

**GEOGRAPHY 491 - A01**

**UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA**

**Spring TERM 2025**

**JUAN JOSÉ ALAVA**

**COURSE OUTLINE**

*Advanced Topics in Geography: Ecology and Politics of the Killer Whale*

**Lecture:** Wednesdays,06:30 PM - 09:20 PM (fully online)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  **January (Spring term):** | January 1 to April 4 |

**Units:** 1.5

**Hours (Online Lecture with break): ~**3

**Building**: None

**Room**: None

**Office Hours:** Online via Zoom or e-mail

**Office Location:** Burnaby, BC

**Contact:** Dr.Juan José Alava(jalava@uvic.ca; j.alava@oceans.ubc.ca)

***We acknowledge and respect the lək̓ʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day*.**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This advanced course will focus on two linked aspects of a single marine mammal species and apex predator, the killer whale (*Orcinus orca*). It is one of the most iconic and closely watched species of cetaceans, but for some populations, their nature is virtually unknown. Thus, it inhabits a variety of ecological spaces/critical habitats, facing conservation threats or political spaces (meaning interaction with human beings). During this course we will examine both areas, and then examine how these two interphases or spheres interact. Thus, the evolutionary history, taxonomy, basic biology, ecology, and behaviour will be linked to the conservation, economics, management, environmental threats, and ethics in the human dimension, focused in Canada’s west coast, British Columbia. Students should have background in some of these areas, although they will be discussed in the class time with opportunity for question and answers.

***KEY THEMES*:** Killer whales, *Orcinus orca,* Bigg’s (transient) killer whales, resident killer whales, southern resident killer whales (SRKW), natural history, ecology, critical habitat, conservation, management, British Columbia, Canada.

**REQUIRED/ RECOMMENDED TEXT(S)**

This course will rely on readings from the scientific (peer-reviewed papers) and management literature (peer-reviewed papers and technical reports) on ecology, conservation and politics killer whales, but it will use the book entitled [Marine Mammals of British Columbia](https://shop.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/product/marine-mammals-of-british-columbia/) by Dr. John K.B. Ford (2014; Royal BC Museum Handbook) as main reference for killer whales in BC. Suggestions will be made as to key papers or sources, but student will need to use their skills with source material. There will be a brief reminder on how to collect and collate sources.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

The course is a senior seminar. Readings and core concepts will be discussed, and students are expected to maintain a reading program of both classic papers and new literature. Each student will claim a topic within broad areas discussed in class and prepare a concise, well-founded, technically superior paper. The size may vary depending on the nature of the topic, some may, for example, have a map folio, but the paper should not exceed 15 pages. This will be due at the end of the class. A seminar requires discussion, after an initial lecture I will give the general material for the following seminar and students are expected to be prepared to engage in the discussion. This is an ongoing part of the graded material for the course. Each student will prepare a digital poster for presentation with a 5-10 minute explanation, and be prepared for questions from the floor. The core material involved reading, discussion, writing and presenting, students should be prepared to cover all four areas. Guest speakers are expected to be invited to the course for a special seminar topic on killer whales.

**EVALUATION** (Grade Breakdown %)

The final grade will be composed of 50% for the term paper, 30% for the poster and presentation, and 20% for participation in discussion during the online classes.

**GRADING SYSTEM**

**As per the Academic Calendar:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Grade point value** | **Grade scale** | **Description** |
| **A+AA-** | 987 | 90-100%85-89%80-84% | **Exceptional**, **outstanding** and **excellent** performance. Normally achieved by a minority of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectation and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter. |
| **B+BB-** | 654 | 77-79%73-76%70-72% | **Very good**, **good** and **solid** performance. Normally achieved by the largest number of students. These grades indicate a good grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area balanced with satisfactory grasp in the other area. |
| **C+****C** | 32 | 65-69%60-64% | **Satisfactory**, or **minimally satisfactory**. These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter. |
| **D** | 1 | 50-59% | **Marginal** Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter. |
| **F** | 0 | 0-49% | **Unsatisfactory** performance. Wrote final examination and completed course requirements; no supplemental. |
| **N** | 0 | 0-49% | **Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.** |

**GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT INFO**

* Geography Department website: [uvic.ca/socialsciences/geography/](https://www.uvic.ca/socialsciences/geography/)
* Geography Department Chair: geogchair@uvic.ca
* Geography Undergraduate Advising: geogadvising@uvic.ca

**POLICY ON LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

Assignments that are returned after the deadline will be deducted between -5% and -10%, depending on the circumstances from the total grade of the final assignment grade

**POLICY ON ATTENDANCE**

As this is a virtual course on evenings, the online attendance and participation via Zoom is mandatory.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

It is every student’s responsibility to be aware of the university’s policies on academic integrity, including policies on **cheating, plagiarism**, **unauthorized use of an editor**, **multiple submission**, and **aiding others to cheat**.

**Policy on Academic Integrity**: [web.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html](https://web.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html)

If you have any questions or doubts, talk to me, your course instructor. For more information, see [uvic.ca/learningandteaching/cac/index.php](https://www.uvic.ca/learningandteaching/cac/index.php).

Please. See below the stated policies on plagiarism, unauthorized use of an editor. Use of ChatGPT or other AI softwares is restricted or pending permission from the instructor. Please, see the following link and other associated aspects of academic integrity concerning AI, as well as the **UVic’s Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) Position Statement**:

* ***Scholarly Use of AI tools***

<https://libguides.uvic.ca/c.php?g=734270&p=5318205>

* ***UVic’s Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) Position Statement***:

<https://teachanywhere.uvic.ca/academic-integrity/genai-position-statement/#position-statement>

**Plagiarism**

A student commits plagiarism when he or she:

* submits the work of another person in whole or in part as original work
* gives inadequate attribution to an author or creator whose work is incorporated into the student’s work, including failing to indicate clearly (through accepted practices within the discipline, such as footnotes, internal references and the crediting of all verbatim passages through indentations of longer passages or the use of quotation marks) the inclusion of another individual’s work
* paraphrases material from a source without sufficient acknowledgment as described above

The university reserves the right to use plagiarism detection software programs to detect plagiarism in essays, term papers and other work.

**Unauthorized use of an editor**

An editor is an individual or service, other than the instructor or supervisory committee, who manipulates, revises, corrects or alters a student’s written or non-written work.

The use of an editor, whether paid or unpaid, is prohibited unless the instructor grants explicit written authorization. The instructor should specify the extent of editing that is being authorized.

Review by fellow students and tutoring that do not include editing are normally permitted. In addition to consulting with their instructors, students are encouraged to seek review of and feedback on their work that prompts them to evaluate the work and make changes themselves.

**Multiple submission**

Multiple submission is the resubmission of work by a student that has been used in identical or similar form to fulfill any academic requirement at UVic or another institution. Students who do so without prior permission from their instructor are subject to penalty.

**Falsifying materials subject to academic evaluation**

Falsifying materials subject to academic evaluation includes, but is not limited to:

* fraudulently manipulating laboratory processes, electronic data or research data in order to achieve desired results
* using work prepared in whole or in part by someone else (e.g., commercially prepared essays) and submitting it as one’s own
* citing a source from which material was not obtained
* using a quoted reference from a non-original source while implying reference to the original source
* submitting false records, information or data, in writing or orally

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a documented disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) as soon as possible ([uvic.ca/services/cal/](https://www.uvic.ca/services/cal/)). The CAL staff is available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let us know your needs, the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

**POSITIVITY AND SAFETY**

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive and safe learning and working environment for all its members.

**SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE RESOURCE OFFICE (SVRO)**

If you have been directly or indirectly impacted by sexualized violence, reach out to the SVRO for information, advice, resolution options (restorative and disciplinary) as well as support options and referrals. The SVRO is both survivor-centred and trauma-informed in their approach.

Equity and Human Rights Office, Sedgewick Building, C Wing: [www.uvic.ca/svp](http://www.uvic.ca/svp): E-mail: eqhr01@uvic.ca

Phone: 250-721-8488

**EQUITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS (EQHR)**

UVic Equity and Human Rights is a resource for students, staff and faculty who have experienced discrimination and harassment and are looking for informal and formal resolution options as well as advice, coaching and/or education. We are available for confidential consultations so that you can ask questions and learn your options.

Equity and Human Rights Office, Sedgewick Building, C Wing: [www.uvic.ca/equity](http://www.uvic.ca/equity);

E-mail: eqhr01@uvic.ca

Phone: 250-721-8488

**RESOURCES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

The University of Victoria offers a number of resources to support international students as they pursue their studies. UVic’s [International Centre for Students](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.uvic.ca%2Finternational-experiences%2Findex.php&data=05%7C01%7Csoscasdn%40uvic.ca%7C24d4241453f24a9781fa08db8a379fdb%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638255743726045764%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=shQtSBjZ0pyEtGVRHmcwrMX7Wc%2BKjryQ80crJP0NmMc%3D&reserved=0) is the primary office supporting international students on campus at the university-wide level and provides various supportive program through the [UVic Global Community Initiative](https://www.uvic.ca/international-experiences/get-involved/uvic-global-community/index.php), including a Mentorship Program and Conversation Partner Program. For academic advising-related questions, students in the Geography Department are also encouraged to meet with the Geography Undergraduate Advisor (geogadvising@uvic.ca) as well as an academic advisor in the [Academic Advising Centre](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.uvic.ca%2Fservices%2Fadvising%2Findex.php&data=05%7C01%7Csoscasdn%40uvic.ca%7C24d4241453f24a9781fa08db8a379fdb%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638255743726045764%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=OGPDqik90Pm6BPynFK8IuLX6xdx7kSq5RE3yICUQj%2B4%3D&reserved=0) early in their studies to help map out a plan to declare a major and complete university program requirements. Other resources include the [Centre for Academic Communication](https://www.uvic.ca/learningandteaching/cac/index.php) and the [Math and Stats Assistance Centre](https://www.uvic.ca/science/math-statistics/current-students/undergraduate/msac/). International students are also encouraged to contact the International Student Liaison in Geography (Prof. CindyAnn Rose-Redwood, cindyann@uvic.ca), who can assist in making connections with other international and domestic students in the Geography Department and share opportunities for getting involved in departmental activities more broadly.

**COURSE EXPERIENCE SURVEY (CES)**

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. The survey is accessed online and can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.

**CALENDAR for Important Dates**

Note: Important dates are also here: <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/dates/>

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **DATE** | **Scholar/Academic Activity** |
| **January 6th** | Second term classes begin for all faculties |
| **Wednesday, January 8th** | First Day of Classes for GEOG 491–A01 |
| **January 19th** | Last day for 100% reduction of second term fees for dropped courses |
| **January 22nd** | Last day for adding courses that begin in the second term |
| **Friday, January 31st** | Last day for paying second term fees without penalty |
| **February 17th** | University Closed (Family Day) |
| **Monday, February 17th - Friday, February 21st** | Reading Break for all faculties |
| **February 28th** | Last day for withdrawing from full year and second term courses without penalty of failure  |
| **Monday, March 10th** | First registration date for Summer Session 2025 |
| **Friday, April 4th** | Last day of classes for all faculties |
| **Saturday, April 5th and Sunday, April 6th** | S.E.L. days (Student Experience of Learning survey) |
| **Friday, April 18th** | University Closed (Good Friday) |
| **Monday, April 21st** | University Closed (Easter Monday) |

**DISCLAIMER**

The above schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.

**NOTE:**

A note to remind you to take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone.

Counselling Services - *Counselling Services can help you make the most of your university experience.* *They offer free professional, confidential, inclusive support to currently registered UVic students.*  [uvic.ca/services/counselling/](https://www.uvic.ca/services/counselling/%20)

Health Services - *University Health Services (UHS) provides a full service primary health clinic for students, and coordinates healthy student and campus initiatives.* [uvic.ca/services/health/](http://www.uvic.ca/services/health/)

Centre for Accessible Learning - *The CAL staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations* [uvic.ca/services/cal/](https://www.uvic.ca/services/cal/)*. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.*

Elders' Voices - *The Office of Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement (IACE) has the privilege of assembling a group of Elders from local communities to guide students, staff, faculty and administration in Indigenous ways of knowing and being.* [*uvic.ca/services/indigenous/students/programming/elders/index.php*](https://www.uvic.ca/services/indigenous/students/programming/elders/index.php)