Toll Free) to speak with Technical Support Representative.

1. Email: helpdesk@online.tamuc.org to initiate a support request with a Technical Support Representative.
2. Help: Click on the 'Help' button on the toolbar for information regarding working

D. Withdrawal Policy

- Every student has the right to drop the course without penalty until the drop-date. Students dropping the course during this period will be given a DP (drop while passing). A grade of DP is GPA neutral, but a grade of DF counts as an F on your transcript.
- If you choose to stop attending class, you may be dropped from the course due to excessive absences. If you are not satisfied with your grade in the course and wish you to drop, it is *your* responsibility to drop the course. Once a grade of DP or DF has been submitted, it cannot be changed.
- A student may drop a course by logging into their myLEO account and clicking on the hyperlink labeled 'Drop a class' from among the choices found under the myLEO section of the Web page.

E. Student Conduct

All students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. You are adults and will be treated as such. Discriminatory, rude, and inappropriate language will not be tolerated in this class and students will be asked to leave or drop the class (these same rules apply for online discussions). If a student continues to act in the same manner during future classes, the instructor reserves the right to drop the student from the course.

F. Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly work free from fraud and deception and is an educational objective of this institution.

Texas A&M University-Commerce has explicit rules and regulations governing academic dishonesty and academic misconduct. As the University states, “All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” These policies are stated in detail in the Student’s Guide Handbook. Each student is expected to read this document and abide by the contained policies. These university policies will be followed in this class. The minimum penalty for an act of academic

dishonesty will be the assignment grade of 0 on the examination or homework assignment. The maximum penalty is expulsion from the University.

Texas A&M University-Commerce further does not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Conduct that violates generally accepted standards of academic honesty is defined as academic dishonesty. "Academic dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another and passing them off as one's own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material.

If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it. Visit the following websites:

<http://www.plagiarism.org>

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/weweb/handouts/plagiarism.html>

<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>

G. Requests for Special Accommodations

Requests from students with disabilities for reasonable accommodations must go through the Academic Support Committee. An individual instructor cannot decide to make accommodations for you without that Committee's approval.

H. ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services, Gee Library, Room 132, (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835 phone, (903) 468-8148 fax

Email: StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu or Rebecca.Tuerk@tamuc.edu