

The University of Findlay

College of Sciences

Summer 2026

The mission of The University of Findlay is to equip our students for meaningful lives and productive careers.

Course Number: ASLA 457-01 Biology and Conservation of Big Cats: South Africa

Credit Hours: 3 credit hours

Class Time/Place: Loop Abroad South Africa Session 1: May 16th-May 31st, 2026; Session 2: May 30th-June 14th, 2026; Session 3: June 13th-June 28th, 2026; Session 4: June 27th-July 12th, 2026; Session 5: July 11th-July 26th, 2026; Session 6: July 25th-August 9th, 2026

Prerequisites, Co-requisites and Course Description:

This course focuses on big cat management and/or conservation. The course will involve learning about the host organization's work and gaining extensive experience with its animals while using the center's site as a base from which to learn about big cats. Students will attend extensive classroom lectures and complete several labs in addition to participating in routine welfare checks, feeding, ethograms, enrichment planning, and implementation and observation of training sessions with big cats. The course is repeatable with a maximum of 9 total credits provided the topics are unique.

Instructor: Erica Ward, DVM

Instructor Contact Information: erica@loopabroad.com

Office Hours: upon request

Course Objectives:

The following Learning Objectives will be addressed or assessed as part of the course:

- **Remember** how to identify major species of endemic wildlife
- **Understand** the comparative anatomy and physiology of big cats
- **Understand** big cat husbandry, common medical conditions, preventative medicine and care
- **Understand** field anesthesia and **Apply** knowledge gained to operate a projectile drug delivery device

- **Analyze** major conservation strategies, such as using ‘charismatic megafauna’ to promote the conservation of whole ecosystems
- **Analyze** the history and contemporary perspectives on zoos, shelters, and ecotourism and their development and animal welfare impacts

Required Textbooks and Other Materials:

Students are not required to purchase texts. All required texts, research articles and information will be provided in class.

- Loop Abroad’s workbook that corresponds to the class section (if applicable).
- Materials for notes (notebook and/or laptop, writing utensils, etc.), wrist watch, snacks, refillable water bottle, insect repellent, and sunscreen.
- Students may be asked to wear specific clothing items on certain days depending on the projects at hand.

Instructional Strategies:

Case Analysis	x	Library and Internet Research	
Debate	x	Practice/drill	x
Discovery/Independent Research		Problem solving	x
Discussion/Questioning/Interviewing	x	Reading assignments	x
Experiential Learning	x	Role playing/simulation games	
Field Experience	x	Service Learning	x
Group Presentation	x	Video/Audio Review and Critique	
Laboratory Experiences	x	Other	
Lecture	x		

Methods of Assessment: Your course grade will be determined as follows:

Abstracts		Participation	x
Attendance	x	Peer Evaluation	
Capstone Project		Portfolio	
Case Study		Portfolio Lab Performance	

Exams	x	Presentations	x
Group Projects		Professional Evaluation	
Homework Assignments	x	Quizzes	
Internet Research		Research project	
Journaling	x	Other	
Lab Performance	x		
Oral/written review of literature			

Grading: Your course grade will be determined as follows:

Exam: 30%

Assignments: 50%

Class Attendance, Participation and Performance: 20%

Assignments will be completed while the student is participating in the Loop Abroad program. The exam will be proctored on the last day of the program and will be a closed book exam. Completed writing assignments should be submitted to your assigned veterinarian instructor in a word document or google document by the designated time and due date. Details on the assignments and assessments will be distributed on the first day of the program.

Throughout this course, instructors will assess students on their participation in labs and activities both in and out of the classroom. To do well on this assessment:

- Be sure to do your best in all labs and activities and complete corresponding handouts and pages in workbook
- Be an active and engaged participant (pay attention during class, volunteer answers, ask questions, etc)
- Be a team player and be helpful to your peers and instructors both in and outside the classroom
- Be prepared and on time for all activities

Please note: this is not an exclusive list. A student's behavior, attitude, and actions throughout their Loop Abroad program may have an impact on their Participation and Performance Score.

Grading Scale/Distribution:

Grade	Points	Grading Scale
A	4.00	93-100
A-	3.67	90-92
B+	3.33	87-89
B	3.00	83-86
B-	2.67	80-82
C+	2.33	77-79

C	2.00	73-76
C-	1.67	70-72
D+	1.33	67-69
D	1.00	63-66
D-	0.67	62-60
F	0.00	below 60
U	0.00	

University Honor Code:

Each and every student of the University will adhere to the following Honor Code:

“I will not knowingly engage in any dishonorable behavior, cheat, steal, lie, or commit any act of plagiarism during any academic work, course, or endeavor. If I observe an act which I believe violates the University’s Honor Code, I may, at my discretion, report it to the appropriate personnel.”

Student Acknowledgement of University Honor Code:

“I acknowledge that I have fully complied or will comply with all aspects of the University’s Honor Code in submitting this work.”

Student Rights and Responsibilities Statement, Article VIII-Academic Integrity:

<http://catalog.findlay.edu/en/current/Undergraduate-Catalog/Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities-Statement/VIII-Academic-Integrity>

University Diversity Statement:

As part of our commitment to achieve excellence, the University of Findlay values and actively promotes a welcoming and supportive environment that honors the many aspects of diversity. We aspire to foster acceptance of, respect for, and appreciation of all persons in our campus community. We celebrate our commonalities and unique differences, and we acknowledge that diversity broadens learning, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and prepares our students for meaningful lives and productive careers.

Course Policies and Practices:

Attendance and Participation Policy

Students are expected to attend all class meetings for which they are registered. This is regarded as a matter of individual student responsibility. The only excused reasons for absences will be illness that impairs ability to attend and function within the classroom setting or an unavoidable personal emergency.

Students are expected to attend all class sessions on all days of class. It will be the responsibility of the student to contact the course instructor or site director, preferably before the absence, to provide the appropriate documentation and verification for the reason for the absence, and to make arrangements with the course instructor for missed work. Students are

responsible for all missed class material. Students may be subject to limited participation in hands-on practice at the instructor's discretion if they have missed the underlying material needed to safely perform the task at hand.

Final Exam Date: TBD, Please see Loop Abroad Schedule

Special Services: If you are a student with a disability, it is your responsibility to inform your instructor and register with the Office of Disability Services (ods@findlay.edu) at least one week prior to a needed service so reasonable accommodations can be made.

Course and Instructor Evaluation: Each student is expected to complete the course and instructor evaluation which is sent electronically to the student by the Office of the Registrar. The electronic notification comes in the form of an e-mail from the UF Registrar's Office with the following subject line: Online survey for the designated course (e.g., BIOL 102).

Last Date of Attendance Policy: Instructors are required to indicate the last known date of attendance when a final grade of "F" or "U" is assigned to a student.

Tentative Course Outline:

Based on the program location, these are possible lecture and lab topics. A class section may have several labs or lectures that correspond to one or more of the topics below.

Possible Lectures:

- Environmental Enrichment for Captive Big Cats
- Introduction to African Big Cats and Cheetahs
- Big Cat Nutrition and South African Antelope Species
- Preventative Medicine and Diseases of Big Cats
- Capture and Restraint of Wild Animals
- Hunting Debate
- African Conservation Issues
- Zoological Purpose and Cheetah Breeding and Planning Presentation
- Exhibit Design Discussion

Possible Labs:

- Animal Checks
- Enclosure Maintenance
- Food Preparation and Delivery
- Observe Ambassador Training
- Cheetah Walks
- Invasive Plant Removal
- Enrichment Design, Preparation and Implementation
- Maintenance Projects for Cheetah, Serval and Caracal
- CPR Lab
- Suture Lab
- Assist with Ambassador Program

- Ethograms
- Husbandry and Training of Leopard, Lion and Tiger
- Drug Calculations and Prepping
- Fence Repairs and Clearing
- Exhibit Design and Workshop
- Blow Darting