

Coral Reef Ecology: Coming Spring 2008!!!

The course is designed to introduce students to the plants and animals found in the marine and terrestrial environments of the Caribbean and to study their adaptations in the context of community ecology. Fishes, invertebrates, reptiles and marine algae will be the major groups encountered and snorkeling will be used for observation and collection. (SCUBA certification is not required.) Field work will be the main activity and attention will be given to collection methodology, identification, sampling techniques, research design and other useful field skills. Lectures, lab work and readings will supplement the field work, as will an independent research project during the second week. The coral reefs at San Salvador are very rich, quite accessible and easily studied. A typical day's work may involve visits to two or three field locations. A three or four day orientation session in Gainesville just prior to departure will be used for lectures, discussions and to introduce the observation, collection and identification techniques to be employed in the course. Also, a local field trip and possibly an overnight field trip will be scheduled. During the first week of the 15 days spent on San Salvador the emphasis is on visiting all of the 12 or more ecological sites on the island and to observe the organisms *in situ*. Following the site visits there are discussions about adaptations seen in the field and the significance of these adaptations in the context of morphology, anatomy, physiology, behavior, development and ecology. Another major focus of the course is on the variety of organismal interactions that occur on the reefs and their ecological/evolutionary implications.

Although the major theme of the course is biological, it seems appropriate that attention be paid to the significant social, cultural, and historical attractions found on the island. To this end, interactions with the local culture are encouraged. Also, students come in contact with individuals conducting current research projects at San Salvador in the fields of geology, anthropology, archaeology, pathology, and conservation. Visiting scientists working at the Center are invited to speak about their areas of expertise when appropriate.

1) ACADEMIC CREDIT: probably 4 hours

2) LOCATION: The island of San Salvador, easternmost island in the Bahamas. The San Sal program is housed at the Gerace Research Center, a science

laboratory/field station chartered by the Bahamian Government and operated under an American director. Facilities include vehicles for class trips, labs with running sea water, air-conditioned lecture rooms, specimen repository, library and canteen. Food and lodging are provided at the station. Clear water and spectacular field sites with abundant, shore-accessible coral reefs for serious study are the major attractions. Accommodations at the Center are rustic but quite adequate.

3) PREREQUISITES: Intro Bio or their equivalents or permission of instructor. Also, an interest in organismal biology, hard work, and a desire to participate in an educational experience that emphasizes instructor-class interactions and approaches not available in a typical course. First year and upper-class students are invited to apply. This is a serious upper-level course but it is not restricted to biology majors or those planning careers in biology/ecology. ¶4)

FACULTY: Dr. Brian Silliman and 3-5 additional faculty members. The normal class size is 30 students, providing an excellent faculty to student ratio of about 1:6. All of the faculty have taught in the tropics numerous times and represent a wide range of scientific expertise and interests.

Selection for UF students in the Bahamas will be based upon several factors which include: a) Year in school b) biological and career based interests c) experience, d) reason for wanting to take the course, e) academic performance, f) a personal interview. Successful applicants will be required to make an initial deposit in order to reserve space in the program. Interviews will be set up once applications are received.

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