

## **Ecosystem Ecology (NREM 680) – Discussion Leader Guidelines**

### **OVERALL PURPOSE:**

Student-led discussions of the primary, peer-reviewed literature will expand upon material covered in lectures and textbook readings. Discussions are meant to introduce students to the current ecological literature; provide insight into important questions, knowledge gaps, and future research needs; introduce appropriate experimental designs and methodologies; etc.

### **DISCUSSION LEADER(S):**

A discussion leader will be in charge of leading and facilitating the laboratory discussions of peer-reviewed literature. All students will read the assignment prior to class and come prepared to ask questions, discuss and analyze key points, and integrate concepts from throughout the semester. **The primary role of the discussion leader will be to choose and distribute the paper; introduce the paper; explain important terms, methods, and results; and engage the class in a quality discussion.** As stated on the syllabus, being a discussion leader counts for **20% of your final grade**. Participating during lectures and student-led discussions throughout the semester is the other **20% of your final grade** (i.e., just because you are not leading the discussion does not mean that it is your day off!).

A student discussion leader(s) will be assigned to each date/topic early in the semester. Each discussion will be ~60 minutes, so time management is important. The discussion leader will:

- 1) Meet with the instructor  $\geq 2$  weeks prior to the assigned date to decide upon an article for discussion. I must approve your choice prior to distribution to the rest of the class.**
- 2) Distribute the reading to your classmates  $\geq 1$  week in advance of the discussion date.**
- 3) Complete additional background readings to become an “informed expert” on the topic. These may be readings referenced in the article and/or other articles that you come across while researching your topic and deciding upon a reading for the class.**
- 4) Email the instructor a list of ~10-12 questions designed to stimulate discussions  $\geq 1$  week prior to the discussion date. I will work with you to refine your questions. Questions should, in general, be unique to that week’s topic and article (i.e., try to avoid discussing upcoming topics). However, integrating topics from prior weeks into your questions is highly encouraged. In developing questions, go beyond questions that simply elicit yes or no answers, or those that only involve recalling specific factual information from the paper. In other words, good questions will be open-ended, have broader implications, and thereby encourage discussion. **At least 1 of the questions should relate to Hawai‘i, whether the article was Hawai‘i based or not (e.g., How does the information presented in the article inform ecosystem science in Hawai‘i?).****
- 5) Distribute the questions to your classmates  $\geq 1$  day in advance of the discussion date.**
- 6) Give a presentation (25 min.; being over by  $\leq 5$  min. will result in a loss of 10 pts. (5%);  $> 5$  and  $\leq 10$  min. loss of 20 pts. (10%);  $> 10$  min. loss of 200 pts. (100%)) on the day of the discussion to introduce/summarize/ explain/outline: (a) cool and interesting information about the author(s), study site, methods, etc.; (b) the scientific question (i.e. justification) for the study; (c) the approach and pertinent methods (i.e. experimental design; be careful and don’t spend too much time here); (d) the most important results and findings; and (e) **supplemental information from additional readings** (e.g., What has been done on the topic to date?; Have other related studies been done and, if so, what have they found? Include at least several slides with bulleted text points, and key Figures/Tables). If you are going to use PowerPoint, **save your file as PowerPoint 2003 or 2010** and bring it to class on the day of your presentation on a jump drive, flash key, CD, etc.**

**7)** Prepare a handout that includes: (a) key information from your introduction (text, figures, tables, etc.); (b) your discussion questions; and (c) a bibliography on the topic ( $\geq 15$  references, the majority of which should come from the peer-reviewed literature and none of which should come from the literature cited in the article for that day's discussion (you can include the important ones, they just won't count towards the minimum number of references)). **Note that your handout should NOT simply be a copy of your PowerPoint slides.** This is the opportunity to provide more in-depth information.

**8)** Be prepared to summarize key points, concepts, questions, analyses, etc. in the **last 5-10 min.** of the discussion.

**9)** Come prepared to stimulate discussion and participation by your peers (i.e., a lull in discussion will be viewed as more unfavorable on the part of the discussion leader than it will the rest of the class).

The instructor will grade each discussion leader based on the following criteria:

<b>Criteria / Grading rubric for Discussion Leader</b>	<b>200 points possible</b>	
	<b>Max pts.</b>	<b>Your pts.</b>
<b>Introduction/Presentation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the overall context/justification of the study well introduced?</li> <li>• Were the questions/hypotheses/experimental design well introduced?</li> <li>• Were important methods and/or terminology introduced adequately?</li> <li>• Was peripheral information on the researcher, study site, etc. presented?</li> <li>• Were results/ideas from supplemental readings well presented, including use &amp; descriptions of pertinent Figures &amp; Tables?</li> <li>• Did the presentation go over the time limit?</li> </ul>	50 (25%)	
<b>Handout</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content and clarity?</li> <li>• Inclusion of key figures, tables, and results?</li> <li>• Quality of discussion questions?</li> <li>• Quality and depth of bibliography?</li> </ul>	50 (25%)	
<b>Discussion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well were questions handled?</li> <li>• How well was discussion stimulated?</li> <li>• Were questions conducive to discussion?</li> <li>• Did the discussion stay focused on the topic?</li> <li>• Did the discussion leader dominate the discussion?</li> <li>• Did the discussion leader encourage class participation?</li> </ul>	50 (25%)	
<b>Overall</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the discussion leader meet deadlines for choosing an article, developing questions, and distributing the article to the class?</li> <li>• Was the article placed within the context of the discussion topic and ecosystem ecology in general?</li> <li>• How well were difficult concepts explained, and questions addressed?</li> <li>• Were they an "informed expert" on the subject matter?</li> </ul>	50 (25%)	

**Total Points Received** \_\_\_\_\_