

SOIL/WATR 462/662: Environmental Biogeochemistry

Spring 2017 Syllabus

Course Information

Class Times: Wednesday 2:00 – 3:50pm
Friday 2:00-3:50pm

Location: Discussion/Lecture in CCC 231, Lab in TNR 260/261

Credits: 3.0

Instructors Information

Dr. Kyle Herrman Email: Kyle.Herrman@uwsp.edu (preferred method)
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Office Hours: By appointment

Dr. Rob Michitsch Email: rmichits@uwsp.edu (preferred method)
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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Objective

The goal of this course is to expose students to the theory, concepts, and methods available to quantify biogeochemical cycles in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Students will use the theory they learn in the beginning of class to conduct an independent research project that will explore some aspect of biogeochemistry. Using common methods in soil/water analysis and advanced analytical chemistry techniques students will plan, develop, and conduct an in-depth research project. At the end of the semester students will give a scientific-style oral presentation that discusses the rationale behind their project and explores the significance of the data collected.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester a student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate how air, soil, and water are unique mediums for biogeochemical cycles
2. Identify biotic and abiotic interactions and potential feedback loops involved in biogeochemical cycles
3. Apply knowledge gained in the class to examine if biogeochemical cycles are impacted by either an anthropogenic or natural forcing factor
4. Apply your understanding of elements that shape successful oral communications such as topic, purpose, genre, and audience to critique your own and others' delivery and provide effective and useful feedback to improve your communication
5. Apply discipline-specific standards of oral communication to compose an articulate, grammatically correct, and organized presentation of your research project with properly documented and supported ideas, evidence, and information suitable for the topic, purpose, and audience
6. Complete a research project that integrates knowledge, skills, and experiences that allows students to determine how the physical, chemical, and biological environment is connected in soil and water resources
7. Demonstrate the skills needed to conduct applied research in soil and water resources that would be required for graduate school or agency positions where adaptive management is being utilized

Textbooks

1. *Biogeochemistry: An Analysis of Global Change, 3rd Ed.* Schlesinger and Bernhardt. Elsevier (text rental).
2. Other readings/sources will be assigned and provided to you. You will be expected to have read the material and be prepared to discuss the material in class.
3. *The Bedford Handbook: 6th Ed.* Hacker. Bedford/ St. Martin's (suggested/text rental).

Assignments

Exam

The exam in this class will be a take-home exam. Because it is a take-home exam you may be required to conduct reading comprehension, essay response, graph making, and data analysis. The exam will be based on lecture material we cover during the first half of class. You will be given approximately one week to complete the exam and are not allowed to discuss specific responses to questions with any other students. You are allowed to discuss general approaches to questions with other students but you and you alone are responsible for the material you turn in. If any of the writing, graphs, figures, or calculations are too similar to another student's exam, then all individuals involved will be brought up on charges of academic misconduct according to Chapter 14 in the University Handbook (<http://www.uwsp.edu/admin/stuaffairs/rights/rightsChap14.pdf>).

Cheating and/or plagiarism will not be tolerated. You may consult and discuss the assignments with one another, but you must complete the assignments and exams independently. Aside from the lecture material, you must properly reference work that is not your own. Your final exam answers must be uploaded to D2L.

Literature Review

During the 5th week of class, groups must turn in a literature review of the topic they have selected. This will require each group to turn in a summary that discusses what research has been published in the scientific literature relating to their topic. Each group member is required to summarize 2 different articles related to your project. Be sure that in your summary you do not simply copy down the abstract but that you include how this particular article applies to your research project.

Proposal

In approximately the 8th week of class, groups will present their proposal for the research project. This will consist of a 10 minute PowerPoint presentation in which all members of the group will present. You will need to work with either Dr. Michitsch or Dr. Herrman to figure out the specific details regarding methodology. The more details you can provide the better the feedback you will receive. During the proposal you must use the following format:

- Title – this needs to be a simply representation of your project (i.e., not overly wordy)
- Significance – why the project is important to the average citizen (i.e., human health or ecological effect)
- Rationale – why is your study necessary
- Objectives – identify the major goals you will accomplish
- Hypothesis(es) – provide specific statements that clearly indicate what you expect to observe
- Methods – provide the specific methods you will use to achieve your objectives (be sure to provide some details into how the method works)
- Data analysis – what statistical tests will you use to analyze the data
- Expected results – provide a general idea of what you expect the data to look like

Data Analysis and Graph Creation

During the 13th week of class, Dr. Herrman will instruct you about stats and preparing your tables and graphs (Dr. Michitsch will contribute). On Monday May 2nd, (the week before your presentations), each group will turn in the tables and figures they will be presenting during their final presentation. We will focus on the format of data presentation, use of appropriate statistics to analyze the data, and the correct use of units, figure legends, etc. in order to prepare your final presentations.

Final Presentation

In the last week of class each group will give their final presentation. This will consist of a 15 minute PowerPoint presentation with 5 minutes of question and answer. Each member of the group is required to present. During the presentation each group is required to discuss the significance of the project, what their data suggests regarding their hypotheses, and how their data fit with other studies conducted in similar systems. Slides should have limited amounts of text, all figures and tables should have correct units and easily seen in a large room, and the presentation should have good continuity. A general outline should be:

- Title slide
- Introduction
 - Significance
 - Objective and Hypothesis(es)
- Methods
- Results with statistical analyses
- Discussion/Conclusion
- Acknowledgements

Project Status Reports

What: Each project team will develop a brief (maximum 1 page) summary of activities completed by the Team over the past week and/or status of activities initiated in prior weeks.

When: Due at 12:00 noon each Monday (beginning March 27th) unless instructed otherwise.

How: Each Team's Project Leader will send one email to Drs. Herrman and Michitsch. While the Project Leader will send the email, this does not imply that the Project Leader is solely responsible for creating the Status Report. Status Reports should be developed as a Team effort. Please remember that this is a formal email and should be presented in complete sentences and in paragraph form. If necessary feel free to use Word to create the reports and send them as an attachment.

Graduate Students

One expectation of graduate students in this class will be to teach an agreed upon topic to the class. This will be using a standard PowerPoint format and will be approximately a 30-minute presentation. In addition, graduate students are required to turn in a scientific style abstract (500 words) based on the group project they are completing. It will be due either during week 15 or 16 of the semester.

Points

Undergraduate Student		Graduate Student	
Assignment	Points	Assignment	Points
Exam	25	Exam	25
Literature Review	10	Literature Review	10
Proposal	15	Proposal	15
Data Analysis, Graphs	15	Data Analysis, Graphs	15
Final Presentation	35	Final Presentation	35
Teaching/Abstract		Teaching/Abstract	25
Total	100	Total	125

Grading Scale

A	>92	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	60-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	F	<60
B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69		

Tentative Schedule (subject to change as semester progresses)

Week	Topic	Assignments	Instructor
1	Syllabus, Overview, History, Water		Herrman
2	Water, Microbial Communities, Intro Soil		Herrman/Michitsch
3	Atmosphere, Carbon Cycle	Topic Due	Michitsch
4	Redox Chemistry		Herrman
5	Plants		Herrman
6	Soil Chemistry	Literature Review Due	Prater
7	Nitrogen & Phosphorus Cycles		Herrman
8	Proposals, Project Design	Exam Assigned	Herrman/Michitsch
9	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK		
10	Sampling, Sample Prep	Exam Due	
11	Experiments		
12	Experiments		
13	Experiments (Data Analysis, Graphs)		
14	Experiments		
15	Experiments	Graphs due Monday	
16	Presentations on Friday		
Finals			

Available Analyses (list subject to change)

Soil Pool	Water Pool	Flux/Rate/Biomass Estimate
Organic Matter	Carbon Constituents	Labile Carbon
Total Nitrogen	Total Nitrogen	Methanogenesis
Total Carbon	Total Phosphorus	Nitrification
Extractable Nutrients	Nutrients	Denitrification
	Various Anions and Cations (F ⁻ , Cl ⁻ , Br ⁻ , SO ₄ ²⁻ , Mg, Ca, K, etc.)	Mineralization
		Microbial Biomass
Soil Chem/Phys Properties	Water Chem/Phys Properties	Phosphorus Sorption Capacity
pH	pH	Chlorophyll a
CEC	Alkalinity	Transient Storage/Solute Transport
EC	Redox Potential	
Bulk Density	Specific Conductance	Bacterial and Fungal Analyses
Soil Moisture	Turbidity/TSS	

Laboratory Safety

Safety procedures must be followed at all times to avoid danger to yourself and those you share laboratory with. If you ever have a safety question, **ASK!!!**

General – Basic safety equipment in the laboratory includes: eye wash station, safety showers, gloves, aprons, fire extinguishers, chemical absorbents, etc. You should be aware of the location of all these items

Chemical Spills – In the event of a spill:

1. Alert others in area.
2. Determine chemical type.
3. Put on necessary protective equipment.
4. Contain spill with absorbent.
5. Call ×3456 or 9-911 or 911 if necessary.

Chemical absorbent is located by the door in room 260.

Note: not all chemicals can be contained with paper towels, in fact some chemicals are flammable in contact with organic materials such as paper.

Fire – In the event of a fire:

1. Turn off gas, remove flammables.
2. Alert others in area.
3. Determine chemical type.
4. Contain with appropriate material.

Attire – Chemical spills do happen. To avoid damage to your clothes or person we recommend: laboratory coats, old clothes, closed toe shoes, and (when necessary) use of PPE.

Sharps – Needles, etc. are to be disposed of in “Sharps” containers, not the trash.