

*Madagascar: The Eighth Continent: Life, Death and Discovery in a Lost World*  
(Un)Common Read – IDH2930  
Section 0210 Class #23482  
Fall 2021

**INSTRUCTOR:**

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**TAs:**

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- All email correspondences must be from your “.ufl” account and have your full name in the body of the email. Otherwise, your message may not be recognized by our email filters, and thus, may not be answered.

**CLASS MEETINGS:**

Wednesdays, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> periods (1:55 – 3:50 pm), Sept. 1 – Oct. 20, Little Hall 119

**OFFICE HOURS:**

Dr. Tennant’s office hours: Zoom, by appointment

Ariana’s office hours: Friday, period 3 (9:35-10:25)

Daniel’s office hours: Monday, period 4 (10:40-11:30)

Zlata’s office hours: Thursday, period 5 (11:45-12:35)

Ethan’s office hours: Thursday, period 8 (3:00-3:50)

**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 instructor's UF study abroad courses from summer 2016-19). 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.

### **SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

• Sept. 1, Class 1, Introductions to each other and to Madagascar; discussion of paper *Totem and Taboo Reconsidered: Endangered Species and Moral Practice in Madagascar* and Preface and Introduction of *8<sup>th</sup> Continent*; ARIANA leads discussion on introductory paper to Madagascar

• Sept. 8, Class 2, Discussion of *8<sup>th</sup> Continent* chapter 1 – Deep into a Primordial Land: The Perfumed Isle; discussion of *8<sup>th</sup> Continent* Introduction; ZLATA leads discussion on reptiles of Madagascar

DEADLINE – Monday, Sept. 13, each team has paper chosen by 11:30 am

• Sept. 15, Class 3, DANIEL leads discussion on spiny forest paper; discussion of *8<sup>th</sup> Continent* chapter 2 – Deep into a Lost World: The Spiny Desert

DEADLINE – Monday, Sept. 20, final project topics and formats approved by Dr. Tennant

• Sept. 22, Class 4, ETHAN leads discussion on paleontology/megafauna; ARIANA leads discussion of *8<sup>th</sup> Continent* chapter 3 - Search for the Pygmy Hippo

• Sept. 29, Class 5, Student paper presentations; Discussion of *8<sup>th</sup> Continent* chapter 4 – The Most Beautiful Enigma in the World

• Oct. 6, Class 6, Student paper presentations; Discussion of *8<sup>th</sup> Continent* chapter 5 – Island of Dreams

• Oct. 13, Class 7, Student final project presentations

• Oct. 20, Class 8, Student final project presentations; *8<sup>th</sup> Continent* epilogue and class wrap-up

## **GRADING:**

Pairs of students will present and lead discussion on a paper(s) from the course list; these papers are instructor-selected journal articles and other documents related to course content. Each presentation will be worth 100 points. Each student will also complete an individual final project, worth 130 points. This class project can be delivered as an academic poster, a personal reflection, or a creative endeavor related to our readings or a specific area of interest related to Madagascar. All final projects will include a presentation to the class, and must be supported by academic citations (not websites). Meeting the deadlines for confirming your paper and final project choices are worth 5 points each.

***Note that ppts (for paper presentation as well as final project presentation) must be uploaded to Canvas at least 24 hours prior to the presentation. Online submission closes at 1:55 pm the day before presentation. Meeting these deadlines will be worth 5 pts each.***

Class participation is essential for success in the (Un)Common Read. Students will therefore be evaluated on participation in classroom discussions, each discussion worth up to 5 points. The following rubric will be used for grading:

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, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>) 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 TEXTBOOK:**

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.

**MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES FEES:**

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

**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.

### **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT:**

We are committed for this course to be helpful and engaging for students of all diverse backgrounds and perspectives and that your learning needs are served in and out of class. We will present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: age, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, nationality, race, religion, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and more.

It is our goal to make all class materials and assignments accessible to everyone, using the principles of universal design for learning.

If you require specific academic accommodations, please discuss this with us as soon as possible in the semester and additionally check out the resources of the Disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/>, 352-392-8565).

### **ONLINE COURSE EVALUATION PROCESS:**

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

### **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://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-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 let us know.

### **RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL HELP:**

Health and Wellness

- U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>, 392-1575

- UF Title IX: [inform@titleix.ufl.edu](mailto:inform@titleix.ufl.edu) , 352-273-1094
- University Police Department, 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), <http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

#### Academic Resources

- E-learning technical support, <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml> , 352-392-4357 (select option 2), [Learning-support@ufl.edu](mailto:Learning-support@ufl.edu)
- Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>
- Student Complaints On-Campus: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

UF Student Success: For improving study skills to connecting with a peer tutor, peer mentor, success coach, academic advisor, and wellness resources, go to <http://studentsuccess.ufl.edu>

#### **UNIVERSITY COVID INFORMATION:**

**In response to COVID-19, the following practices are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.**

- **If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated.** Vaccines are readily available at no cost and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit this link for details on where to get your shot, including options that do not require an appointment: <https://coronavirus.uflhealth.org/vaccinations/vaccine-availability/>. Students who receive the first dose of the vaccine somewhere off-campus and/or outside of Gainesville can still receive their second dose on campus.
- **You are expected to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings even if you are vaccinated.** Please continue to follow healthy habits, including best practices like frequent hand washing. Following these practices is our responsibility as Gators.
  - Sanitizing supplies are available in the classroom if you wish to wipe down your desks prior to sitting down and at the end of the class.
  - Hand sanitizing stations will be located in every classroom.
- **If you sick, stay home and self-quarantine.** Please visit the UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website about next steps, retake the questionnaire and schedule your test for no sooner than 24 hours after your symptoms began. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 (or email [covid@shcc.ufl.edu](mailto:covid@shcc.ufl.edu)) to be evaluated for testing and to receive further instructions about returning to campus. UF Health Screen, Test & Protect offers guidance when you are sick, have been exposed to someone who has tested positive or have tested positive yourself. Visit the [UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website](#) for more information.
  - **Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.**
  - **If you are withheld from campus by the Department of Health through Screen, Test & Protect you are not permitted to use any on campus facilities. Students attempting to**

attend campus activities when withheld from campus will be referred to the Dean of Students Office.

- Continue to regularly visit [coronavirus.UFHealth.org](https://coronavirus.UFHealth.org) and [coronavirus.ufl.edu](https://coronavirus.ufl.edu) for up-to-date information about COVID-19 and vaccination.