

California State University, Fresno  
Department of Biology

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**Reconciliation Ecology**

Graduate Seminar & Discussion

Spring 2007

<http://reconciliationecology.blogspot.com/>

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*Course No:* BIOL 260T

*Instructor:* Dr. Madhusudan Katti, Biology Dept.

*Unit Value:* 3

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*Location:* Science 103

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*Catalog Description:*

Reconciliation ecology aims to reconcile biodiversity conservation with human development by addressing mechanisms that allow other species to co-exist in human landscapes, and ways to promote coexistence. This course will explore the evolutionary ecological principles and socioecological context of reconciliation ecology, using case-studies and readings. Students will (1) survey how humans create / modify habitats for other organisms, (2) identify responses available to organisms based on evolutionary ecological principles, (3) study cases of species thriving in human habitats, and, (4) examine the design of human landscapes to reconcile development with conservation.

***Course Materials***

This graduate course is based on readings from the contemporary literature pertaining to the broadly interdisciplinary area of inquiry. Students will, with my help, pick relevant papers from the primary literature for discussion during the weekly session. The weekly discussion will be led by two students, each presenting at least one paper. The presenters are also expected to dig a little deeper into the background literature supporting the focal paper. All students are expected to carefully read at least the main papers discussed each week, and encouraged to read additional background papers as are made available. This course is *web-enabled* so I will make readings and additional material available on Blackboard (<http://blackboard.csufresno.edu/>). Please make sure to use that site frequently.

***Assessment***

As a graduate course, your grade depends upon your participation in the class, your ability to comprehend, synthesize, and communicate material from diverse sources, and your writing. By the end of the semester, you are each required to write one review article or essay on a relevant topic, chosen in consultation with me, and drawing upon appropriate literature. As an alternative to this individual essay, you also have the option of collaborating on a group project leading up to an original research paper of sufficient quality to justify submission to a peer-review journal by the end of

the semester. Suitable topics for such a collaborative proposal will be discussed and agreed upon by the group with my guidance. The paper (term-paper or collaborative manuscript) will constitute a third of your grade, while discussion participation and your presentation will count for another third. For the remaining third of the grade, we will try a new group communication project - a collective course blog! Blogs (Web logs) are the new common mode of rapid communication, as you are aware, and you need to learn how to use this tool effectively in communicating about your own work. A group blog for the class has been set up at:

<http://reconciliationecology.blogspot.com/>

All the students have a role as authors of this blog, so each of us can post essays or observations, and everyone within the class can comment on any posting. The class will be encouraged to put this blog in the public domain, but may leave it private if so desired. If you miss two or more class meetings without strong justification, your grade will be reduced by at least one letter grade.

### **Subject to Change**

This syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on announcements made while you were absent.

### ***University & Course Policies***

**I support wholeheartedly the university's policies, including, but not limited to, the following:**

***Copyright:*** You will be provided with digital and/or print materials to support your learning in this course. As all of these materials are proprietary in nature, and most are protected by copyright, you may not reproduce or retain any of the materials for purposes other than class work.

***Students with Disabilities:*** Upon identifying themselves to the instructor and the university, students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodation for learning and evaluation. For more information, contact Services to Students with Disabilities (<http://studentaffairs.csufresno.edu/ssd/>) in Madden Library 1049 (278-2811).

***Cheating and Plagiarism:*** "Cheating is the actual or attempted practice of fraudulent or deceptive acts for the purpose of improving one's grade or obtaining course credit; such acts also include assisting another student to do so. Typically, such acts occur in relation to examinations. However, it is the intent of this definition that the term 'cheating' not be limited to examination situations only, but that it include any and all actions by a student that are intended to gain an unearned academic advantage by fraudulent or deceptive means. Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating which consists of the misuse of the published and/or unpublished works of others by misrepresenting the material (i.e., their intellectual property) so used as one's own work." Penalties for cheating and plagiarism range from a 0 or F on a particular assignment, through an F

for the course, to expulsion from the university. For more information on the University's policy regarding cheating and plagiarism, refer to the Schedule of Courses (Legal Notices on Cheating and Plagiarism) or the University Catalog (Policies and Regulations)

**Computers:** "At California State University, Fresno, computers and communications links to remote resources are recognized as being integral to the education and research experience. Every student is required to have his/her own computer or have other personal access to a workstation (including a modem and a printer) with all the recommended software. The minimum and recommended standards for the workstations and software, which may vary by academic major, are updated periodically and are available from Information Technology Services (<http://www/csfresno.edu/ITS/>) or the University Bookstore. In the curriculum and class assignments, students are presumed to have 24-hour access to a computer workstation and the necessary communication links to the University's information resources."

**Disruptive Classroom Behavior:** "The classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the rights of others seeking to learn, respect for the professionalism of the instructor, and the general goals of academic freedom are maintained. ... Differences of viewpoint or concerns should be expressed in terms which are supportive of the learning process, creating an environment in which students and faculty may learn to reason with clarity and compassion, to share of themselves without losing their identities, and to develop and understanding of the community in which they live . . . Student conduct which disrupts the learning process shall not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action and/or removal from class."

### ***Course Goals and Primary Learning Outcomes***

The course aims to teach students to apply evolutionary ecological principles in a broader context of understanding how humans relate to and shape the natural world, to promote biodiversity conservation in places where people live and work. This fresh approach challenges students to explore a variety of questions from a range of perspectives, drawing upon such disciplines as evolutionary ecology, environmental history, and human socioecology. This course will encourage greater interdisciplinary thinking among students and better prepare them for a leadership role in nature conservation as well as human development. Finally, students are also encouraged to incorporate these approaches into their own research projects and theses.