

FIELD METHODS IN WILDLIFE AND CONSERVATION

Course Number: AG 337

Section: *Lecture*: 01E *Lab*: 01L

Location: AGET 255 Lab: See lab schedule for locations

Meeting Time:

Lecture: 8am-9:15am Lab: 2pm- 4:50pm

Instructor Name: Dr. Charles Hoitt

OFFICE HOURS:

PHONE: (806) 318-8710

use text header 411 for common questions; 911 for emergencies (ex. Canvas is down at a due date) Include your course and section

Email: Charles.hoitt@etamu.edu

Office: AGET 154

Office Hours: Open Door & By Appointment

Course Description:

This course provides students with hands-on training in field techniques used to collect and analyze quantitative data on plant and animal populations, wildlife movements and home ranges, habitat relationships, and animal behavior. Field activities are integrated with lecture content that emphasizes study design, statistical analysis, and the interpretation of ecological data. Students are required to enroll in both the lecture and laboratory components of the course.

The laboratory component introduces students to the fundamental skills, methods, and techniques used in wildlife population and habitat studies. Through field-based experiences, students will investigate wildlife and ecological communities in a variety of local environments, including Blackland Prairie and Oak Savanna ecosystems, as well as the East Texas A&M University farm and wetland habitats as well as other sites.

Required textbooks:

Required Text:

The Wildlife Techniques Manual (2 volume set) ISBN: 9781421401591

Edition: 7th Edition

Author(s): Nova J. Silvy (Editor)

Publisher: The Johns Hopkins University Press

Required Lab Materials:

3 ring binder for Lab Notebook

Composition Notebook for Field Journal

Course Learning Outcomes & Methods for Assessing Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. **Prepare for and conduct fieldwork safely and professionally**, demonstrating appropriate planning, equipment selection, and field safety practices that protect both themselves and others. *Methods for assessment: Pre/Post Lab Quizzes, Lab Reports, Lab Practical, Field Notebook*
2. **Document and evaluate ecological conditions** using standard field observation, sampling, and record-keeping techniques. *Methods for assessment: Exams, Quizzes, Lab Reports, Final Project, Field Notebook*
3. **Use field equipment and sampling methods** to assess wildlife presence, distribution, movement patterns, home ranges, and habitat associations. *Methods for assessment: Pre/Post Lab Quizzes, Lab Reports, Lab Practical*
4. **Apply quantitative field techniques** to measure and analyze wildlife habitats, population characteristics, animal behavior, and ecological community interactions. *Methods for assessment: Exams, Pre/Post Lab Quizzes, Lab Reports, Lab Practical*
5. **Read, interpret, and critically evaluate peer-reviewed scientific literature** related to field research methods across a variety of plant and animal taxa. *Methods for assessment: Exams, Lecture Quizzes, Pre-Lab Quizzes, Lab Reports*
6. **Demonstrate professional field and scientific practices**, including responsibility, ethical conduct, and attention to data quality and integrity. *Methods for assessment: Pre/Post Lab Quizzes, Lab Reports, Lab Practical, Field Notebook*
7. **Work effectively as a member of a field research team**, contributing productively to the planning, implementation, and completion of large-scale field projects. *Methods for assessment: Lab Attendance and Participation, In-Class Discussions, Team Lab Reports, Final Project*
8. **Communicate scientific information clearly and effectively in writing**, including the presentation and interpretation of field data and research findings. *Methods for assessment: Lab Reports, Exams, Final Project, Field Notebook*

9. **Demonstrate professional interpersonal skills**, including collaboration, constructive critique, leadership, project management, and effective communication in both field and classroom settings. *Methods for assessment: Exams, In-Class Discussions, Final Project, Field Notebook*

Instructor Policies:

Incomplete, Late, and Make-up work

Students are expected to submit all assignments by the published due date and time. Work not submitted by the deadline will receive a grade of **zero (0)** unless prior arrangements have been approved by the instructor or the absence qualifies under University policy.

The instructor reserves the right to determine whether late submissions or make-up work will be accepted and under what conditions. Approval of late or make-up work is not automatic and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Students participating in approved University-sponsored activities or other excused absences recognized by University policy are exempt from late penalties. In these cases, students are responsible for notifying the instructor in advance whenever possible and completing all required work **before departing for the University-related activity**. Online assignments remain due as scheduled, as they are made available well in advance of their due dates and times.

All students are responsible for adhering to applicable University policies regarding attendance, excused absences, and academic responsibilities. When questions arise, the official University Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Catalog, and Student Handbook shall govern.

Lab Specific Policies

See Lab Syllabus Addenda for Additional Lab Specific syllabus policies and information

Mandatory Laboratory Attendance and Participation Policy

The laboratory component of this course is a required and integral part of the learning experience. Because many laboratory exercises involve field-based activities, data collection, group projects, and hands-on training that cannot be fully replicated outside of scheduled lab periods, **attendance and active participation are mandatory**.

Students are expected to:

- Arrive on time and remain for the entire laboratory period.
- Come prepared with required field gear, equipment, and assignments.
- Actively participate in all field and laboratory activities.
- Contribute meaningfully to team-based projects and data collection efforts.
- Follow all safety instructions and procedures provided by the instructor.

Unexcused absences, excessive tardiness, early departures, failure to participate, or failure to arrive prepared may result in a loss of participation points and may negatively affect the student's final course grade. Students who miss a laboratory exercise due to a documented university-approved absence should

notify the instructor as soon as possible. Makeup opportunities, when feasible, are at the discretion of the instructor and may not be available for all field activities.

Because many laboratory exercises involve collaborative work and unique field experiences, attendance alone does not constitute participation. Students are expected to engage fully in all assigned activities.

Transportation for Field Laboratory Activities

Transportation to and from field sites is available for students who need assistance traveling to course-related field laboratory locations.

Students requiring transportation should meet at the instructor's office no later than 2:00 PM on the day of the scheduled field laboratory. The instructor, graduate student, and/or teaching assistant (TA) will provide transportation in a University- or department-approved vehicle, subject to available space.

Students who prefer to drive themselves may travel directly to the designated field site. Directions and meeting information will be provided prior to each field laboratory.

Students are encouraged to communicate transportation needs in advance whenever possible to help ensure adequate transportation arrangements can be made. Transportation logistics, departure times, and field site locations will be communicated through university email and course announcements.

Failure to arrive at the designated meeting location by the scheduled departure time may result in the student being responsible for arranging their own transportation to the field site. Students who travel separately remain responsible for arriving at the field site on time and participating in all scheduled activities.

The instructor reserves the right to modify transportation procedures based on University policies, field site requirements, vehicle availability, and safety considerations.

Respect for Organisms, Habitats, and Classmates

This course involves direct interaction with wildlife, plants, natural habitats, and fellow students. Professional and ethical conduct is required at all times.

Students are expected to:

- Treat all living organisms with respect and care.
- Minimize disturbance to wildlife, vegetation, and habitats during field activities.
- Follow all animal handling, collection, and observation protocols exactly as instructed.
- Leave field sites in the same or better condition than they were found.
- Respect private property, university lands, and public natural areas.
- Treat classmates, teaching assistants, and instructors with courtesy, professionalism, and respect.
- Foster an inclusive learning environment by valuing diverse perspectives and experiences.

Harassment, discrimination, bullying, intentional harm to organisms, destruction of habitat, or behavior inconsistent with professional scientific conduct will not be tolerated and may result in removal from field activities, grade penalties, referral to university conduct processes, or dismissal from the course.

Laboratory and Field Behavior Policy

Laboratory and field activities require a high level of professionalism, safety awareness, and personal responsibility.

Students must:

- Follow all instructor directions immediately and completely.
- Adhere to all laboratory, field, university, and site-specific safety regulations.
- Use equipment responsibly and only for its intended purpose.
- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear for field conditions.
- Maintain a professional attitude during all course activities.
- Refrain from behaviors that disrupt instruction, compromise safety, or interfere with the learning experience of others.

The following behaviors are prohibited during laboratory and field exercises:

- Reckless or unsafe conduct.
- Horseplay or inappropriate behavior.
- Possession or use of alcohol, illegal drugs, or impairment from any substance during course activities.
- Intentional misuse of scientific equipment.
- Falsification or fabrication of data.
- Unauthorized collection or removal of organisms or materials from field sites.
- Conduct that places individuals, wildlife, or property at risk.

Students who engage in unsafe or disruptive behavior may be removed from the activity, receive a grade penalty, be marked absent for the exercise, and/or be referred to appropriate university disciplinary processes.

As future natural resource professionals and scientists, students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the highest standards of safety, ethics, responsibility, and respect for both people and the natural environment.

Generative AI Usage

Generative AI applications (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, DALL·E, Grammarly, or similar applications) may only be used in this course for **specific assignments where the instructor explicitly permits their use.** Unless otherwise stated in the syllabus or assignment guidelines, AI assistance is not

allowed. Using AI in unauthorized contexts or submitting AI-generated content as your own work may constitute a violation of academic integrity and may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. When using AI in permitted contexts as outlined in the syllabus or explicitly permitted by the instructor, you are responsible for ensuring that AI-generated content is properly cited, accurate, ethical, free of misinformation or intellectual property violations. AI-generated content must never be submitted as your own work. Doing so may constitute a violation of academic integrity and may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

Please contact me if you have questions regarding this course policy. I embrace the technology coming from a private sector business owner background. I am open to discussion and exploring its use further in courses and research. I will give bonus opportunities and assignments that use generative AI in the context of the course.

Any generative AI use should be cited AND clearly disclosed according to the instructions in this syllabus and/or individual assignments. An example of an APA citation (7th ed. format) is seen here:

OpenAI. (2025). ChatGPT (May 2025 version) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com>

Grade Breakdown & Grading Scale:

Lecture:

Lecture Hour Exams:	300 points
	3x 100 points each
Quizzes	150
<i>Online or In-Class</i>	
Final Project:	150 points
In-class Activities:	25 points
Total Lecture Points:	625 Points

Lab:

Item	Points	#/Description/etc.	Total
Team Lab Reports	15 points	10	150 points
Individual Field Reports	15 points	10	150 points
Attendance & Participation	Varies	<i>Weekly Lab Sign in and Sign out</i>	75 points
Lab Practical Exam	75 points	<i>Final Field Methods Assessment</i>	75 points
Field Notebook Review	75 points	<i>Review of individual student's Field Notebook</i>	75 points
Pre-Lab Quizzes	5 points	10	50 points
Total Lab Points:			575 Points

Combined Course Total: 1200 points

Grade Range:

A >1080 B 959.5-1079.99 C 780-959.4 D 666-779.5 F <666

University Policies

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the Student Guidebook.

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the Attendance webpage and Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01.

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03

Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateschool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyFormold.pdf>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Students with Disabilities-- 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 reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Ag 337 Lab Specific Syllabus Addenda

Ag 337 Lab Field Methods Course Dress Code Policy Addendum

Field Work Attire and Safety Requirements

To ensure student safety, comfort, and professionalism during field activities, all students enrolled in **Field Methods** must adhere to the following dress code requirements whenever participating in outdoor field exercises, site visits, or other course-related fieldwork.

Required Attire

Students must wear:

- Closed-toe, closed-heel shoes or work boots with appropriate traction.
- Long pants made of durable material (e.g., jeans, work pants, or field pants).
- Shirts that provide adequate coverage of the torso and shoulders.
- Weather-appropriate clothing, including jackets, rain gear, hats, and gloves when conditions require.
- Any personal protective equipment (PPE) specified by the instructor or field site, such as safety vests, hard hats, safety glasses, or hearing protection.

Prohibited Attire

The following items are not permitted during field activities:

- Sandals, flip-flops, slides, Crocs with open ventilation holes, or other open-toed footwear.
- Shorts, skirts, or dresses unless specifically approved for a particular activity.
- Clothing that is excessively loose and may create a safety hazard around equipment or vegetation.

Professional Conduct and Preparedness

Students are expected to:

- Arrive prepared for the environmental conditions and duration of the field activity.
- Bring sufficient water, sun protection, and other personal items recommended by the instructor.
- Maintain a professional appearance appropriate for interaction with landowners, industry partners, agency personnel, and members of the public.

Compliance

Students who arrive without appropriate attire or required safety equipment may be prohibited from participating in the field activity. Absences resulting from failure to comply with the dress code may be treated as unexcused and may affect participation or assignment grades as outlined in the course syllabus.

The instructor reserves the right to modify these requirements based on field conditions, weather, site-specific hazards, or institutional safety guidelines.

Weather Policy Addendum for Field Laboratory Activities

Weather and Field Activity Expectations

Field laboratory activities are a required component of this course. Students should expect to participate in scheduled field exercises **rain or shine** and should come prepared for typical outdoor weather conditions, including light rain, wind, heat, cold, and muddy terrain.

Field activities will proceed as scheduled unless weather conditions are determined to be hazardous or unsafe. Examples of hazardous conditions may include, but are not limited to:

- Lightning or thunderstorms in the immediate area
- Severe weather warnings issued by the National Weather Service
- Flooding or flash flood conditions
- High winds that create safety concerns
- Extreme heat or cold conditions that pose health risks
- Any other environmental hazard identified by the instructor or the University

If hazardous weather conditions are expected or develop before a scheduled field activity, the instructor may:

1. Relocate the laboratory to an alternative indoor location (e.g., an on-campus classroom or a University Farm Classroom);
2. Modify the planned activity; or
3. Cancel the laboratory session if no safe alternative is available.

Students will be notified of any changes via **university email and D2L course announcements** as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of each student to regularly monitor their university email and course announcements before traveling to the field site.

Failure to check course communications will not excuse a student from attendance requirements or alternative assignments associated with modified laboratory activities. Students should always dress appropriately for outdoor conditions and be prepared for changing weather during field exercises.