

The Cat's Meow Syllabus

Instructor: Megan Ennes
Email: megan.ennes@ufl.edu
Phone: 352-273-2006
Office: 201 McGuire Hall

Classroom: Little 0119
Meeting time: T/3 Tuesdays 9:35-10:35
Course Prerequisites: None
Course Credits: 1

Office Hours

By appointment before or after class

Course Description

In this class we will explore the semi-domestication of the house cat and the role cats play in current society. Written by an evolutionary biologist and cat owner, this book looks into the history of cats and how they became our beloved pets. The book uses all the tools of modern technology including GPS tracking and genomics as well as forensic archaeology to learn more about how cats came to live in our homes. This course will allow students to learn how evolution is tracked as well as to think about why we all love cat videos so much. Discussions will range from evolution to anthropology to pop culture as we explore what it means to be a cat.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Describe why cats are considered semi-domesticated.
- Explain the current theories of where cats originated.
- Debate the ethics of cat breeding.
- Describe at least three different methods for studying cat evolution and behavior.

Required Reading:

Losos, Jonathan. (2023). *The Cat's Meow: How Cats Evolved from the Savanna to Your Sofa*. Viking. ISBN: 9781984878700

Grading and Attendance Policies:

Students will be graded based on participation, weekly assignments, and a final reflection as described below.

Attendance:

This course meets once a week for 15 weeks which means we will only have the opportunity to meet 15 times. Therefore students are expected to attend all class periods. Accommodations via Zoom can be made if requested by 4:00 pm on Monday. All students will receive one excused

absence for any reason- I do not require a note for this. Since this is an Honors Seminar, it is my expectation that all students participate in the discussions and activities.

Observance of Religious Holidays: UF respects students' observance of religious holidays. Students, upon prior notification to their instructors, shall be excused from class or other scheduled academic activity to observe a religious holy day of their faith. Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence. Students shall not be penalized due to absence from class or other scheduled academic activity because of religious observances.

Grading:

This class will include a wide range of activities over the course of the semester.

- Attendance: 15 points per class for a total of 225 points
- Weekly reading reflections: 5 points per week for a total of 75 points.
 - These will be short reflections on the discussion board in Canvas. You may opt out of the discussion post for one week with no penalties.
- Final reflection and presentation: 100 points
 - The final reflection will be a summary of the evolution concepts related to cats covered in this course. Students will turn in a submission of their reflection as well as give a short presentation (5-8 minutes) summarizing the information to their class. Students will have the option to select the format that best fits their interest (Mural, Prezi, PowToon, Video, Infographic, Essay, cat memes, etc). The final reflection will answer the following questions:
 - If you were to explain to someone how the house cat evolved, what would you tell them? Cite at least three chapters from this course.
 - If you were to research the house cat, what question would you ask, and what strategy would you use to collect the data you need to answer the question? What ethical issues might arise with your study and how might you address them?
 - What did you find most interesting or surprising this semester?
 - How does the information you learned this semester relate to your current major or other facets of your life?

These assignments will be worth 400 points.

Grading Scale

A 93-100%	C 73-76%
A- 90-92%	C- 70-72%
B+ 87-89%	D+ 67-69%
B 83-86%	D 63-66%
B- 80-82%	D- 60-62%
C+ 77-79%	F <60%

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, 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>

More information on grades and grade points can be found:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Anticipated Schedule (Subject to Change)

Date	Location	Topic/Guest Speaker	Reading Due
8/27	Little 0119	Introduction to class and instructor	
9/3	Little 0119	What does it mean to be domesticated?	Ch 1-2
9/10	Zoom	Studying jaguars in Guyana, Dr. Hallat , Assistant Research Professor	Ch 3-4
9/17	Little 0119	Evolution, population size, and fossils	Ch 5-6
9/24	Dickinson Hall Lobby	Using museum collections to study cats, Dr. Mathis , Collections Manager- Mammals	Ch 7-8
10/1	Zoom	Gene flow, natural selection, and AI	Ch 9-10
10/8	Little 0119	Ethics of selective breeding	Ch 11-12
10/15	Little 0119	Genetics, cats, and human diseases	Ch 13-14
10/22	Zoom	Tracking cats, Guest TBD	Ch 15-16
10/29	Smathers Library	Cats in literature, Santamaria-Wheeler , Exhibits Director Katiana Bagué , Exhibits Associate	Ch 17-18
11/5	Little 0119	Presentations	Ch 19-20
11/12	Harn Museum of Art	Cats in art, Dr. Segal - Director of Education and Curator of Academic Programs	
11/19	Little 0119	Presentations	
11/26	Little 0119	Presentations/Preparation for meeting the author	
12/3	Little 0119	Conversation with the author, Dr. Losos - Professor of Biology	

Colors denote the location. Please note we will be meeting in various spaces across campus.

Links and Policies

Class Demeanor

Students are expected to behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussions. Please review the discussion etiquette document on Canvas prior to engaging in the discussion forum. Additionally, **emails sent to the instructor must follow professional etiquette** (e.g.

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/how-to-write-a-professional-email>).

Class Recording

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 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Inclusive Learning Environment

This course embraces the University of Florida’s Non-Discrimination Policy, which reads, The University shall actively promote equal opportunity policies and practices conforming to laws against discrimination. The University is committed to non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations, genetic information and veteran status as protected under the Vietnam Era Veterans’ Readjustment Assistance Act.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights and responsibilities for inclusive learning environment, please see the instructor or refer to the Office of Multicultural & Diversity Affairs website: <http://multicultural.ufl.edu>.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting 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. Faculty can expect to receive a student's accommodation letter within the first 3 weeks of classes; however, if a student registers with the DRC later in the semester faculty are still obligated to facilitate accommodations. Neither faculty nor administrators may independently deny a request for accommodation that is approved by the Disability Resource Center.

UF Honesty Code

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class, as it constitutes intellectual theft and academic dishonesty. I will use TurnItIn to check all materials for plagiarism.

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 (sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/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 consult with the instructor.

All students must conform to UF's Honesty Code regarding cheating, plagiarism, and the use of copyrighted materials, which you can find at:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
2. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
3. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
4. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.

Evaluations

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/>.

Technical Help

Coursework will require ongoing use of a computer and a broadband connection to the Internet. Please see the university's student computing requirements here:

<https://it.ufl.edu/policies/student-computing-requirements/>

For issues with technical difficulties for e-learning in Canvas, please post your question to the Technical Help Discussion in your course, or contact the UF Help Desk at:

- Learning-support@ufl.edu | (352) 392-HELP - select option 2 | <http://elearning.ufl.edu>
- Library Help Desk support <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>
- SFFGS Academic Hub <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/303721>

Software Use:

All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit umatter.ufl.edu/ to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit counseling.ufl.edu or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit shcc.ufl.edu/.

University Police Department: Visit police.ufl.edu/ or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center.

The Hitchcock Field & Fork Pantry is a free resource to support UF undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff experiencing any level of food insecurity. Experiencing food insecurity may mean you have faced challenges to meeting your needs in quantity and nutritional quality of food. For example, food insecurity may look like eating ramen because you can't afford foods you consider healthy, nutritious, or appropriate for yourself, to outright skipping meals or eating smaller meals. If you're not sure about whether you fit the criteria, come anyway! You only need to bring your UFID; you do not need to prove that you are in need. The Pantry does not discriminate based on income, class, race, ethnicity, gender, out-of-state or international student status, housing status, or ability. The Pantry doesn't just offer canned food. The Pantry offers fresh, seasonal produce, frozen meat, milk, vegan options, menstrual products, and select toiletries. They are happy to accommodate requests as they can, if you can't find what you need

your first time. The Pantry assures guests, potential and current, that accessing emergency services like the Pantry is not a reflector of one's self worth, nor are they taking resources from someone "more deserving" or "more in need" than themselves. You can visit the Pantry website (pantry.fieldandfork.ufl.edu) for more information including current hours. The Pantry is located between Marston Science Library and McCarty Hall, behind the HUB, on the University of Florida Gainesville campus.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601, or <https://career.ufl.edu/>. Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: <https://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010, to make an appointment 352- 392-6420, or <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu>. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138, or <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.