



BIOL 3117 Ecology Laboratory
Biology Program
Department of Natural Sciences

Instructor Information

Instructor: Danielle Rios, MSc.

Office: Central Academic Building 354

E-mail: drios@tamusa.edu

Office hours: Have questions? Come see me!

My office hours are dedicated time for you to stop by with questions about the course, assignments, grades, or anything you need help understanding. You don't need an appointment during the following times:

Day	When I'm Available
Monday	3:30 - 4:30PM
Tuesday	9:00 - 10:30AM
Wednesday	9:00 - 10:30AM
Other times	By appointment, online or in person

Lab Meeting Format:

Mondays in CAB 310

11:00 AM -1:45PM

Course Description

This laboratory course introduces the principles and methods of ecology. Students will conduct field and lab experiments to investigate species interactions, population dynamics, and community structure. The course emphasizes data collection, statistical analysis, and scientific writing.

Prerequisites: C or better in [BIOL 1307](#) and [BIOL 1107](#).

Corequisites: [BIOL 3317](#). TSI Restriction(s): Reading, Writing, and Math

Course Objectives

1. Apply scientific principles and methods of ecological inquiry through field and laboratory investigations
2. Formulate ecological questions, hypothesis, objectives, and methods of inquiry to test proposed hypotheses.
3. Utilize standardized field and laboratory techniques, methods, and equipment to investigate ecological questions involving species interactions, population dynamics, and community structure.
4. Collect ecological observations and experimental data in a lab notebook using field and lab data-collection protocols.
5. Organize and analyze ecological data using Microsoft Excel and other appropriate statistical tools.
6. Create tables and figures to describe ecological patterns, interpret results, and evaluate hypotheses.
7. Communicate ecological findings through scientific writing using evidence collected and analyzed during field and laboratory investigations.

Recommended Resources/ Materials

Course Materials

- **Lab handouts:** Lab handouts and other course materials will be provided digitally by the instructor through blackboard.
- **Laboratory Equipment:** Required laboratory equipment and supplies are covered by the laboratory fee and will be provided during lab.
- **Laptop:** Access to a laptop capable of running Microsoft Excel is required for lab activities involving data organization, analysis, statistics, and graphing. If you do not have access to a compatible device, laptops are available for checkout through the University library. Students are responsible for obtaining a compatible laptop prior to laboratory activities for which one is required.
- **Laboratory Notebook:** Non-spiral, approximately 9x11 inches
- **Field Lab Materials:** Appropriate outdoor attire, clothes-toed-shoes suitable for current weather and field conditions. Water and sun protection such as sunscreen and hat. Bring any necessary personal medications that may be need while participating in outdoor activities.
- **iNaturalist:** Students will participate in a semester-long iNaturalist project to document biodiversity observed throughout the semester. Observations will be incorporated into lab activities, data analysis, and class discussions. Specific requirements and instructions will be provided on Blackboard.



iNaturalist app logo



Course policies

Attendance: Students are expected to arrive on time and remain for the duration of the lab exercise. Arriving more than 10 minutes late or leaving before the completion of the laboratory exercise may affect attendance and participation credit. If the lab exercise has been completed and the class has been dismissed before a student arrives, the student may not receive attendance credit for that lab.

Students with more than three absences may not receive credit for the lab.

Participation: You are expected to have reviewed the course material for the week and material from previous lectures. Come prepared to actively participate in lab activities.

Communication: All communication and inquiries to the instructor should be e-mailed to drios@tamusa.edu. This e-mail is intended for communication only. No late assignments will be accepted via e-mail unless the instructor has granted an accommodation. All assignments are submitted via blackboard or in person (see lab schedule).

Course Changes: The lab schedule is tentative and subject to change at any time; however, students will be notified via an e-mail message or during class should it change.

Netiquette: Avoid using inappropriate language with others verbally or in written form. All communications, both written and verbal, will be recorded during every session.

Make up Labs: No Make-up Labs are granted. If absent during the online or face-to-face session you are expected to communicate in written form in advance or no later than 24hrs from your absence. If a valid excuse is provided, and accepted by instructor, you may submit a lab report but will not get points for attendance or full credit. If you have more than 3 absences, you may not get lab credit.

Late assignments: for each day passed the due date, 10% will be deducted over the total possible points.

Course Evaluation

- **You will be asked to complete and sign a series of forms during our first day of Lab. These forms are mandatory for all field trips and failure to submit them means that you cannot participate in field trips.**

Laboratory Assignments

Laboratory Coursework will include lab notebook entries, post-lab assignments, and formal lab reports. Assignments requirements and deadlines will be provided by the instructor and made available on Blackboard. Digital assignments must be submitted through their respective Blackboard submission link.



- **Lab Notebook Entries:** Students will maintain a laboratory notebook throughout the semester to document observations, raw data, measurements, methods, and other relevant information collected during select labs and field activities. The notebook serves as a record of the scientific work conducted during laboratory and field activities.
- **Post-Lab Assignments:** Selected lab exercises will include a post-lab assignment submitted digitally through Blackboard. Post-lab assignments are shorter than Formal lab reports and focus on analysis and interpretation of data collected.
- **Formal Lab Reports:** Selected lab exercises will require a formal lab report submitted digitally through Blackboard. These reports are focused on scientific writing and communication skills. Each formal lab report will have two submission attempts, allowing students to revise their work based on instructor feedback.

Formal Lab Reports will generally include:

Introduction

- **Research question**
- **Lab Goal and objectives**
- **Hypothesis/Hypotheses**
- **Background paragraph**

Methods

- **Materials and equipment**
- **Procedures**

Results

- **Include Tables**
- **Include Figures**
- **Result descriptions**

Conclusion

- **Main Findings and Overall Conclusion**

Discussion

- **Result interpretation**
- **Ecological Explanation**
- **Limitations/variation**

**See rubric and student example on Blackboard for more detailed info*

Quizzes: Quizzes will be available for specific labs and posted to blackboard.

- Regular quizzes will be available via blackboard and completed outside of lecture time. You will have to submitted before the Due date as indicated by instructor.
- Each quiz can be taken multiple times within the due time period and the highest score will be added to your gradebook.
- Questions will be presented one at a time and no backtracking will be possible; number of questions may range from 5-10 questions.
- Length of quiz may range from 5 to 10 minutes.

GRADING (Number of quizzes and assignments may be adjusted based on student course load)

Assessment	Points
▪ Post Lab Assignments (6)	20 points each
▪ Lab Notebook Entries (5)	10 pts/each
▪ Formal Lab Reports (3)	25 points each
▪ Participation/Attendance (13)	5pts each
▪ 5 quizzes	10pts each
Total Points	360

Calculation of Final Grades

- Your lab grade will be calculated out of 360 points

A = 90 – 100%

B = 80 – 89.9%

C = 70 – 79.9%

D = 60 – 69.9%

F = <59.9%

The following lab schedule is tentative and subject to change. Any changes to the schedule will be communicated via verbal communication during lab time, on Blackboard and student email in a timely manner.

Fall 2026 Lab Schedule					
Lab No. and Date	Topic	Materials Needed	Learning Topics and Methods	Lab Type	Due Date
0 – 8/24	Lab Introduction and Safety Orientation	Computer needed with internet connectivity and Microsoft Excel	Best practices in lab and field lab training	N/A	
1- 8/31	Meteorological Data Analysis for Ecological Studies		Weather data sources, Graph interpretation, Air-water temp and precipitation	Formal Lab Report	9/8
2– 9/14	Statistical Analysis and Experiment Design in Ecological Studies		Descriptive Statistics, Standard Error and ANOVA interpretation	Post Lab Assignment	9/22
3.1 – 9/21	Vegetation Field Lab	Dress for outdoors, bring good outdoor shoes, water, and needed medication. Bring notebook for data recording	Daubenmire, transect, quadrat, vegetation cover, productivity	Digital Lab Report Notebook Check (10/5)	10/13
3.2 – 9/28	Vegetation Analysis	Bring notebook for data recording, need laptop	Soil color chart, texture, soil moisture content, ANOVA. t-test		
3.3 – 10/5	Soil Analysis				



Fall 2026 Lab Schedule

Lab No. and Date	Topic	Materials Needed	Learning Topics and Methods	Lab Type	Due Date
4-10/12	Population Phenotypic Variation	Laptop	Analyzing morphological characteristics relating to environment	Post Lab Assignment Notebook check (10/12)	10/18
5 – 10/19	Population Dynamics	Device compatible with Excel	Analyzing population trends	Post Lab Assignment	10/27
6.1 – 10/26	Aquatic Community Structure Field Lab	Dress for outdoors, bring good outdoor shoes, water, and needed medication Meet in CAB 310 and carpool to field location. Bring notebook for data recording.	Water quality parameters and aquatic insect sampling	Formal Lab Report Notebook Check (11/2)	11/3
6.2 – 11/2	Aquatic Community Structure Analysis	Bring notebook for recording data, and computer needed compatible with Microsoft Excel	Biotic index, EPT index trophic groups		11/10
7 – 11/9	Avian Community Structure	Computer needed with internet connectivity and Microsoft Excel	Shannon index and similarity index	Post Lab Assignment (Notebook Check)	11/17
8 – 11/16	Indices and Citizen Science		Shannon index and similarity index	Post Lab Assignment (Notebook Check)	11/24
9 – 11/30	Landscape Ecology and Geographic	Computer needed with internet connectivity	Landscape Ecology, GIS	Post Lab Assignment	12/3



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Fall 2026 Lab Schedule					
Lab No. and Date	Topic	Materials Needed	Learning Topics and Methods	Lab Type	Due Date
	Information Systems Last Lab Meeting				



IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

University Email Policy and Course Communications: All correspondence between professors and students must occur via university email accounts. You must have your Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at helpdesk@tamusa.edu or at 210-784-HELP (4357). If you don't hear back within 48 hours, contact them again. They have many requests during the first part of the semester, so you may need to follow up with them.

Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is located in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us at the [website](http://www.dss.tamusa.edu) or email us at dss@tamusa.edu. All students are encouraged to discuss their academic accommodation with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

Academic Learning Center: All currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio can utilize the Academic Learning Center for subject-area tutoring. The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the *Tools* section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu, calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202. Online tutoring is also available for after hours and weekend assistance.

While tutoring hours may change based on tutor schedules and availability, the current tutoring hours for MATH in the ALC are as follows:

Appointments available MATH Walk in Tutoring – No appointment needed

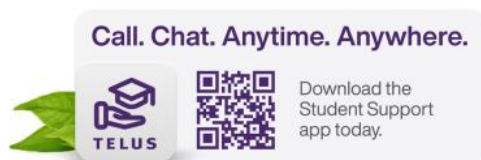
	Appointments available	Walk in Tutoring – No appointment needed
MONDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
TUESDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
WEDNESDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
THURSDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
FRIDAY	8 am – 5 pm	11 am – 4 pm

Counseling/Mental Health Resources: As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, visit our website, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. *Crisis support is available 24/7/365 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 or through the TELUS student support App.*



The TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to including 24/7/365 support for in the moment distress, crisis support, an anonymous peer-to-peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.



Emergency Preparedness: JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification system. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>. More information on emergency response may be found at: [Emergency Operations Plan](#) and the [Emergency Action Plan](#). Download the SafeZone App (<https://safezoneapp.com/>) for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non-Emergency (210) 784-1900.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance: According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended by the published Census Date (the first week of class). Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend prior to the published Census Date (the first week of class) will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

Jaguar Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center (WLDCC): The WLDCC provides support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as eportfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. The WLDCC offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. Students can schedule appointments with the WLDCC in JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on "Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center" to make your appointment. Students wanting to work in realtime with a tutor can schedule an "Online Appointment." Students wishing to receive asynchronous, written feedback from a tutor can schedule an "eTutoring" appointment. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our [website](#). The WLDCC can also be reached by emailing wldcc@tamusa.edu.

Meeting Basic Needs: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to submit a [CARE report](#) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if



you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources. A food pantry is available on campus; click [here](#) for hours and contact information.

Military Affairs: Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots' Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military.va@tamusa.edu or (210)784-1397.

Religious Observances: Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the wide variety of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or course work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

The Six-Drop Rule: Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

Statement of Harassment and Discrimination: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality and the uniqueness of the individual on our campus and within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees are to be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the University's Civil Rights Officer at 210-784-2061 or titleix@tamusa.edu.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking based on sex, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio's Title IX Coordinator can support those impacted by such conduct in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the Title IX Coordinator. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other related sex-based misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator (titleix@tamusa.edu, 210-784-2061, CAB 439K). If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.



Pregnant/Parenting Students: Texas A&M-San Antonio does not require a pregnant or parenting student, solely because of that status or issues related to that status, to (1) take a leave of absence or withdraw from their degree or certificate program; (2) limit the student's studies; (3) participate in an alternative program; (4) change the student's major, degree, or certificate program; or (5) refrain from joining or cease participating in any course, activity, or program at the University. The university will provide such reasonable accommodations to pregnant students as would be provided to a student with a temporary medical condition that are related to the health and safety of the student and the student's unborn child. These could include maintaining a safe distance from substances, areas, and activities known to be hazardous to pregnant individuals and their unborn child; excused absences because of illness or medical appointments; modified due dates for assignments; rescheduled tests/exams; taking a leave of absence; and being provided access to instructional materials and video recordings of lectures for excused absences, if these would be provided to any other student with an excused absence. Pregnant/parenting students are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator with any questions or concerns related to their status (titleix@tamusa.edu; 210-784-2061; CAB 439K).

Texas A&M-San Antonio has also designated the Title IX Coordinator as the liaison officer for current or incoming students who are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18 years of age. The Title IX Coordinator can provide students with information regarding support services and other resources.

Young Jaguars can support parenting students with daycare if students meet this criteria: (1) must be enrolled in classes at Texas A&M-San Antonio in the current semester, (2) must be Pell eligible or a single parent, (3) child(ren) must be aged 3 to 12-years-old, and (4) child(ren) must be enrolled in Pre-K-3 through 6th grade. Hours of operation is Monday-Thursday 3:30pm-9:00pm. For more information, please contact Young Jaguars at youngjaguars@tamusa.edu or call (210) 784-2636.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities: The following statement of students' rights and responsibilities is intended to reflect the philosophical base upon which University Student Rules are built. This philosophy acknowledges the existence of both rights and responsibilities, which is inherent to an individual not only as a student at Texas A&M University-San Antonio but also as a citizen of this country.

Students' Rights

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no University rule or administrative rule that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the University, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, and pregnancy/parenting or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.



Students' Responsibilities

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty, and administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, [Student Code of Conduct](#), on our website, and University Catalog, and to comply with them, as well as with federal, state, and local laws.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notifications.

We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, or disability. Conduct that infringes on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the [Student Code of Conduct](#) or visit the resources available in the [OSRR website](#)

Important Fall 2026 Dates:

Dates	Event
August 20	Tuition & Fee Payments deadline
August 24	First day of class
September 7	Labor Day Holiday – No Classes / University Closed
September 9	Census Date – Students not paid in full or enrolled in a payment plan by 4:59 pm may be dropped for non-payment
October 5 – October 16	Midterm grading period
November 13	Last day to drop with an automatic “W”
November 25	Study Day – No classes
November 26-November 28	Thanksgiving Holiday – No Classes / University Closed
November 30	Last day to drop a course or withdraw from the University
December 4	Last day of classes
December 5 – December 11	Final exams
December 15	Commencement

The complete [academic calendar](#) is available online



Use of Generative AI Permitted Under Some Circumstances or With Explicit Permission

There are situations and contexts within this course where you may be asked to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools to explore how they can be used. Outside of those circumstances, you should not use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any student work (assignments, activities, discussion responses, etc.) that is part of your evaluation in this course. Any student work submitted using AI tools should clearly indicate with attribution what work is the student's work and what part is generated by the AI. In such cases, no more than 25% of the student work should be generated by AI. If any part of this is confusing or uncertain, students should reach out to their instructor for clarification before submitting work for grading. Use of AI-generated content without the instructor's permission and/or proper attribution in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.