

The University of Findlay

College of Sciences

Spring 2026

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

Course Number: ASLA 448-01 Tropical Biology, Conservation, and Ecology: Thailand Veterinary Semester Abroad

Credit Hours: 3 credit hours

Class Time/Place: Spring 2026 Loop Abroad Thailand TVSA

Prerequisites, Co-requisites and Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the many animals and ecosystems of the tropics through classroom, field, and laboratory work. Students will learn the types of biomes and their history, threats, and conservation. Building on students' understanding of ecology, they will learn about efforts by both the government and non-governmental organizations to protect threatened ecosystems through logging and/or fishing bans, national parks, and accelerated recovery techniques. Students will also learn about community perspectives on these sensitive ecosystems. Field work for this course will include SCUBA diving and/or snorkeling with a conservation component, depending on the program location. The course is repeatable with a maximum of 9 total credits provided the topics are unique.

Instructors: 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:

- **Understand** the ecosystems of the tropics and the factors that underlie their distribution
- **Analyze** ecological succession and how an understanding of ecological succession can be applied to implement accelerated recovery
- **Analyze** the various stakeholders involved in tropical conservation and the different ways they view and interact with the environment
- **Understand** basic coral reef ecology and conservation issues both locally and globally

- **Understand** how wildlife organizations work to assist endangered and at-risk species
- **Apply** knowledge gained to identify common marine life in reef systems

Required Textbooks and Other Materials:

Students are not required to purchase these 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).
- Host organization’s conservation text or articles that correspond to the class section (if applicable) for example, in Thailand: Scott, Chad. *The Koh Tao Ecological Monitoring Program, Second Edition*. Koh Tao, Thailand: Conservation Divers Ltd, 2019. In Belize: Kaplan, Eugene H. 1982. *A Field Guide to Coral Reefs of the Caribbean and Florida*. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, New York.
- Materials for notes (notebook and/or laptop, writing utensils, etc.), wrist watch, refillable water bottle, dry bag, sunscreen and insect repellent, bathing suit, rash guard, snacks.

Instructional Strategies:

Case Analysis		Library and Internet Research	
Debate		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	
Group Presentation		Video/Audio Review and Critique	
Laboratory Experiences		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	
Group Projects		Professional Evaluation	x
Homework Assignments	x	Quizzes	
Internet Research		Research project	
Journaling		Other	
Lab Performance	x		
Oral/written review of literature			

Grading: Your course grade will be determined as follows:

Exams: 40% (20% each)

Conservation quizzes: 20%

Reflections: 20%

Class Attendance, Participation, and Performance: 20%

Assignments will be completed while the student is participating in the 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 or CELA program may have an impact on their Participation and Performance Score.

Grading Scale/Distribution:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Grading Scale</u>
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.

Possible Lectures

- Coral symbiosis
- Fish Cleaning Behavior
- Marine Protected Areas
- Coral Bleaching
- Barrier Reef structure
- Sponges
- Annelids
- Mollusks
- Arthropods
- Echinoderms
- Ecotourism and Conservation
- Thailand Forest Cover, Forest History, Implementation of National Parks, and Buddhism
- Introduction to Thailand, Importance of Forest, and Forest Types

Possible Labs

- Pool Work
- Snorkeling
- Nocturnal Plankton Survey

- Night Beach Seine
- Mangrove Prop-root Epibiont Survey
- Terrestrial vegetation and beach survey
- Coral disease and bleaching survey
- Marine fishes and large invertebrate survey
- Monitor Conservation Plots and Tree Nursery Techniques
- Village Visits to Learn about Rice Farming Near and in the Forest
- Interview Ethnic Minorities about Forest Meaning and Use
- Mulberry Paper Making and Orchids
- Bat Observations in Caves
- SCUBA Ecological Monitoring – Invertebrate Survey
- SCUBA Ecological Monitoring – Fish Survey