

## Biology 355: Plant Ecology

Instructor: Dr. Brian C. Barringer  
Email: [bbarring@uwsp.edu](mailto:bbarring@uwsp.edu)  
Phone: 715-346-2452  
Office/Lab: TNR 476/469  
Office Hours: Thur/Fri 10:00 – 12:00 or by appointment

Lecture: Tue/Thur 12:30 – 1:45 in TNR 461  
Lab: Thur 2:00 – 4:50 in TNR 461



**Required Texts:** *The Ecology of Plants*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Gurevitch *et al.* 2006; additional reading will be provided on Canvas

**Course Description:** Biology 355 is an advanced course in organismal, population, community, and ecosystem ecology with a primary focus on plants.

**Course Learning Outcomes:** After taking this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Use knowledge of ecological and evolutionary processes to describe and explore patterns in nature, specifically as they apply to plants and the interactions they have with their biotic and abiotic environments.
- 2) Use observations and both empirical and theoretical tools to conceptualize and explore relevant questions of interest within the scientific field of plant ecology.
- 3) Articulate a reasonable understanding of the history of plant ecology as a scientific discipline and identify some of its most outstanding contributors and studies, both past and present.
- 4) Critically evaluate literature and communicate information effectively as dictated by norms within the scientific field of plant ecology.

**Exams:** This course includes three exams total: two midterms and a final. Exams will generally contain a mixture of question types (e.g., short answer/short essay, fill-in-the-blank, quantitative, labeling/drawing figures or diagrams, and multiple-choice questions). Exam content will focus on lecture material; however, lab activities and supplemental readings compliment lecture material and might serve as inspiration for exam questions. Midterm exams will occur during two lab periods in TNR 461. The final exam is cumulative though it will be weighted toward material covered during the last third of the semester (i.e., after midterm II). The final exam is also worth a bit more than the midterms. The final exam will occur in our regular lecture classroom (TNR 461) on Mon, Dec 16<sup>th</sup> at 2:45 PM.

**Quizzes:** I will ask that you read a number of items (mostly peer-reviewed journal articles) this semester. We will discuss these items during our meetings; therefore, you must have access to this material in class. With that in mind I encourage you to bring a tablet/laptop to class on those days (hard copies of reading material will also work). Most reading assignments will be accompanied by a short quiz, which will be administered promptly at the start of class on the associated day (see course schedule, below). Quizzes are not meant to be difficult; they are simply meant to provide an incentive for students to complete the reading assignments before coming to class.

**Lab:** We will meet most – but not all – weeks for lab. Some weeks you will be working on your own. Some of our labs will occur outdoors or in the TNR greenhouse; please dress appropriately.

**Attendance:** I do not take attendance in lecture. However, this is a small class and I do notice who is there and who is missing. Regularly missing and/or being late to lecture will negatively influence your participation score. Also, based on my experience teaching this course I can assure you that students who regularly attend and participate in lecture do significantly better than students who habitually skip and/or are late. Do not fool yourself into thinking that your textbook and access to my lecture slides are meaningful substitutes for attending lecture! They are not.

On-time attendance in lab is mandatory and I will take attendance at the beginning of each lab meeting. Each of our meetings is worth up to 10 points for attendance (not including midterm exam meetings and weeks in which you are working independently). Students arriving late to lab lose one attendance point per minute (up to a 10 point maximum). Please be there on time. If you miss lab it is your responsibility to obtain notes/information/data from a classmate.

**Participation:** This is an upper-division course on a fairly specialized topic. I assume you are here because you are sincerely interested in plant ecology. I expect you to come to class prepared, to act professionally, and to be an active participant in our meetings and activities. The course will be more enjoyable for everyone if you do your best to engage with me, your peers, and course material to the maximum extent possible. A finite number of points are allocated to participation. You must earn these points! Students who are quiet, unengaged, and/or generally appear uninterested in our activities will not fare well in this regard.

**Extra credit:** I do not offer extra credit in response to student requests. However, on occasion I might offer a small amount of extra credit, usually for attending relevant seminars held on campus or in the community. If/when these opportunities occur I will announce them in class and via email.

**Grading:** The total number of points possible in this course is 470. Point values for individual exams, quizzes, assignments, etc. are listed below. Values with an asterisk (\*) refer to assignments that, if not completed, will result in the associated loss of points and a reduction of your letter grade to the next lowest full grade (i.e., B+ to a C+).

Activity	# Points Possible
Midterm exams (2)	60 each
Final exam	80
Quizzes (10)	5 each
<i>Clarkia</i> project assignment	30*
<i>Solidago</i> project assignment	30*
<i>Brassica</i> project assignment	30*
Independent project assignment	30*
Independent project presentation	20*
Attendance in lab	10 each meeting
Participation	30



Your final grade in this course will be based on the percentage of all possible points that you earn throughout the semester. To determine your final grade the following metric will be used:

≥	90-	87-	84-	80-	77-	74-	70-	67-	60-	≤
94%	93%	89%	86%	83%	79%	76%	73%	69%	66%	59%
A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F

**Make-up and late policy:** Make-ups for missed quizzes and exams are given only in truly extraordinary situations. However, if you have a university-sanctioned event or have an emergent medical situation, death in the family, etc., you can take a make-up. In order to qualify for a make-up, you must provide a written, verifiable excuse from an authorized person (coach, medical doctor, minister, etc.) within 72 hours of the missed quiz/exam. This excuse should clearly articulate that you were unable to make it to class on the day you missed. I reserve the right to verify the legitimacy of all excuses by contacting the authority figure. Assignments are due on their respective due dates (see course schedule, below). Assignments turned in late lose 20% of their value per day.

**Students with disabilities:** I am happy to help you if you need special accommodations to succeed in this course. Please visit the UWSP Student Disability and Assistive Technology Center (located in LRC 609) to document your needs and then contact me so that appropriate arrangements can be made. More information can be found here: <http://www.uwsp.edu/disability/Pages/default.aspx>

**Academic integrity:** It is your responsibility to be aware of your rights and responsibilities as a UWSP student. Please take the time to read and understand the information found here, and let me know of any questions: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf> Also, be sure to review the following information on plagiarism: <http://library.uwsp.edu/guides/vrd/plagiarism.htm>

**Course schedule:** Note that I reserve the right to alter this schedule, with due notice, as we progress through the semester. Lab meetings occur on dates in bold.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignments and due dates</b>
9/3	Introduction	
<b>9/5</b>	Review of plant anatomy, physiology, and taxonomy <i>Lab: Clarkia project (set up experiment)</i>	<i>Clarkia</i> project assignment assigned.
9/10	<b>Quiz I (Hairston et al. 1960)</b> Review of plant anatomy, physiology, and taxonomy	<b>Read Hairston et al. 1960 before lecture.</b>
<b>9/12</b>	Plant mating systems and reproduction <i>Lab: Quiz II (Hartnett and Abrahamson 1979) and Solidago project (introduction; meet at SW corner of Lake Joanis in Schmeeckle Reserve)</i>	<b>Read Hartnett and Abrahamson 1979 before lab.</b> <i>Solidago</i> project assignment assigned.
9/17	Plant mating systems and reproduction	
<b>9/19</b>	<b>Quiz III (Barringer and Geber 2008)</b> Plant mating systems and reproduction <i>Lab: Brassica project (set up experiment)</i>	<b>Read Barringer and Geber 2008 before lecture.</b> <i>Brassica</i> project assignment assigned.
9/24	Plant mating systems and reproduction	
<b>9/26</b>	Plant life-history ecology <i>Lab: Independent project (introduction)</i>	Independent project assignment assigned. Independent project presentation assignment assigned.
10/1	Plant life-history ecology	
<b>10/3</b>	Plant life-history ecology <i>Lab: work on projects</i>	
10/8	Plant life-history ecology	
<b>10/10</b>	No lecture meeting <b><i>Lab: midterm exam I</i></b>	
10/15	Plant population ecology	
<b>10/17</b>	Plant population ecology <i>Lab: work on projects</i>	
10/22	Plant population ecology	
<b>10/24</b>	Plant population ecology <i>Lab: work on projects</i>	
10/29	Plant population ecology	
<b>10/31</b>	Plant community ecology <i>Lab: work on projects</i>	
11/5	Plant community ecology	<b><i>Solidago</i> project assignment due.</b>
<b>11/7</b>	Plant community ecology <i>Lab: work on projects</i>	
11/12	<b>Quiz IV (Janzen and Martin 1982)</b> Plant community ecology	<b>Read Janzen and Martin 1982 before lecture.</b>
<b>11/14</b>	No lecture meeting <b><i>Lab: midterm exam II</i></b>	
11/19	Large-scale plant ecology	
<b>11/21</b>	Large-scale plant ecology <i>Lab: Independent project presentations</i>	



11/26	<b>Quiz V (Colautti and Barrett 2013)</b> Special topic: invasive species Lab: <i>work on projects</i>	<b>Read Colautti and Barrett 2013 before lecture.</b> <b>Independent project assignment due.</b>
11/28	Thanksgiving break	
12/3	<b>Quiz VI (Rader et al. 2016)</b> Special topic: bees and other pollinators Lab: <i>work on projects</i>	<b>Read Rader et al. 2016 before lecture.</b>
12/5	<b>Quiz VII (Chapter 21 in textbook)</b> Special topic: climate and climate change Lab: <i>work on projects</i>	<b>Read Chapter 21 in your textbook before lecture.</b>
12/10	<b>Quiz VIII (Flinn 2015)</b> Special topic: balance of nature Lab: <i>work on projects</i>	<b>Read Flinn 2015 before lecture.</b>
12/12	<b>Quiz IX (TBD)</b> Special topic: to be determined by class Lab: <i>work on projects</i>	<b>Read TBD before lecture.</b>
	<b>Quiz X (TBD)</b> Special topic: to be determined by class Lab: <i>work on projects</i>	<b>Read TBD before lecture.</b> <b>Clarkia and Brassica project assignments due.</b>
12/16	<b>Final Exam (2:45 PM in TNR 461)</b>	

