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
Dates:	ROUGHLY August 10 to August 25, 2026 (**precise dates are chosen to minimize flight costs, balanced against likely academic obligations in September**).
Location:	Tanzania
Cost:	***Approximately* $6800** (Airfare, accommodations, travel within country, and food **are included**; some additional costs for travel medicine and a travel visa are necessary). The exact cost will depend upon airfares, itineraries, and the international monetary exchange rates at the time our booking is made. We have no control over such fluctuations and students must recognize that costs may vary. The standard OUPFB deposit will be required to secure a place in the course.
Prerequisites:	Completion of second year university biology program, including introductory ecology course. 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*:	24 (8 reserved for uOttawa)
Course Description (brief):	This course brings students on wildlife safari through some of the world's most extraordinary and iconic ecosystems, found across northern Tanzania, one of the safest areas in Africa. Ecosystems in the area include different kinds of forests, savannahs, and higher elevation ecosystems on the slopes of extinct volcanoes. We will visit iconic parks and regions, such as Serengeti, Kilimanjaro, Ngorongoro, Tarangire, Mkomazi, and Arusha). We will discuss how ecological interactions in this region are shaped by climate, predators, herbivory, wildlife migration, volcanic history, and human use of different habitats. We will observe species' behaviour and interactions in the field and some introduction to human-wildlife interactions (including zoonotic diseases).
Evaluation:	• 15% oral participation and engagement with course activities, including Mandatory half-day risk management session attended in person or by teleconference. • 15% oral presentation in the field based on elements of the field experience in Tanzania. Oral presentation is researched, prepared and submitted in advance of field course. • 35% field book: observations and responses to questions completed in the field. • 35% final essay: expanded and scholarly presentation of material covered in the oral presentation for the course, using primary scientific literature (i.e. journal articles) as sources. All components of the course must be completed, *including* risk management participation and completion of a risk management assignment.

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. Trips out on safari will 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 when lunch is served, followed by a short rest period, and then more time out on safari in the afternoon. Safaris do not take place in the evenings. Class activities after dinner will include presentations by students, discussions amongst participants of the day's events, notable sightings, and interpretation of observations. Some days will begin very early (around 5am) to permit special activities.
(b) Work habitat & Physical exertion	A significant part of the course is in the form of safari, which takes place in big Toyota Land Cruiser-type vehicles. Walks along the middle elevations of Kilimanjaro can cool or wet (or both), while ranger-guarded walks in Arusha National Park are somewhat more temperate. These are not strenuous hikes, but they are at high elevations up to around 2000m, so they feel demanding compared to a walk at sea level. 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 high elevation walks 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. Medical risks are always best considered directly with a travel medicine specialist who can evaluate your health needs expertly and particularly. 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 by leaving the vehicles. We may encounter them on walks in the presence of trained guides or in campsites in the Serengeti, but we 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 and fleeces. The course will take place during the dry season, so significant rainfall is unlikely, but it can happen. Sunburn is likely for many people in dry, tropical environments but this risk is mitigated identically to a day outdoors in Canada through the use of sunscreen and hats. 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, 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. Safari ants can be disconcerting for some and will sting and uncomfortably if disturbed. These ants can be avoided by heeding guides and watching where you walk. • Bring lip balm, sun hats, and bathing suits if you would like to swim at one of the campsites.
(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 a campsite in some areas. Students should always wear their hiking boots when walking around campsites. Mobile ant colonies called "Safari ants" can be irritating if stepped on but they form distinct groupings that can be avoided by stepping over them, so watch where you walk, and heed guides.
(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 are also encouraged to bring their own soap, shampoo, and personal towels. • There may not be laundry facilities, so students should bring several changes of clothes. It has always been possible to hand wash clothing in remote areas, so bringing a "shakeable" laundry bag for this purpose can be useful (or borrow one from another course participant).
(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.
(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 will 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 or with USB plugs in vehicles. • Cellular service in Tanzania is better than in remote areas of Canada and cell signals are available in most, but NOT all, locations. eSIMs are available inexpensively on many devices to permit access and use of Tanzanian cell networks, including data. We do not endorse any particular service, but will note that AirAlo has operated successfully in the past for this purpose.
(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 is permitted. There are many local beers that students may choose to purchase and there will be some opportunities to do so. This is not a supervised activity and we do not encourage alcohol consumption.
(k) Vaccinations/ Insurances	Vaccinations should be discussed 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 and we welcome and encourage questions about the course in general and about safety in particular.