

Syllabus

The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History (Un)common Read

IDH2930 Section 0236 Class #26359

Time: Tuesday, Period 7 (1:55pm - 2:45pm)

Location: Little 117

Fall 2021

Instructor

Sahale Casebolt, PhD

sahale@ufl.edu, 352-273-1939, Office Hours: Wed 2pm-3pm

Office Location: Florida Museum, Dickinson Hall room 226 (accessible by appointment only)

Course Description

This is one of the (un)common reads courses of the Honors Program at the University of Florida. These are discussion-oriented, one credit seminar courses centered on a book.

Are we in the middle of a mass extinction event? How do current environmental crises such as climate change and biodiversity loss compare to past events like the extinction of the dinosaurs? Does Earth's past provide insight for what we can expect in the future? These are questions addressed in the book we will read in this course: [The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History](#) by Elizabeth Kolbert, the 2015 Pulitzer prize winner for non-fiction.

General Education Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Students will be assigned one book chapter with a writing assignment each week, and class meetings will be in the format of a discussion based on the reading. After completing this course, students should be able to place recent environmental crises (species extinctions, habitat loss, climate change, etc.) into historical context, as well as improve writing and class discussion skills. Students will also gain a better understanding of the causes, consequences, and magnitude of species extinctions and biodiversity loss.

Required Textbook

- [The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History](#) by Elizabeth Kolbert

Canvas E-Learning Site

The Canvas e-Learning site will be used for submitting assignments, viewing grades, accessing the syllabus, contributing to a discussion, and communicating with the instructor. Access the site by logging in to your UF e-learning site: <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>

Course Schedule

Date	Reading to complete for class and discussion	Assignment Due (1:55pm)
Aug 24	Class Introduction	Read the Syllabus
Aug 31	Prologue & Chapter 1: The Sixth Extinction	Essay Response 1
Sept 7	Chapter 2: The Mastodon's Molars	Essay Response 2
Sept 14	Chapter 3: The Original Penguin	Essay Response 3
Sept 21	Chapter 4: The Luck of the Ammonites	Essay Response 4
Sept 28	Chapter 5: Welcome to the Anthropocene	Essay Response 5
Oct 5	Chapter 6: The Sea Around Us	Essay Response 6
Oct 12	Chapter 7: Dropping Acid	Essay Response 7
Oct 19	Chapter 8: The Forest and the Trees	Essay Response 8
Oct 26	Chapter 9: Islands on Dry Land	Essay Response 9
Nov 2	Chapter 10: The New Pangaea	Essay Response 10
Nov 9	Chapter 11: The Rhino Gets an Ultrasound	Essay Response 11
Nov 16	Chapter 12: The Madness Gene	Essay Response 12
Nov 23	Chapter 13: The Things with Feathers	Essay Response 13
Nov 30	Final Class Discussion Review the book as needed for your final reflection essay response.	Essay Response 14 (Final Reflection)
Dec 7	No Class	None

Course Assignments

Students will be assigned reading from one chapter of the book each week and submit a short essay response (between 200 and 250 words) for one question of your choosing out of three provided questions related to the assigned reading for that week. These writing assignments are intended to encourage completion of the reading before the class meets, and to provoke thoughtful in-depth discussion. Essay responses should consist of original thoughts and words. Plagiarism is against the Honor Code and will be penalized. Do not include quotes from the book in your essay response. Instead of quoting something in the book, you should rephrase in your own words. Do not include citations or references from other sources in your essay response. The only thing you need to read to answer the

question is the assigned book chapter (I encourage you to read beyond what you are assigned in class based on your interests, but you do not need to do so to complete the assignment).

Essay responses will be submitted using the course's canvas e-learning site, and are due before the start of class (Tuesday at 1:55pm). You will not be allowed to redo or makeup any essay responses, and late essays will not be accepted. **Essay responses submitted for a class in which the student was absent will automatically receive a 0**, unless you have prior permission from the instructor. Essays will be graded on a 10 point scale, using the grading rubric provided.

At the end of the semester, the two lowest essay scores for each student will be dropped before the final course grade is calculated. There will be no quizzes, midterms, final exams, or term papers. **There are no opportunities for extra credit.** The only way to earn points that count toward your grade is by attending class and completing the essay responses as assigned.

University Writing Program

If you need help with writing assignments, or if you generally just want to improve your writing skills, I encourage you to seek support from the university writing program. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

A Note on Class Participation

Speaking in class is not an explicit part of your grade for this course, however, this is a discussion-based course and I have an expectation that everyone will participate in the conversation in some form. Some people are more comfortable speaking in class than others. If you do enjoy speaking in class, please be mindful to create space for others to contribute their thoughts and opinions as well. I interpret "class participation" broadly to include not only speaking in class, but also active listening, thoughtful essay responses, and other types of engagement with classmates and with the material. If you did not say something during a class discussion that you would like to share with the instructor or the class, you are welcome to use the canvas discussion board or message the instructor directly.

Evaluation of Grades & Grading Scale

Item	Total Points	Percent of Grade
Essay Responses (14 total @ 10 points each, two lowest scores get dropped)	120	100%
TOTAL	120	100%

Percent Grade	Grade Points
93.4-100	A 4.00
90.0-93.3	A- 3.67
86.7-89.9	B+ 3.33
83.4-86.6	B 3.00
80.0-83.3	B- 2.67
76.7-79.9	C+ 2.33
73.4-76.6	C 2.00
70.0-73.3	C- 1.67
66.7-69.9	D+ 1.33
63.4-66.6	D 1.00
60.0-63.3	D- 0.67
Below 60.0	E 0.00

More information on grades and grading policies is available here:

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

Class Attendance and Make-Up Policy

Class attendance is expected. Unexcused absences will result in a 0 for the week's assignment. Excused absences are consistent with university policies in the undergraduate catalog (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>) and require appropriate documentation. Late assignments will not be accepted except for extenuating circumstances and as arranged with the instructor.

Class Demeanor

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Please avoid the use of cell phones and restrict eating to outside of the classroom. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all.

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.

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.