



IB 299A: Ecology Merit Workshop

Fall 2025 (updated 2025-08-24)

Course Information

- **Course Duration:** Full Semester (16 weeks)
- **Contact Hours:** Monday 3:00 – 4:50 PM; one 110-minute discussion each week
- **Course Format:** In-person
- **Course Location:** 2090 Natural History Building (NHB)
- **Weekly Work Hours:** Outside of class time you are expected to spend 1 hour individual study time to practice problem-solving with the covered material.
- **Credit Hours:** 1

Instructor Information

- **Teaching Assistant (TA):** Terence Seldon Kwafo
- **Email:** skwafo@illinois.edu
- **TA office:** NHB Learning Center, 2092 NHB
- **TA office hours:** Mondays 2:00 – 3:00 PM, other times by appointment!

Merit Information

- **Merit Contact:** Erinn Dady, Integrative Biology Merit Program Assistant Director
- **Email:** erinnrd2@illinois.edu
- **Merit office:** 3010 NHB
- **Merit office hours:** By appointment

Course Description

The IB 299A Ecology Merit Workshop is part of the Merit program offerings within Integrative Biology. The goal of Merit is to help build critical thinking skills alongside course material. In this workshop, students will develop knowledge of ecology and scientific inquiry by actively engaging in group discussions, activities, and class presentations. Each week, the workshop will review material from the IB 203 (Ecology)

lectures by working on problems designed to challenge and improve critical thinking skills. Merit courses are not simply reviews from lecture but are driven through cooperation using learning activities in a group setting. Therefore, your preparation and participation are key for class to run smoothly. A large part of how the Merit program will benefit you comes from how you interact with the class.

This course is designed to train you to think, reason, and problem-solve in the context of applied, real-world biological scenarios. Doing so requires you to explore core concepts firsthand. This course is designed to be interactive and heavily builds on peer-to-peer interactions in all course components. You are expected to contribute your ideas and insights as well as your questions. Please use this opportunity to its greatest advantage. There is no outside work for this discussion (aside from occasional mock exams), but students should expect to commit the whole class period to instructional activities. Additionally, there are no required texts or other materials needed for this class other than those required and supplied by IB 203 Ecology.

We are looking forward to an engaging and interactive semester with you!

Learning Outcomes

In this course, students will:

1. Be able to use study tools meant to help synthesize facts and concepts to think critically and reason through problems.
2. Be capable of contributing to ecological knowledge by means of using the scientific process.
3. Be able to read and interpret scientific tables and figures, and apply learned patterns to other ecological problems.
4. Understand ecological principles and apply them to scientific and societal needs.

Prerequisites & Requirements

No prerequisites. Concurrent enrollment in IB 203 (Ecology) is required.

Course Materials

Learning Management System

The course webpage will be hosted at <https://canvas.illinois.edu/>. Assignments will not appear in your Canvas calendar. You must also access the grade book from the course view (i.e., not the Canvas grade book).

Required and Recommended Materials

Laptop or tablet, paper and writing utensils.

Required Software

Microsoft Office for assignments in Word and Excel. Available for current Illinois students to download at no charge at the Webstore:

<https://webstore.illinois.edu/shop/product.aspx?zpid=2816>

Course Requirements and Policies

Class Attendance and Absence Policy

Your attendance at all scheduled classes is a mandatory and graded component of this course and essential for success in the course. Missing class unexcused results in a score of zero for your participation grade for that class session. Please email documentation to your TA and carbon copy the Merit Director (erinnrd2@illinois.edu).

Acceptable excused absences (with proper documentation) include:

- **illness** (see 'documentation for medical absences' below),
- a **family emergency** as defined by the student code (documentation can include a letter from a parent or legal guardian, obituary, dean's letter),
- a conflict with **another course's exam that is scheduled at the exact same time** (requires documentation of enrollment in the course and a copy of that course's syllabus with exam time),
- a **university-sanctioned athletic event** (letter from your athletics program required),
- job, graduate, or professional school **interviews** (the best effort should be made to schedule these events around exams; documentation of interview required),
- **religious observance** (requires a letter from the Dean of Students' office, see the section "[Religious Observances](#)" on how to request documentation),
- **official business** with a government agency as covered by the student code (requires documentation from government agency showing the date you need to appear on).

Please consult the Student Code Article 1, Part 5 for details:

<https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1/part5/1-501>

Documentation for medical absences: A note from a clinic or doctor's office.

Reporting your absence for planned events: If you need to miss class for a non-emergency event approved by the student code, email us a minimum of one day before the absence occurs with documentation, or the absence is unexcused, and you will receive a zero.

Reporting your absence for emergencies: If you are ill or you are experiencing a qualifying family emergency and are unable to attend class, email us with documentation within 48 hours of the emergency (or 48 hours after the date range of illness as indicated on a doctor's note). You may also request an absence letter from the Office of the Dean of Students for missed classes here:
<https://odos.illinois.edu/resources/students/absence-letters>.

Participation

Students will rely on their teammates for class activities, and will need your help to make the learning environment the best it can be. So please:

1. Arrive on time. Try to arrive early if possible. It is difficult for everyone to participate (and disruptive to your group members) if you arrive late to class.
2. Project a positive, cooperative attitude when working with group members. Be considerate and stay on task for the activity.
3. Silence and put away cell phones. Please do not message during class. Also refrain from using laptops for anything other than class material. Other activities online activities are distracting to those around you and negatively impact the learning environment.
4. If you have questions, please ask for assistance.

Grading Breakdown & Course Components

You will receive a grade for your weekly preparation and participation – through IB 299 (1 credit hour, independent of your grade in IB 203). There will be two components to your grade:

Weekly Quizzes

- 5 points possible each class period.
- Taken on Canvas <https://canvas.illinois.edu/>.
- Quizzes will be given at the beginning of each class period (10 mins).
- If you are late, you still only have until 3:10pm to take the quiz, and will not be granted a time extension.

Weekly Worksheet and Participation

- 10 points possible each class period.
- Filled out in class, found on Canvas <https://canvas.illinois.edu/>.
- Participation grade:
 - Actively engage in group activities, contribute ideas during discussions, and answer questions during class.
 - Be on time! **Points will be deducted for tardiness.**

Late Assignment Policy

- No make-up quizzes or worksheets if you are late or miss class with unexcused absences.
- Zero points for unexcused absences. We will follow the University policies for excused absence criteria, and excused absences must be approved by the Merit Director. Please be prepared to produce a note from the Emergency Dean or McKinley if needed.

Grading Scale

Percentage	Letter Grade
90% - 100%	A
80% - 89%	B
70% - 79%	C
60% - 69%	D
<59%	F

Additional Course and Campus Policies

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty may result in a failing grade. Every member of the University community is responsible for upholding the highest standards of honesty at all times. Students, as members of the community, are expected to review and abide by the Academic Integrity Policy of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign *Student Code*: <https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1/part4/1-401/>. This course will follow Article 1 Part 4 (1-401 through 1-406) of the *Student Code*, which defines infractions of academic integrity, including but not limited to cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism. You are responsible for being knowledgeable about what the infractions are for not following these guidelines. Ignorance is not an excuse for any academic dishonesty. It is your responsibility to read this policy to avoid any misunderstanding.

Do not hesitate to ask the instructor(s) if you are ever in doubt about what constitutes cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, or any other breach of academic integrity. You can find the full *Student Code* here: <http://studentcode.illinois.edu/>.

Students with Disabilities

The University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana, is committed to ensuring that all students, including students with disabilities, do not experience barriers to learning and participating fully in class. Students who have a letter of accommodation from DRES are advised to share that with instructors as soon as possible to ensure accommodation needs can be discussed and met.

To obtain disability-related academic accommodations, disabled students must contact Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) as soon as possible. To contact DRES, please visit 1207 S. Oak Street, Champaign, call 217.333.1970, email disability@illinois.edu, or visit the DRES website: <https://dres.illinois.edu/>.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

See <http://registrar.illinois.edu/ferpa> for more information on Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Mental Health

Significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, substance/alcohol misuse or interferences in eating or sleep can have an impact on academic performance, social development, and emotional wellbeing. The University of Illinois offers a variety of confidential services including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, psychiatric services, and specialized screenings which are covered through the Health Service Fee. If you or someone you know experiences any of the above mental health concerns, it is strongly encouraged to contact or visit any of the University's resources provided below. Getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do for yourself and for those who care about you.

- Counseling Center (217) 333-3704
- McKinley Health Center (217) 333-2700
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800) 273-8255
- Rosecrance Crisis Line (217) 359-4141 (available 24/7, 365 days a year)

If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

Community of Care

As members of the Illinois community, we each have a responsibility to express care and concern for one another. If you come across a classmate whose behavior concerns you, whether in regard to their well-being or yours, we encourage you to refer this behavior to the Connie Frank CARE Center (formerly the Student Assistance Center) in the Office of the Dean of Students. You may do so by calling 217-333-0050 or by submitting an online referral (<https://odos.illinois.edu/community-of-care/referral>).

Based on your report, staff in the Connie Frank CARE Center will reach out to offer support and assistance.

Further, as a Community of Care, we want to support you in your overall wellness. We know that students sometimes face challenges that can impact academic performance (examples include mental health concerns, food insecurity, homelessness, personal emergencies). Should you find that you are managing such a challenge and that it is interfering with your coursework, you are encouraged to contact the **Connie Frank CARE Center** (formerly the Student Assistance Center) in the Office of the Dean of Students for support and referrals to campus and/or community resources.

<https://odos.illinois.edu/community-of-care/CAREcenter>.

Disruptive Behavior

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office for Student Conflict Resolution (<https://go.illinois.edu/ReportMisconduct>; conflictresolution@illinois.edu; 217-333-3680) for disciplinary action.

Emergency Response Recommendations

Emergency response recommendations and campus building floor plans can be found at the following website: <https://police.illinois.edu/em/run-hide-fight/>. I encourage you to review this website within the first 10 days of class.

Religious Observances

It is the policy of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign to reasonably accommodate its students' religious beliefs, observances, and practices that conflict with a student's class attendance or participation in a scheduled examination or work requirement, consistent with state and federal law. Students must make requests for accommodation in advance of the conflict to allow time for both consideration of the request and alternate procedures to be prepared. Requests should be directed to the instructor. The Office of the Dean of Students provides an optional resource on its website to assist students in making such request:

<https://odos.illinois.edu/resources/students/religious-observances>.

Sexual Misconduct Reporting Obligation

The University of Illinois is committed to combating sexual misconduct. Faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct to the University's Title IX Office. In turn, an individual with the Title IX Office will provide information about rights and options, including supportive measures, resources, the campus disciplinary process, and law enforcement options.

A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors, confidential advisors, and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality, can be found here:

<https://wecare.illinois.edu/resources/students/#confidential>. Other information about resources and reporting is available here: <https://wecare.illinois.edu/>.

Veterans and Military Students

As a military-friendly institution, and per federal regulations and Illinois statutes, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has established policies and procedures to accommodate military-connected students. In addition to the support available at the Chez Veterans Center (<https://chezveteranscenter.ahs.illinois.edu/>), members of the National Guard or Reserves and active-duty military personnel with military obligations (e.g., deployments, training, drills) are encouraged to communicate these, in advance whenever possible, to the instructor. The policy for Excused Absences and Departure from the University for U.S. Military or other U.S. National Defense Services can be found at <https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article3/part3/3-313>.

Tentative Class Schedule – Fall 2025 – IB 299A

Below is a **tentative** class schedule. We reserve the right to make changes to the class schedule. Please consult the course homepage at canvas.illinois.edu for assignment due dates and to check for any updates to this schedule.

Week	Topics	Instructional Activities
Week 1 (August 25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction & Syllabus • Class Expectations • Week 1 Workshop 	Week 1 Quiz Week 1 Worksheet
Week 2 (September 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NO CLASS - Labor Day 	None
Week 3 (September 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 3 Workshop • Scientific Method 	Week 3 Quiz Week 3 Worksheet
Week 4 (September 15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 4 Workshop • Evolution, Life History, Behavior and Populations 	Week 4 Quiz Week 4 Worksheet
Week 5 (September 22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 5 Workshop • Population Growth • Mock Exam 1 <p>IB 203 Exam 1 will be held on Tues, Sept 30</p>	Mock Exam 1 Week 5 Worksheet
Week 6 (September 29)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 6 Workshop • Mock Exam 1 Review • Review of IB 203 Lecture Material for Exam 1 	Week 6 Quiz Week 6 Worksheet
Week 7 (October 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 7 Workshop • Conservation Ecology 	Week 7 Quiz Week 7 Worksheet
Week 8 (October 13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 8 Workshop • Species Interactions I 	Week 8 Quiz Week 8 Worksheet

Week	Topics	Instructional Activities
Week 9 (October 20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Week 9 Workshop Species Interactions II 	Week 9 Quiz Week 9 Worksheet
Week 10 (October 27)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Week 10 Workshop Mock Exam 2 <p>IB 203 Exam 2 will be held on Tues, Nov 4</p>	Mock Exam 2 Week 10 Worksheet
Week 11 (November 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Week 11 Workshop Mock Exam 2 Review Review of IB 203 Lecture Material for Exam 2 	Week 11 Quiz Week 11 Worksheet
Week 12 (November 10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Week 12 Workshop Communities 	Week 12 Quiz Week 12 Worksheet
Week 13 (November 17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Week 13 Workshop Humans and Climate 	Week 13 Quiz Week 13 Worksheet
Week 14 (November 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NO CLASS – Fall Braek 	None
Week 15 (December 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Week 15 Workshop Mock Exam 3 <p>IB 203 Exam 3 date TBD</p>	Mock Exam 3 Week 15 Worksheet
Week 16 (December 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Week 16 Workshop ICES forms Mock Exam 3 Review Review of IB 203 Lecture Material for Exam 3 	Week 16 Quiz Week 16 Worksheet

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