

*Madagascar: The 8th Continent: Life, Death and Discovery in a Lost World*  
(Un)Common Read – IDH2930 (Honors course)  
Section 03F4 Class #14053  
Fall 2024

**INSTRUCTOR:**

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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), Aug. 28 – Oct. 16, Little Hall 119

**OFFICE HOURS:**

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

**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:**

- Aug. 28, Class 1, Introductions to each other and to Madagascar; discussion of papers on field work; discussion of paper Totem and Taboo Reconsidered: Endangered Species and Moral Practice in Madagascar (find papers in Files in Week 1 Required Readings)

- Sept. 4, Class 2, Discussion of paper on rainforests; discussion of *8<sup>th</sup> Continent* Introduction and Chapter 1 – Deep into a Primordial Land: The Perfumed Isle

DEADLINE – Friday, Sept. 6, paper chosen for presentation

- Sept. 11, Class 3, Discussion of *8<sup>th</sup> Continent* Chapter 2 – Deep into a Lost World: The Spiny Desert; discussion of paper on spiny forests

DEADLINE – Monday, Sept. 16, final project topics and formats approved by Dr. Tennant

- Sept. 18, Class 4, Discussion of paper on paleontology/megafauna; discussion of *8<sup>th</sup> Continent* Chapter 3 - Search for the Pygmy Hippo

- Sept. 25, Class 5, student paper presentations; discussion of *8<sup>th</sup> Continent* Chapter 4 – The Most Beautiful Enigma in the World

- Oct. 2, Class 6, student paper presentations; discussion of *8<sup>th</sup> Continent* Chapter 5 – Island of Dreams

- Oct. 9, Class 7, Student final project presentations (by Zoom)

- Oct. 16, Class 8, Student final project presentations; *8<sup>th</sup> Continent* epilogue and class wrap-up (by Zoom)

### **GRADING:**

A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards your Honors Completion Requirements. (Exception: Honors Quest I and II sections require a C). Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Completion module to earn Honors Completion credit.

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 complete an individual final project, worth 130 points.

This final project can be delivered as an academic project or 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 at least 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 class 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/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>.

**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/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/> . 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/get-started/>) 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.

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

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 <https://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 <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results>.

### **UF 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 Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Click here to read the Conduct Code. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

### **IN-CLASS RECORDING POLICY:**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited.

Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services.

A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student6 Policy on Course Syllabi 3 UF, Academic Affairs, August 5th, 2021 Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

### **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 352-294-2273 so that a team member can reach out to you.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>, 352-392-1575
- UF Title IX: [inform@titleix.ufl.edu](mailto:inform@titleix.ufl.edu), 352-273-3721
- University Police Department, 352-392-1111 (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, [Learning-support@ufl.edu](mailto:Learning-support@ufl.edu)
- Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>
- Student Complaints On-Campus: <https://www.sfa.ufl.edu/pub/StudentComplaintPolicy.pdf>
- 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>
- Honors Program, 201 Walker Hall, 352-392-1519  
Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email [advisor@honors.ufl.edu](mailto:advisor@honors.ufl.edu)  
Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via Microsoft Bookings: <https://bit.ly/ufhonorsadvising>