

CONSERVATION BIOLOGY Syllabus

Fall 2026 BIOS 4432/6432

Instructor:

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Boggs 1-90A

Office Hours: by appointment online or in-person

Pronouns: she/hers

Course Description and Objectives: This course considers the broad diversity of disciplines that comprise the modern field of Conservation Biology, though our emphasis will be focused on biological phenomena including the human–biodiversity interface. Recent and current events ranging from national and international policymaking, environmental catastrophes, and emerging crises in wildlife populations will be actively discussed, with attempts made to appreciate the views and values of disparate stakeholders.

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- explain the criteria considered in evaluating and red-listing species, and in developing and implementing new policies aimed to protect biodiversity and the environment
- understand and analyze the biological criteria and data that drive conservation decision-making
- use scientific knowledge to interpret examples and case studies involving contemporary issues affecting biodiversity
- articulate and communicate a breadth of knowledge of conservation challenges, policies, and programs in a variety of formats

Reading Materials:

Optional: Sher, Anna & Eduardo Gonzalez-Sargas. 2026. *An Introduction to Conservation Biology*, 4th Edition. Oxford Univ Press.

Available commercially, Earlier editions are also available on Amazon for rental (\$13). This is one of many excellent introductory texts, and if you are particularly interested in pursuing Conservation Biology in your career, I recommend you use this alongside our course. I will also provide links and literature to support topics presented in class.

Required: readings from primary literature that will be provided on Canvas, as well as links to a wide variety of online materials (e.g., blogs, reports, news media, video documentaries, podcasts).

Additional Resources of Interest:

- <http://www.conbio.org/publications/free-textbook> (no-charge pdf download), Sodhi & Ehrlich. 2010. *Conservation Biology for All*. Oxford University Press.
- Half-Earth Project <https://www.half-earthproject.org/>
- IUCN <https://www.iucn.org/> and IUCN-RedList <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>
- EcoHealth Alliance <https://www.ecohealthalliance.org/>

- IUCN Conservation Planning Specialist Group <http://www.cpsg.org/our-approach/one-plan-approach-conservation>
- Conservation Bytes (blog) <https://conservationbytes.com/>

Honor Code and Code of Conduct: All students are expected to abide by the Academic Honor Code, <https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/academic-honor-code> and Code of Conduct, <https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/student-code-conduct>. Some specific examples of Honor Code violations that I've encountered include: falsifying attendance, copying during quizzes/exams, incorrect citations or lack of citations in writing, or submitting another's work as your own. Students found in violation of the Honor Code will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity.

Community Statement: I am committed to creating a learning environment in which all students feel safe and included. Because we are individuals with varying needs, I encourage your feedback to achieve this goal. To that end, I invite you to let me know about the things we can stop, start, and continue doing to make our classroom an environment in which every student feels valued and can engage actively in our learning community. To further review the mutual expectations in our classroom, please see the [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#), which articulates expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Accommodations: Please contact me during the first week of class or as soon as possible if you need classroom accommodations. Accommodations should be arranged in advance and in accordance with the Office of Disability Services (<http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>)

Course Format: Class meetings will include mini-lectures, discussions, and multimedia presentations. Your preparation and willing participation are a key component of a productive and fun environment. Our course topic lends itself to personal opinions and values, so I ask that you strive to use data, legal precedents, well-documented cultural values and traditions, etc. to support the positions that you present.

Semester Activities and Assignments

Class Preparation: To promote lively discussion of conservation issues during class, we will organize our readings in Perusall. This is an online platform that promotes social reading. Class readings will be assigned via Perusall, with the expectation that you will engage in annotating the reading and responding to your peers prior to the assigned class period. We will draw upon your preliminary discussions in Perusall during our in-class meetings.

Reflections: These tri-weekly assignments will explore connections to the content, your personal experiences, and class dynamics. Beyond the content-specific questions, reflections help deepen your learning, your personal agency, and your ability to fail forward. You will submit your reflections in Canvas by Sunday at 8pm.

Graduate Student Presentations: Students enrolled in 6432 will work in pairs to prepare a set of classroom activities, readings, and lectures on one of the assigned topics in the course schedule.

Undergraduate Digital Posters: Students enrolled in 4432 will prepare a digital poster that explores an imperiled species or current conservation issue. Your poster should analyze the challenges, known and unknown data, and articulate recommendations for a conservation plan. The poster can be designed for either a scientific audience or the general public (i.e. an infoboard at a museum or park). All students will submit a peer critique of 3 posters in the last week of class.

Final Exam: We will have a written assessment during the final exam period. This “exam” will assess your ability to assemble evidence to support particular views, traditions, or policies—whether those may or may not coincide with your own personal views. This will be in the format of a 1-page summary that provides a critical analysis of a given issue. These generally are referred to as Position Papers, and usually are framed around persuading the reader toward (or away from) specific conservation policies, programs, or actions. You will be able to draw upon the readings and any resources from the course.

Attendance: All class sessions are planned to be in-person. You are expected to attend the in-person class sessions unless you have a compelling reason not to do so; and we ask you to communicate regarding all absences. If you are absent from class, an alternate assignment will be provided; this may include a virtual meeting with the instructor to discuss missed material. In-person class sessions will not be recorded.

Assessment for Students in 4432:

Contributions & Preparedness (Perusall responses, in-class activities)	25%
Tri-weekly reflections	20%
Digital poster	20%
Critique of 3 posters	10%
Position paper (Final exam)	25%

Students enrolled in 6432 will be expected to complete longer reflections and co-lead one class period. Thus, the assessment breakdown will be modified as follows:

Contributions & Preparedness (Perusall responses, in-class activities)	25%
Tri-weekly reflections	20%
Class Presentation	25%
Critique of 3 posters	10%
Position paper (Final Exam)	20%

A = 100–89.5%, B = 89.4–79.5%, C = 79.4–69.5%, D = 69.4–59.5%, F = 59.4–0%