UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA
Ontario Universities Program in Field Biology

Course Title:	**Wildlife and Ecology in East African Ecosystems**	
Instructor(s):	Professor Jeremy Kerr Department of Biology University of Ottawa Ottawa, Ontario K1N6N5 jkerr@uottawa.ca	Professor Allyson MacLean Department of Biology University of Ottawa Amaclea3@uottawa.ca
Dates:	ROUGHLY August 15 to August 31, 2025 (**precise dates will minimize flight costs**).	
Location:	Northern Tanzania	
Cost:	***Approximately* $6600** (Airfare, accommodations, travel within the country, and food **are included**; some additional costs for travel medicine and a travel visa are necessary). Costs depend upon airfares, itineraries, and the international monetary exchange rates at the time our booking is made, all factors outside our control. Participants must contact a travel physician prior to the start of the course regarding necessary vaccinations, preventative medications, and to receive advice regarding personal medical requirements (e.g. asthma or allergies). Full COVID vaccination is essential, or students may be denied entry or delayed by Tanzanian authorities. All participants must have a passport that will be valid for six months past the end of the course.	
Prerequisites:	Completion of second year university biology program, including introductory ecology course, or equivalent that we recognize is mandatory. Permission of the instructor and satisfactory completion of the course's risk assessment materials are required. For safety reasons, students must agree to and abide by a code of conduct, take responsibility for their actions in the field, and formally recognize risks in a waiver.	
Enrolment*:	22 (8 reserved for uOttawa)	
Course Description (brief):	This course brings students on wildlife safari through iconic ecosystems of northern Tanzania. These include different rain- and dry forests, savannahs, and higher elevation ecosystems on Mount Kilimanjaro. We will visit iconic parks: such as Serengeti, Kilimanjaro, Ngorongoro, Tarangire, Mkomazi, and Arusha) and study how ecological interactions are shaped by climate, predators, herbivory, wildlife migration, volcanic history, and humans.	
Evaluation:	15% oral participation in course activities, (incl. mandatory risk management session attended in person or by teleconference. 15% presentation in the field, which is prepared and submitted prior to departure. 35% field book: observations and responses to questions completed in the field. 35% final essay: expanded scholarly presentation of material covered in the oral presentation. Each participant will choose from a list of topics to become a "course expert" for it. Students will do a short presentation on the subject under informal conditions to the group during the course. Formal reports on those topics will be submitted three weeks after return to Canada. Citizens of most countries (including Canadians) require a visa before departure. Travel abroad involves inevitable risks; consult the Foreign Affairs travel web site. Additional information on risks and risk management will be provided.	

An Average Day – What to Expect

(a) Daily timeline	An average day in the field in Tanzania will begin around 0700 with breakfast prepared by camp crews and served in a meal tent or lodge. On certain days, very early starts may be required, but safari days mostly begin around 0830, including hours of wildlife and ecosystem observation during the morning. The warmest parts of the day in places like Serengeti will be mid-afternoon, so a break during that time will be normal, followed by more safari time a little later. Safaris do not take place at or after dusk. Class activities after dinner will include presentations by students, discussions amongst participants of the day's events, notable sightings, and interpretation of observations.
(b) Work habitat & Physical exertion	A significant part of the course is in the form of safari, which takes place in Toyota Land Cruiser-type vehicles. However, some hiking is also likely. Walks along or on Kilimanjaro and Ngorongoro can be quite cool. These are not strenuous hikes, but they are at elevations of about 2000-3000m, so they feel demanding compared to a walk at sea level. Effective footwear is a must for these activities. There may be some walks in hot areas near Tarangire National Park with armed guides and local conservation leaders.
(c) Common activities	Describe: ● Common activities include walks, hikes, and safari drives in areas with abundant wildlife ● Associated risks relate mostly to discourteous interaction with local peoples and are mitigated through simple politeness. Some wildlife species present risks, particularly mosquitoes that may carry malaria. This risk is mitigated through the use of travel medication that prevents the disease and bug spray to prevent mosquito bites. While we will be in close proximity to large wildlife species, like elephants and buffalo, and top predators, like lions, we do not approach these animals outside our vehicles. We may encounter them on walks in the presence of trained guides, rangers, or in campsites in the Serengeti, but will not approach them.
(d) Weather, dehydration, & biting insects	Describe: ● Because most visited regions of Tanzania are at high elevation, it is less warm than most people expect and some areas are cold, requiring jackets. The course will take place during the dry season, so significant rainfall is unlikely, but it *can* happen. Sunburn can happen fast in dry, tropical environments but this risk is mitigated identically to a day outdoors in Canada. The course is supported by a camp crew that distributes and manages pure water supplies, so dehydration risks are low provided students remember to drink a little extra water. ● The two main insects that are irritants in the field are Tsetse flies, which are like horseflies in southern Canada in terms of the bite discomfort, and mosquitoes. Tsetse flies are managed by park staff using baited traps that usually reduce tsetse populations very substantially, and tsetse fly bites have been uncommon in the past. Mosquito bites are also uncommon in the dry season and should pose few or no risks provided students heed travel medicine advice provided by their doctor. We advise wearing pants, socks, and closed toe shoes in campgrounds in the evening to help reduce or eliminate bites, along with other typical anti-insect precautions (e.g. bug spray).
(e) Toxic/poisonous, wildlife/ plants	We have not encountered plants that are poisonous on contact, though many plants are poisonous if consumed (as in Canada). Most work on safari prevents any contact with snakes, but it is not impossible to encounter a snake (which may be poisonous) in some areas. Students should always wear their hiking boots when walking around campsites and never walk through vegetated areas in the dark or away from paths. Ant species, especially "Safari ants", can be irritating if stepped on but they form highly clustered, streaming groups that can be avoided by stepping over them.
(f) Sleeping, washroom & laundry facilities	Describe: ● There are tents for students, who will pair up overnight appropriately. ● Many washroom facilities are similar to those that would be found at provincial parks in Ontario, with flush toilets and toilet paper. *Students should bring their own toilet paper just in case*. Students need to bring their own soap, and personal towels. ● There may not be laundry facilities after the first couple of days, so students should bring enough clothes to make it through. It is easily possible to hand wash the most critical items if they run short.

(g) Meal plans & food allergies	Staff cooks are experienced at accommodating diverse dietary needs, including vegetarianism, veganism, and kosher/halal. They also have experience in catering for those with allergies. Inform instructors and camp staff of any issue that could create a concern.
(h) Non-academic responsibilities	Students have few camp responsibilities beyond being courteous with camp crew staff and packing up their things as we move to new locations. Camp staff break camp and set it up elsewhere. Cooking is done by the camp crew also, as is the driving.
(i) Degree of isolation	● Camp crew can charge phones and cameras regularly using equipment in camp and in safari vehicles. ● Cellular service in Tanzania is better than in remote areas of Canada and cell signals are available in most locations, although it may be faint in some of the most remote locations.
(j) Alcohol & drugs	No drug use is permitted under any circumstances, as this is illegal in Tanzania and can be punished severely. **Responsible** alcohol use in camp can be permitted.
(k) Vaccinations/ Insurances	Vaccinations should be considered with a travel doctor. This may include vaccination against hepatitis, typhoid, tetanus, and a series of regular boosters if those are out of date. Oral prescriptions for drugs that prevent malaria (e.g. malarone) are likely to be provided by a travel doctor.
(l) Social Situations	Students will be working with a team of peers in a close group for a period of about two weeks. There is little time in urban environments.
(m) Final comments	This course has been described by many previous participants as “the best experience of my life”. We designed the class to encompass the most beautiful places we know from this part of the world. Safety remains our primary concern at all times.