

Fall 2015

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Geography 303
Conservation and Ecology of Whales

Course Objective

In this course we will examine a broad range of information about cetaceans. Basic taxonomy and biology will provide the basis for an investigation into the somewhat controversial ecology of the whales, dolphins and porpoises. We will also discuss their distinguishing features, and trace their evolution from terrestrial origins.

Their history and current status cannot be understood with reference to the millennia long relationship with humanity that has run the gamut from wholesale slaughter to reverence. We will discuss the intricacies of their survival, looking at how interactions with humans have changed over time, and what threats anthropogenic activities now pose. Course material will cover everything from historic whaling records through to exploring cutting-edge ecological research. The objective of this course is to create a foundation of information, and skills, so the student may integrate material from other sources and build a critically enhanced body of knowledge about cetaceans.

Teaching/Learning Method

In a class of this size, routes of interaction are limited. Lecture periods will usually begin with a short discussion of newsworthy topics from the world of the cetacean. Lectures will use slides, bones, photographs, video and other visual aids to describe ecology and life histories. The use of cell phones, tablets and laptops is not permitted during lectures.

There is no single text that covers this material, as the course is a general introduction to the topic, yet it is at a third year level. Suggestions may be made throughout the class as to where other useful reading material may be found.

Assessment

Two shorter in-class midterms will be given, followed later by a scientific poster presentation to conclude the class. These will test comprehension, and ability to assimilate and present information effectively.

Each student grade will be a sum of the following proportions:

Mid Term Exam	30%
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Poster Presentation	40%

Undergraduate Grading

<i>Passing Grades</i>	<i>Description</i>
A+ 90% - 100% A 85% - 89% A- 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+ 77% - 79% B 73% - 76% B- 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+ 65% - 69% C 60% - 64%	Satisfactory, or minimally satisfactory. These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter.
D 50% - 59%	Marginal Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter.
F 0% - 49%	Fail

Course Experience Survey (CES)

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 provides feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, and will help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. The survey is accessed via MyPage 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.

Office Hours

Office hours will be held on Tuesdays at 5:30pm or by appointment.