

Professional Skills Development for Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Science

BIOL 5208/6208 & ESE 6307 CRN: 14066/14031/17693

M 10:30 am – 12:20 pm

Instructors:

- Marguerite Mauritz, Ph. D. (memauritz@utep.edu)
- Guest lecturers

Prerequisite:

Enrollment in either the EEB MS or PhD program, ESCI MSc Program, or ESE PhD Program.

Course Description:

This course aims to provide instruction and guidance in the development of professional skills needed by doctoral students in ecology, evolution and environmental science. We will engage through in-class lectures, discussion (in-class and online), group exercises, reading, and reflection.

Learning Objectives:

- Develop tools and frameworks for success in grad school.
- Practice effective written and oral communication to expert-, non-disciplinary, and non-technical audiences.
- Create a teaching/outreach module
- Critically examine how we shape the culture of our scientific communities.
- Engage through discussion, self-reflection, and peer-input to foster professional peer mentor networks.
- Explore future career-paths and post-graduation plans, recognize the importance of explicitly considering these goals throughout graduate school.

Text: Materials on selected topics will be posted on Blackboard and distributed in class.

Class Meetings: Once a week, Monday 10:30-12:20

Classroom: Quinn Hall 103

Office Hours: Tuesday 2-3pm and Thursday 10:30-11:30am in Biology 415, or by appointment

Classroom Climate:

Peer-networks and a space to explore ideas is critical for our growth as scientists. Each of us brings a different way of thinking, opinions, and lived experiences shaped by the complexity of our own identities. These diverse outlooks strengthen our community and science when we respect and are willing to learn from each other. Some of the exercises in this class ask for honesty and vulnerability as we share reflections and personal experiences. Growth often comes when we push our comfort zones in a safe environment. This takes courage. I ask that we create a safe environment together, by listening, addressing each other with respect and support, and assuming good intentions. If we get something wrong, we can hold ourselves accountable and acknowledge a misstep. I will work to ensure the class environment remains constructive and I welcome any suggestions along the way.

Assessment: *All assignments will be accessed and submitted via Blackboard*

Class reflections and discussion boards: 10%

- Weekly minute-papers
- Discussion board: 1 post + 1 comment
 - Mini-bio introductory post
 - Mental Health: fun & restorative

Professional Development Materials: 65% (9 total)

- Mentorship Map
- IDP & Strategic Action Planning and Development (Research)
- Field Safety Plan
- Research Summary *
- Plain Language Abstract or SciComm piece *
- Teaching module *
- Strategic Action Planning and Development (Career)
- Personal Statement, CV/Resume
- Data Management Plan (+ revised)

*Assignments with * are peer-reviewed and the final grade will be based on the revised version.*

Feedback to peers: 15% (3 total)

Give feedback to 1 peer in each area:

- Research summary
- Plain Language/Sci Comm piece
- Teaching module

End of semester peer presentations: 10% (1 total)

Choose to present on your research goals, a plain-language summary of your research, or your teaching module.

Attendance:

I generally expect attendance in class. However, sometimes unexpected things happen - each student automatically has 2 excused absences that can be used for any reason and without explanation. If you do know in advance that you will be missing a class or be late submitting an assignment, please send a quick email so I can plan accordingly. For additional absences or late assignments, please contact me in advance.

I will not drop you from the course. However, if you feel that you are unable to complete the course successfully, please let me know and then contact the [Registrar's Office](#) to initiate the drop process. If you do not, you are at risk of receiving an "F" for the course.

Deadlines and Late Work:

Assignments are all due Sunday at 10:00 PM. Each student automatically has 2 late submissions of prof dev materials that can be used for any reason and without explanation. However, please be aware that I may not be able to provide you timely feedback on late work. Late peer-reviewed exercises will not receive a peer review which will affect your ability to revise the work.

Technical Issues with Submission:

I strongly suggest that you submit your work with plenty of time to spare in the event that you have a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer. I also suggest you save all your work in a separate Word document as a backup and do not rely only on

Blackboard to keep your work. If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through Blackboard, please contact the UTEP Help Desk. You can email me your backup document as a last resort.

Instructor Feedback:

I will provide feedback on assignments within a week of timely submissions. For late submissions, I will attempt to provide feedback within a week, but it may take me longer.

Grading

Letter grades for this course will be determined based on the above requirements and will be assigned as follows:

90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
59% or less	F

Course Communication:

Here are the ways we can keep the communication channels open:

- Office Hours: I will have in-person office hours for your questions and comments about the course. If necessary, you can request a virtual meeting and I will send you a Zoom link. Please see the days and times at the top of this syllabus.
- Email: UTEP e-mail is the best way to contact me. I will make every attempt to respond to your e-mail within 24 hours of receipt. When e-mailing me, be sure to email from your UTEP student e-mail account. In the body of your e-mail, clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name, and your university identification number.
- Announcements: Check the Blackboard announcements frequently for updates, deadlines, or other important messages.

Illness Precaution Statement:

Please stay home if you have symptoms of an air-borne illness, experience COVID-19 symptoms, or have been diagnosed with COVID-19. If you have COVID-19 symptoms, get tested immediately. If you were exposed to someone with COVID-19, test yourself at least 5 days after your exposure. If you test negative for COVID-19, consider testing again 2 to 3 days after your first test or 24 hours after experiencing symptoms. UTEP is no longer asking employees and students to report positive COVID-19 test results to the University. However, if you have any questions or concerns about COVID-19, please email covidaction@utep.edu for assistance. More information on UTEP's current COVID-19 recommendations can be found at [the EH&S COVID webpage](#) and it is recommended you also consult the [CDC guidelines](#) for guidance.

Academic Integrity.

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarship free from fraud and deception. Ideas may result from discussion and collaboration, but all work submitted for this class must be original work of the student. Instances of academic dishonesty threaten the atmosphere of trust and free exchange of ideas. Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the [UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures](#). It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student,

possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as ones' own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act.

Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Such instances will result in the offending student receiving a failing grade for work discovered to be fraudulent and for egregious cases, the student may be dismissed from the class with a failing grade. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the Office of [Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution \(OSCCR\)](#) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

Guidance on Artificial Intelligence:

In class we will discuss and agree on acceptable use guidelines for generative AI tools such as Chat GPT. However, you must absolutely not use AI tools to write your entire piece of work. In addition, you are responsible for accurately citing sources to avoid plagiarism, and for non-falsification of facts. Instances that violate these guidelines will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

Accessibility.

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University.

Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the the Center of Accommodations and Support Services ([CASS](#)). You can request accommodations via the [CASS online portal](#), email the office at cass@utep.edu, phone (915) 747-5148, or visit the Union Building East, Room 106. For additional information, visit the [CASS Office website](#).

Military Service Statement

If students are in the military and are in a situation that could entail deployment, they should consult the lead faculty of this course as soon as possible.

Some EEB Resources:

- [EEB PhD Handbook](#)
- [UTEP EEB Student Resources Page](#)
- UTEP BEE Grads IG@utepbeegrads

University IT and Academic Resources:

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support where you can go for assistance: Technology Resources

- [Graduate School](#): important information for timelines, funding, degree completion, transcript requests, graduate student council.
- [Help Desk](#): Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

- [UTEP Library](#): Access a wide range of resources including online full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks, inter-library loans, plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- [University Career Center](#): job resources, interview preparation, LinkedIn profile review, CV/Resume review and more
- [Military Student Success Center](#): Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#): Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#): Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.