

Course Outline
Biology 9400: Ecology and Evolution Graduate Course
Fall 2026 Semester

1. Course Information

Course name and number: Ecology and Evolution Graduate Course. Biology 9400

Location: <redacted>

Day and Time: <redacted> This 3 hour time will be used for all class components, including lectures, discussions, and presentations.

2. Enrollment Restrictions

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in Biology, as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

3. Instructor Information

<redacted>

4. Course Description and Graduate Course Level Learning Outcomes/Objectives

Course Description: Scientific discovery is arguably more challenging in Ecology & Evolution than in any other natural science discipline because of the difficulty in defining the boundary conditions of a scientific question, variability in ecological processes in space and time, barriers to replication, the (unknown) complexity of ecological systems, and the inherent unpredictability of working with living organisms. In this course, we will take a broad approach to consider “What makes this study great?” in Ecology & Evolution. We will deeply consider published research that illustrates or directly addresses specific challenges in research in E&E, and explore how those challenges were handled leading to important advances in the discipline and beyond.

Course Learning Outcomes/Objectives: The objective of this course is to expose graduate students in Ecology & Evolution to landmark research across the ecological hierarchy, cultivate critical reading and evaluation skills, and develop an ability to generalize scientific approaches across disciplines and scales of inquiry. By critically evaluating and understanding “what makes this study great?”, participants will see how key elements of landmark research in E&E may be incorporated into their current, and future research activities independent of specific scale or topic.

5. Course Timeline and Format

<redacted>

Each week, we will read and then break-down a paper that is generally recognized as ‘groundbreaking’ that illustrates or directly addresses a specific challenge in research in E&E that had been introduced the previous week, revealing how the challenge was handled, leading

to important advances in the discipline, as well as potentially public policy or science in general. Each participant will be responsible for leading the discussion on one paper over the course of the semester.

6. Course Materials

Readings in the scientific literature will be assigned weekly, and made available via the course's BrightSpace page. All required materials will be from the freely-available peer-reviewed literature.

7. Methods of Evaluation

Evaluation	Description	Weight
Participation	Thoughtful and informed engagement in 10 out of 11 weekly reading discussions	10%
Reading Summary	Submission of draft discussion leadership presentation for feedback.	15%
Discussion Leadership	In-class presentation and discussion leadership of one of the assigned readings over the course of the semester (includes peer-evaluation).	15%
Contribution to Peer Evaluations	Brief written peer-evaluation of discussion leaders presentation (submitted confidentially to instructor)	10%
Essay Outline	Outline of term paper submitted for feedback from instructor (by Nov 2 – tentative)	10%
Final Essay	By December 9	40%

Details of expectations of each of the evaluation components will be provided over the course of the semester at appropriate times.

8. Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the [Scholastic Offences policy](#), specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between Western University and Turnitin.com.

9. Health/Wellness Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Mental Health Support](#) at Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

10. Accessible Education (AE)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education (AE), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AE and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations may include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

11. Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts on the [Wellness and Wellbeing website](#). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

12. Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Participants in this course may choose to use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools/software/apps at their own discretion to inform their understanding/interpretation of weekly assigned topics on their own time. However, if said tools/software/apps are used the user must recognize and acknowledge that they may provide information that is inaccurate or incorrect. The participants accurate and in-depth understanding of the weekly assigned course materials is assessed through both discussion leadership and weekly participation scores. Participation is evaluated in-person, without access to digital resources. The presentation of inaccurate or incorrect information derived from GenAI sources will compromise evaluation scores.

The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools/software/apps in the preparation of written work and presentations as part of the course assessment is not permitted.