

Ecosystem Ecology (NREM 680) – Discussion Leader Guidelines

OVERALL PURPOSE:

Student-led discussions of the primary, peer-reviewed literature will expand upon material covered in lectures and textbook readings. Discussions are meant to introduce students to the current ecological literature; provide insight into important questions, knowledge gaps, and future research needs in ecosystem science; introduce appropriate experimental designs and methodologies; etc.

DISCUSSION LEADER(S):

Discussion leaders will be in charge of leading and facilitating discussions of peer-reviewed literature. All students will read the assignment prior to class and come prepared to ask questions, discuss and analyze key points, and integrate concepts from throughout the semester.

The primary role of the discussion leader will be to choose and distribute the paper; introduce the paper; explain important terms, methods, and results; and engage the class in a quality discussion. As stated on the syllabus, being a discussion leader counts for **20% of your final grade**. Participating during lectures and student-led discussions throughout the semester is the other **20% of your final grade**.

A discussion leader(s) will be assigned to each date/topic early in the semester. Each discussion will be ~60 minutes, so time management is important. The discussion leader will:

- 1) Meet with the instructor ≥ 3 weeks prior to the assigned date to decide upon an article for discussion. I must approve your choice prior to distribution to the rest of the class.**
- 2) Email the instructor a list of ~10-12 questions designed to stimulate discussions ≥ 2 weeks prior to the discussion date. I will work with you to refine your questions. Questions should, in general, be unique to that week's topic and article (i.e., try to avoid discussing upcoming topics). However, integrating topics from prior weeks into your questions is encouraged. In developing questions, go beyond yes/no questions, or those that only involve recalling specific factual information from the paper. In other words, good questions will be open-ended, have broader implications, and thereby encourage discussion. At least 1 of the questions should relate to Hawaii, whether the article was Hawai'i based or not (e.g., How does the information presented in the article inform ecosystem science in Hawaii?).**
- 3) Distribute the reading and questions to your classmates ≥ 1 week in advance of the discussion date.**
- 4) Complete additional background readings to become an "informed expert" on the topic. These may be readings referenced in the article and/or other articles that you come across while researching your topic and deciding upon a reading for the class.**
- 5) Give a presentation (~45 min.; being over by ≤ 5 min. will result in a loss of 5 pts. (5%); >5 and ≤ 10 min. loss of 10 pts. (10%); >10 min. loss of 100 pts. (100%)) on the day of the discussion to introduce/summarize/ explain/outline: (a) cool and interesting information about the author(s), study site, methods, etc.; (b) the scientific question (i.e. justification) for the study; (c) the approach and pertinent methods (this should include detail on at least one method from the discussion article that is commonly used in ecosystem science); (d) the most important results and findings; and (e) **supplemental information from additional readings** (e.g., What has been done on the topic to date?; Have other related studies been done and, if so, what have they found? Include at least several slides with bulleted text points, and key Figures/Tables from the additional readings). Bring your presentation to class on the assigned day on a jump drive, flash key, CD, etc.**

7) Prepare a handout that includes: (a) key information from the discussion article (justification, objectives, important figures and tables, conclusions, etc.); (b) key information from the supplemental articles (justification, objectives, important figures and tables, conclusions, etc.); and (c) a bibliography on the overall topic (≥15 references, the majority of which should come from the peer-reviewed literature and none of which should come from the literature cited in the article for that day’s discussion (you can include the important ones, they just won’t count towards the minimum number of references)). **Note that your handout should NOT simply be a copy of your PowerPoint slides.** This is the opportunity to provide more in-depth information for future reference.

8) Be prepared to summarize key points, concepts, questions, analyses, etc. in the **last 5 min.** of the discussion.

9) Come prepared to stimulate discussion and participation by your peers.

The instructor will grade each discussion leader based on the following criteria:

Criteria / Grading rubric for Discussion Leader	100 points possible	
	Max pts.	Your pts.
Introduction/Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the overall context/justification of the study well introduced? Were the questions/hypotheses/experimental design well introduced? Were important methods and/or terminology introduced adequately? Was peripheral information on the researcher, study site, etc. presented? Were results/ideas from supplemental readings well presented, including use & descriptions of pertinent Figures & Tables? Did the presentation go over the time limit? 	25 (25%)	
Handout <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content and clarity? Inclusion of key figures, tables, and results? Quality of discussion questions? Quality and depth of bibliography? 	25 (25%)	
Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well were questions handled? How well was discussion stimulated? Were questions conducive to discussion? Did the discussion stay focused on the topic? Did the discussion leader dominate the discussion? Did the discussion leader encourage class participation? 	25 (25%)	
Overall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the discussion leader meet deadlines for choosing an article, developing questions, and distributing the article to the class? Was the article placed within the context of the discussion topic and ecosystem ecology in general? How well were difficult concepts explained, and questions addressed? Were they an “informed expert” on the subject matter? 	25 (25%)	

Total Points Received _____