



Prescott College

Kino Bay Center, Sonora, Mexico

Course Descriptions

Fall Semester

All classes listed here are offered in the field at the Kino Bay Center except in Fall Block 1

Climate Change, Fisheries & Policy (Block 1): This course is offered in Prescott, Arizona and examines marine policy with a focus on climate change, fisheries and policy. We begin by developing a general background in maritime cultures, laws of the sea, and the ecological, economic, and social importance of the marine environment. Issues studied in depth include fisheries, climate change, pollution, tourism, habitat alteration, island and coastal management, protected areas, and endangered species. An understanding of resource ecology and conservation biology forms the foundation of learning in the class. Policy and law in the United States and the international dynamics of marine conservation issues are emphasized, including international treaties, globalization and trade. Readings, discussions and lectures are complemented with guest speakers.

Natural History of the Gulf of California (Block 2): The Gulf of California is one of the most productive marine environments on earth. Its islands, biological diversity, biogeography, and cultural history make it a remarkable place for students to learn about the natural history of coastal, desert, islands and offshore environments of the Gulf of California. Students develop skills in field observation, species identification, field journaling, species accounts and collaborative field-based learning. This class gives students unparalleled opportunities to experience and learn about the diversity of marine life in the Gulf of California, including invertebrates, fish, birds, marine turtles, marine mammals and marine and coastal plants.

Cultural Geography (Session B): This field class explores the relationship between humans and the environment in the bio-culturally rich Gulf of California. Human communities and cultures are shaped by the land and seascapes, histories, languages and geographies in which they develop. This course explores the cultural history and geography of the communities and cultural groups of the Sonoran coastal regions Sonora, Mexico. Students learn from readings, assignments and discussions, as well as from interactions with individuals from indigenous, rural Mexican and urban communities. Students map the historical and contemporary geographies of major cultural groups in the region, understand and describe the major historical events influencing cultural development and geography in the region, and learn appropriate tools for studying culture.

Community-based Marine Conservation (Session B): Issues facing the world's oceans are explored through theoretical, community-based, and field-based lenses. Issues are studied through the lens of policy, social justice, culture, globalization, science, and trade. Students apply theoretical knowledge to real-world case studies in coastal Sonora, Mexico. Through first-hand field observation and participation students gain an understanding of the complexity of conservation challenges in the Gulf. For example, case studies in fisheries provide students with the opportunity to observe a variety of fishing techniques, speak with fishers, learn through on-board observations, and evaluate the viability and sustainability of different management scenarios. Field observations are complimented by discussions with resource users, community members, researchers and managers.

Conservation Practicum (Fall Term): Each student has the opportunity to work alongside conservation professionals working at the Kino Bay Center to contribute to an ongoing project. Project work provides students with experience in applied conservation science, community work, habitat protection, traditional ecological knowledge, and science communication. Projects might include researching marine mammals, birds, or turtles, developing interactive interpretive displays, facilitating environmental education, participating in community-based conservation projects, or evaluation of alternative resource use (and more).

Mentored Studies (All enrollment periods) : Students work with Center faculty and staff to design mentored studies and final projects that contribute to their learning and Center programs.



Spring Semester

Spanish Intensive & Cultural Immersion: During this course, students study an intermediate or advanced Spanish language curriculum during daily classes focused on grammar and vocabulary, as well as speaking and comprehension. Part of the course includes living with a local host family, which provides the opportunity for informal practice and increase intercultural communication abilities. Students also participate in service projects, guest lectures, discussions and local field outings.



Sea Kayaking and Marine Natural History (Block 1): Sea kayaking places us in intimate contact with the ocean environment. This course is an introductory study of the interrelated topics of marine natural history and sea kayaking skills. Topics for study include tides and currents, wind and waves, and the natural history of nearshore organisms including fishes, seabirds, marine invertebrates and marine mammals. Students learn and practice paddling skills, navigation, and ocean survival techniques drawn from the rich, thousand-year history of sea kayaking.



Diversity of Marine Life (Block 2): This intensive field course surveys the common groups of marine organisms. Through field observations, discussions, readings, lectures, teamwork, and camping trips, students will explore the evolution, diversity, morphology, field identification, and ecology of marine algae, halophyte plants (such as mangroves), plankton, invertebrates, fishes, reptiles, seabirds, and marine mammals of the Gulf of California Midriff Region.



Island Biogeography (Session D): Ever since the work of seminal natural historians such as Humboldt, Wallace, and Darwin, islands have fascinated for sorting out patterns of distribution of plants and animals. The Gulf of California islands supports an exceptional array of flora and fauna and its many islands are considered a laboratory for evolution and endemism. Through field observations, discussions, readings, lectures and camping trips, students will study facts and patterns of species distributions.



Biological Field Methods (Session D): The course focuses on the development of scientific questions and hypotheses, accepted field methods to address these questions, and means of analysis and summary - tools sought after by many employers. Students are introduced to a variety of field methods, including those used by researchers at the Kino Bay Center. There are opportunities for students to learn and practice research methods with birds, marine mammals, invertebrates and plants.



Conservation Practicum (Spring and Summer Terms): Each student has the opportunity to work alongside conservation professionals working at the Kino Bay Center to contribute to an ongoing project. Project work provides students with experience in applied conservation science, community work, habitat protection, traditional ecological knowledge, and science communication. Projects might include researching marine mammals, birds, or turtles, developing interactive interpretive displays, facilitating environmental education, participating in community-based conservation projects, or evaluation of alternative resource use (and more).



Mentored Studies (All enrollment periods): Students work with Center faculty and staff to design mentored studies and final projects that contribute to their learning and Center programs.



Summer Semester

Conservation Practicum (Summer term): See description above.