

TiME for Conservation Course Syllabus

Course Description: The TiME for Conservation course has been designed to immerse second-year undergraduate students from the Department of Biology and Environment at the University of Haifa – Oranim campus into the world of conservation biology. The course is built around the TiME initiative (this-is-my-earth.org), where students actively contribute to the preservation of biodiversity hotspots through informed decision-making and engagement. This course encourages self-learning, group collaboration, and debate, providing students with a practical understanding of ecology and conservation biology.

Time required: 200 minutes.

Course Goals: By the end of this course, students will:

- Develop a profound understanding of fundamental terms in ecology and conservation biology.
- Enhance their writing and debating skills, specifically in the context of conservation biology.
- Take meaningful initiatives to protect biodiversity hotspots through informed and persuasive decision-making.

Required Texts, Materials, or Equipment:

- TiME website: www.this-is-my-earth.org
- IUCN website: <https://www.iucnredlist.org>
- BioData Base website: <https://biodb.com>
- At least 3 computers/laptops/tablets

Major Assignments: Descriptions

The final assignment of this course is a group short presentation that aims to motivate the class to vote for the group's assigned biodiversity hotspot land, one of the three lands presented on the TiME website.

Introduction to the TiME Initiative

- 15 min: Lecture on species extinctions, emphasizing contemporary causes, particularly habitat loss.
- 10 min: Overview of the biodiversity hotspot concept and introduction to the TiME initiative.

Assigning Biodiversity Hotspot Lands

- 5 min: Class division into three groups (up to 4 members each¹) and assignment of lands from the TiME website (Every year TiME uploads 3 privately owned unprotected biodiversity hotspots lands that are candidates to become protected areas, once they are purchased by the local NGO with the financial support of TiME).
- Group members collaboratively define and compile essential terms related to ecology and conservation biology while analyzing the land they were assigned to.

Analyzing Assigned Lands: Geography, Biome, and Habitat

- 15 min: Students describe the geography and physical structure of their assigned land, identifying its biome² and the degree of protection the biome holds. Students define the habitat type, its shape, how much edge effect it has, and whether it is fragmented.
- 30 min: Exploration of why the land is considered a biodiversity hotspot, identification of endangered species, and assessment of IUCN conservation statuses (CR, EN, VU, NT, CD, LC, DD). Writing whether the species can serve as a flagship, umbrella, keystone, indicator, or economic species.

Long-Term Management and Ecosystem Services

- 30 min: Investigation into the land's management plan, existing threats, potential expansion of disturbances, and motivations for protection.
- Discussion of ecosystem services provided by the protected land, both locally and globally. Can the land serve as a biological corridor?

Additional (optional) points for the land analysis.

- Price of the land. Price per hectare
- Strength of local currency
- Political stability of the country

Preparing Persuasive Presentations

- 40 min: Students summarize key points supporting their land's significance and prepare a 5-minute persuasive presentation.
- Group representatives rehearse arguments for their land, focusing on the most compelling aspects.

Presentations and Class Discussion

- 20 min: Representatives present their persuasive arguments (5-minute limit), followed by 1-2 minutes of questions from classmates.
- 15 min: Class discussion about the presented lands and a vote (excluding voting for their own lands).

¹ Try to keep the groups small for efficient learning experience. When the class is larger assign groups to the same lands trying to have the same number of students assigned to a specific land. Classes can have 3, 6, or 9 groups.

² For each of the underline terms ask the students to provide a definition on a separate page. By the end of this short course each group should have its own list of terms and definitions.

Consolidating Definitions and Optional Real-World Engagement

- 20 min: Each group proposes definitions for essential terms, culminating in final definitions agreed upon by the class.
- Optional activity: Encourage students to actively participate on the TiME website through voting and potential fundraising.

Grading Guidelines (Suggested)

Students can be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Correct and extensive use of relevant terms in assignments.
- Timing adherence during presentations and discussions.
- Presentation aesthetics and effective debate structure.

Note: This syllabus is subject to adjustments based on class dynamics and learning progress. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions or need further assistance!

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