

**DRAFT**  
**Spring 2019**  
**GEOG 423/523: Advanced Biogeography**  
**Biogeography of Africa**

Instructor: Kendra Chritz

Office: XX

Email: XX

Phone: XX

Office Hours:

Lecture: XX

## **Course Objectives**

The African continent is one of the most biologically and culturally diverse places on Earth. In this course, students will conduct a wide survey of the natural complexity of Africa, including its flora, fauna, biomes and climates. We will learn the changing environments across Africa, and what process drive these changes. We will also discuss the rich natural history of Africa, specifically the fossil record (with spans over 500 million years), with special focus on anthropology and human evolution, and how the evolution of our species in Africa reflects on us as organisms. Finally, we will discuss modern issues of environmental justice and conservation on the continent, and how to better elevate the voices of African scholars.

Students will be able to identify and locate the major biomes of Africa, as well as describe broadly the animals, plants, climate and ecological process at work within them. Students will be able to describe how these biomes change over time, and what modern threats and pressures exist on these ecosystems.

Students will be able to describe, broadly, the fossil record preserved in Africa, and will gain an appreciation of the importance of the geologic record on African continent in our understanding of Earth history. We will especially focus on the biological evolution of people (paleoanthropology) and their cultural history (archaeology), and students will be able to identify major events in human evolution.

This course will have special emphasis on African scholarship, even though traditionally, most research on the natural world in Africa has been conducted by people from the west, often under colonial systems and tendencies. We will discuss these issues and students will be introduced to world-class scholars and researchers from across the continent, and be able to recognize the systems that has minimized the work of African scholars.

## **Required Reading**

**(upcoming)**

## **Grading**

The final grade scale is as follows: A+: >98; A: 92-98; A-: 90-92; B+: 88-90; B: 82-88; B-: 80-82; C+: 78-80; C: 72-78; C-: 70-72%; D+: 68-70; D: 62-68; D-: 60-62; F: <60. Grades will be posted on Canvas along with any announcements. I will occasionally offer extra credit, but there are no guarantees. Grades will be updated on Canvas, which is also where course announcements will be posted. You may make an appointment with me to discuss your grade(s) and progress in class.

Class participation (15% of total grade) This course is designed to be collaborative and discussion-led. As such, your participation in class, which includes completing the required readings, attendance and class discussions, will all factor into your score (5%). We will discuss assigned readings in class, and there will be a small, weekly assignment (10%).

Exams (50% of total grade) There will be two exams, Exam 1 (25%) and Exam 2 (25%). Exams will focus on competency of scientific topics and readings. Students who miss an exam without a documented, pre-discussed excuse will receive a zero score. Make-ups for missed exams will require a documented excuse (i.e., doctor's note, family emergency). I will not provide make-up exams for students without a valid excuse. I will work with you, though, if you have

Final Project (35% of total grade) There will not be a final exam. Students will instead conceive of a final project on any topic of their choosing pertinent to the class. The project will have a written component and a presentation component. Students will have until week 5 to meet with me during office hours and pitch a project idea, and I will help refine the topic and give advice on research. As for the two project components, there will be some freedom as to what those can be.

*Written component (15%)* – Students can choose between a literature review on their chosen topic OR a Wikipedia page entry on a chosen topic that must be 2,000 words. A Wikipedia page can either be an expansion of a stub article or a new article.

*Presentation component (10%)* – Students have the choice between a 12 minute oral presentation on their topic or some other visual presentation, which must be approved ahead of time.

## **Class Participation**

This course is meant to be discussion-led and collaborative, and as such, your class participation is important. Students may bring annotated readings to class for discussion either as print-outs or on a device such as a laptop or tablet, but you are NOT permitted to use your devices for anything other than reading course materials or note-taking. I reserve the right to ban digital devices at any time. Students are not permitted to use their phones during class. I will note that many studies show that handwritten notes are better than typed notes at memory and retention.

## **Contacting me**

I am available via email or phone. You are welcome to email me questions up until 12am the night before an exam or turning in your final project.

## **Ethics**

Academic misconduct, such as cheating, dishonesty and plagiarism will not be tolerated. All cases of academic dishonesty/misconduct will be referred immediately to the Student Judicial Affairs Office. The penalties for engaging in academic dishonesty and/or misconduct can range from a grade of "F" for an assignment to an automatic failure of the course. Please consult the university policy at <https://dos.uoregon.edu/social-misconduct>.

## **Disability Services**

It is important to me that everyone has equal opportunity to excel in this course. If you need any specific accommodations in order to participate fully in this class, please inform me of your particular needs, along with documentation from the campus learning services office.

# **Course Schedule**

## **Week 1**

**April 1:** Introduction and course overview

Reading:

**April 3:** African Diversity: an overview

Reading: Chapter 1, "The Forces that Shaped Wild Africa", *Terrestrial regions of Africa and Madagascar*;

Assignment:

## **Week 2**

Introduction to African Biomes

Reading: <https://www.nature.com/scitable/knowledge/library/terrestrial-biomes-13236757>

<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199830060/obo-9780199830060-0112.xml>

Biomes of the tropics I

Reading:

Assignment:

## **Week 3**

Biomes of the tropics II

Reading:

Biomes of the subtropics

Reading:

Assignment:

**Week 4**

Extreme Environments and Islands

Reading:

Recap, discussion, Exam review

Reading:

Assignment:

**Week 5**

**Exam 1**

Reading:

The geology and fossil record of Africa

Reading:

Assignment:

**Week 6**

Human Evolution in Africa

Reading:

People and ecosystems through time

Reading:

Assignment:

**Week 7**

Colonialism and Science

Reading:

Review, discussion, catch up

Reading:

Assignment:

**Week 8**

**Exam 2**

Reading:

Modern environmental issues: climate change  
Reading:

**Week 9**

Modern environmental issues: conservation  
Reading:

Modern environmental issues: industrialization, urbanization and tourism  
Reading: n/a  
Assignment:

**Week 10**

Final Presentations  
Reading: n/a

Final Presentations  
Reading: