

*Madagascar - The Eighth Continent:
Life, Death and Discovery in a Lost World*

(Un)Common Read – IDH2930, section 22H3

INSTRUCTOR:

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CLASS MEETINGS:

Thursdays, period 7 (1:55-2:45 PM), Little 117.

OFFICE HOURS:

Dr. Tennant’s office hours: Friday, period 8 (3:00-3:50), Health Science Center Library.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND GOALS:

Madagascar is home to some of the world’s most unique flora and fauna, but this biodiversity is highly threatened due to environmental degradation and loss, endangering wildlife, and taking a toll on the culture and daily life of the Malagasy people. *Madagascar - The Eighth Continent: Life, Death and Discovery in a Lost World* introduces the reader to the unique fauna, flora, and cultures of Madagascar through the authors’ travels with researchers in herpetology (the study of reptiles and amphibians), primatology, paleoecology and archaeology. Not only do readers learn about the biodiversity and cultures of this fascinating “eighth continent”, but they also get a sense for the joy of scientific exploration and discovery in the natural world, what it is like to be a field-based (rather than laboratory-based) scientist, and the rationale for and continued importance of such research.

This (Un)Common Read course is perfect for students with an interest in/love for nature, exploration, wildlife, and learning about distant lands and cultures; significant threads on conservation and biodiversity also run throughout the assigned text. Students will read the book

Madagascar - The Eighth Continent: Life, Death and Discovery in a Lost World in its entirety. To provide context, students will be assigned short readings from additional sources such as *Antipode: Seasons with the Extraordinary Wildlife and Culture of Madagascar* (Heather E. Heying), and may consult field guides such as the 3rd edition of Glaw and Vences' classic *Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Madagascar*, and Russell Mittermeier's *Lemurs of Madagascar*. Prior to some readings, the instructor (or students, if interested) will provide short introductions to the localities, wildlife, people, and customs described in the readings, augmented by photographs (unique species, environment, habitat loss, the local people and cultural activities) from recent trips to Madagascar (including the summers of 2016 – 2018 UF study abroad courses). One of the unique strengths of the class will be the ability to share first hand experiences and impressions from time in country, providing valuable context to the readings.

After having read the book "The Eighth Continent", participated in class discussion, and completed the course assignments, students will have an understanding of:

- Malagasy culture, geography, biodiversity, and conservation, and how these interact;
- The continuing importance of field-based research in an increasingly molecular world;
- How Madagascar can serve as a model for conservation, research, and sustainable development.

Students may also reflect on how the lessons learned in Madagascar can inform the decisions we make on a daily basis, both at home and abroad.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

- August 23, Class 1, Introductions to each other and to Madagascar; discussion of the paper "Totem and Taboo Reconsidered; Endangered Species and Moral Practice in Madagascar"
- August 30, Class 2, Discussion of book's Preface, Introduction and Chapter 1 – Deep into a Primordial Land: The Perfumed Isle
- September 6, Class 3, Discuss potential final projects with Emily
- September 13, Class 4, Discussion of Chapter 2 - Deep into a Primordial Land: The Spiny Desert
- September 20, Class 5, Students present on selected readings
- September 27, Class 6, Discussion of Chapter 3 – Search for the Pygmy Hippo
- October 4, Class 7, Students present on selected readings
- October 11, Class 8, Discussion of Chapter 4 – The Most Beautiful Enigma in the World

- October 18, Class 9, Students present on selected readings
- October 25, Class 10, Discussion of Chapter 5 – Island of Dreams
- November 1, Class 11, Final student project presentations
- November 8, Class 12, Epilogue and complete book discussions
- November 15, Class 13, Final student project presentations
- November 22 – NO CLASS OR OFFICE HOURS - Thanksgiving Break
- November 29, Class 14, Final student project presentations

GRADING:

Students will each present and lead 1 discussion of readings from the course list (these are instructor-selected papers and other documents listed in the footnotes of *The Eighth Continent*). Each presentation will be worth 100 points. Each student will also complete a final assignment, which will be worth 130 pts. This class project can be delivered in a variety of formats – for example, an academic paper (with presentation given in class) or poster tied to the issues covered in class and through the readings, or a personal reflection or creative endeavor related to biodiversity, conservation, sustainability, Madagascar, or field research.

Students will also be evaluated on participation in classroom discussions, each worth 5 points. The following rubric will be used:

0 points = unexcused absence.

1 point = present but does not contribute.

3 points = participates in discussion by adding an opinion, posing thoughtful questions, and answering questions.

5 points = makes exemplary contributions to discussion by integrating concepts, introducing novel perspectives, and drawing out contributions from classmates.

Your final grade will be based on the percentage of the total points earned as follows:

<u>Point Range (%)</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>
90% and above	A
87%-89%	A-
83%-86%	B+
80%-82%	B

77%-79%	B-
73%-76%	C+
70%-72%	C
65%-69%	C-
55%-64%	D
54% and below	E

UF GRADING POLICIES:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

ATTENDANCE:

Requirements for class attendance, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>. Attendance at and participation in class sessions are mandatory, with point totals described above.

It is understood that valid absences may occur. If you have a valid documented excuse and notify the instructor by email in advance, you will be able to make up missed class discussions through written means.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

Madagascar - The Eighth Continent: Life, Death and Discovery in a Lost World, rev. ed., 2013, by Peter Tyson.

COURSE WEBSITE:

Course website: E-Learning (Canvas) website, <http://lss.at.ufl.edu>

The E-Learning (Canvas) website is where the class syllabus, handouts, notes and assignments will be posted, along with any announcements. This site is also where you will find basic course-related information. Please remember that you are responsible for all announcements made in lecture and/or posted on the course website for this class.

ONLINE COURSE EVALUATION PROCESS:

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES FEES:

There are no materials and supplies fees assessed for this class.

UNIVERSITY HONESTY POLICY:

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code”. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with class instructor.

- Academic dishonesty cannot be tolerated. All persons involved in cheating or plagiarism will receive a zero on the affected assignment or quiz, and will be reported to the Dean of Students Office.

STUDENT DEMEANOR

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and to remain in class until the class has been dismissed. Students are expected to come to class prepared, having completed any required readings and performed any preparatory work that is assigned. While in class, students are expected to participate in class discussion, and to treat the other students and the instructor with respect and attention. While in class, students should not participate in texting, information seeking or viewing outside of that related to the course task at hand, talking on the phone, or other activities not related to classroom engagement and participation.

ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION:

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: 392-1575
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>

Contact information for the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.