

PLBI 327 Course Profile

The course description and Winter 2020 syllabus Plant Biology 327, **Systematics and Diversity of Plants**, can be found [here](#).

Generally offered in: Winter semesters

Prerequisite(s): BIOL 371

Antirequisite(s): None

Answered by Dr. Jana Vamosi

In your own words, can you give a brief summary of what this course is about?

This course covers the **broad topic of plant and algae diversity**. We cover ground spanning from how you can identify plants in your backyard to how you can determine the evolutionary age of a group of related plant species to how the climate may have played a role in causing extinction of certain groups of plants.

What is the main skill you want students to take away from this course?

Because there are so many plant and algae species (>400,000) we can't possibly cover them all. Therefore, the best skill to have is how to find and decipher information on any species when you need it. To do this, the class takes a conceptual approach and covers methods that can be applied to any group of plants of interest

Will a textbook be required for the class? If so, which?

There is a recommended (but not required) textbook:
Raven, Evert, and Eichhorn, Biology of Plants: Freeman and Company.

What aspect of the course do you think students struggle with the most?

As far as plant classification, students need to know how to distinguish between major groups of plants (e.g., knowing the difference between mosses and ferns) and to do this **requires knowledge of botanical terminology**. I think students struggle the most with this because it starts to add up as the course proceeds.

What can students do to be successful in this course besides attending lectures?

I **provide practice questions** prior to all the exams and they give a good idea of what the actual test is going to be like so I definitely recommend doing those. I also encourage students to ask questions and start discussions in lecture and that provides a good opportunity to solidify concepts

What do you think is the most effective way that students can prepare for an examination in the course?

As I mentioned above, do the practice exam and spot where any trouble is occurring. I know it's difficult but do try to keep up with the material so it doesn't come all at once right before an exam.

Online delivery

* The features of the class could potentially differ from these responses as the format of the course is solidified.

Will classes be in person or delivered online? Online

Will lecture be synchronous or asynchronous? Asynchronous

Will classes be recorded? Yes

Will this course have a lab or tutorial component this Winter 2021 semester? No

What will the laboratory component of the course look like? How has it been adjusted from previous years?

In lieu of a typical lab, the course will involve activities and opportunities for some experiential learning. The **final assignment** involves "iNaturalist bingo" where you will need to go outdoors (whenever it fits in your schedule) and identify plants.

What will the tutorial component of the course look like? How has it been adjusted from previous years?

There will not be a formal tutorial component. However, the TA and instructors will have office hours throughout the semester where some material that will serve to provide **review material** will be delivered.

Are there other ways the course has been adjusted from previous years?

The course material has been adjusted in terms of learning assessments. Previous years had 2 midterm exams, 1 lab exam, 1 final exam, and 4 assignments. The course has been adjusted to instead have 5 quizzes, 6 assignments, and marks for participation (in online discussions).

Extra questions

Do you have any other advice for incoming students taking PLBI 327?

Take a moment now and then and ask yourself why what you're reading or studying might be important. Get in the practice of making connections between material in your different courses. How does plant biology connect with biochemistry, for example? **Find ways to maintain the interest and curiosity you had when you wanted to enter the field of biology.** At least, that's what helps me when I'm getting bogged down with information overload.

Do you have any stand-out memories from teaching this course?

Well, I've never had a celebrity visit or anything. However, I've always been encouraged by the number of students who took the course thinking that plants would be very dull and have been pleasantly surprised by how fascinating plants really are. They aren't always flashy but plants are often quietly awesome.