Ecology of the Dining Hall **Biology 338, Fall 2024**
Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00 AM - 11:20 AM **Location: CKB 316**

Instructor: Maria Stanko (she/her) **Email:** mstanko@njit.edu **Phone: 973-642-7246**
Office: CKB 340E
Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:00pm-4:00pm, Thursdays 11:30am-1:30pm, or by appointment.

Description: This course will examine the on-campus ecosystem of the dining hall as a framework for learning about a number of ecological concepts. We will investigate topics such as food webs, nutrient cycling, microbial ecology, and agroecology as they apply to the organisms and biological processes present in our dining hall. Course work will involve extensive reading and discussion of scientific and popular literature.

Prerequisite: BIOL 205&206 or permission of the instructor.

Text: No required textbook. Extensive required readings from a variety of sources, including scientific and popular literature, are posted on the course Canvas site.

Course website: canvas.njit.edu/

Photo credit: Maria Stanko

Learning Outcomes: Students will be able to:

- Apply ecological concepts to understanding food systems.
- Explain how the ecosystem of the dining hall is connected to other systems.
- Read critically and form and articulate opinions on complex issues in ecology.
- Independently conceive of and execute an investigation-based final project.

Course policies:

- Course materials are provided for your own use only. No posting/sharing anywhere.
- You must check Canvas regularly and ensure that you regularly check the email address associated with your Canvas profile.
- If you miss an exam or an assignment deadline due to an excusable absence, contact Dr. Stanko as soon as possible and submit documentation of your absence via the Student Absence Verification Request at the Office of the Dean of Students. If your absence is related to university sports, please submit the relevant documentation to Dr. Stanko. Unexcused late assignments are accepted but penalized 10% per day late, with a maximum 50% deduction.
- Compliance with current NJIT Covid-19 policies or other safety policies is required.

Disability Statement: Please let me know if you need accommodations for a disability. If you are in need of accommodations due to a disability please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources & Services (OARS) to discuss your specific needs: https://www.njit.edu/studentsuccess/accessibility

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Grade scale: Grades will be assigned based on the percentage (rounded to a whole number) of points you earn out of the total possible, following the standard grade scale (90%+ A, 85-89% B+, 80-84% B, 75-79% C+, 70-74% C, 60-69% D, <60% F). Please note that the points per category are estimated and may vary slightly.

Category	Points
Assignments	70
Hypothesis Reading Annotations (6x5)	30
Participation	15
Presentation	50
Midterm Exams (2x30)	60
Final Exam	75
Total Points	**300**

Assessment of Learning:
Assignments - Students will submit periodic assignments related to course content.
Hypothesis Reading Annotations – Some assigned readings will have an associated Hypothesis Reading Annotation assignment. This is a tool accessed via the course Canvas page. Students make annotations on assigned readings in conversation with other students.
Participation – This course involves extensive discussion of course topics and readings. Participation will be assessed via relevant verbal discussion during class and contribution to class activities.
Presentation of final project - Your assignment for the final project is to research any topic that interests you that meets the following criteria: your topic must involve FOOD and ECOLOGY and require some DATA COLLECTION (for example, from the dining hall, a grocery store, or a literature survey). The final product of your project will be a 10-minute presentation to the class sharing what you've learned (50 points).
Midterms and Final Exam - There will be two midterm exams and one final exam that cover the application and understanding of the material covered in the course. Midterms and exams must be completed independently during the scheduled class time (midterms) and the scheduled final exam time (final exam). The final exam will be cumulative, with a heavier emphasis on content not previously covered on midterms.

Academic Dishonesty: Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf. Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu.

Generative AI: This course expects students to work without artificial intelligence (AI) assistance unless specifically stated in the directions of an assignment. For assignments in which AI use is permitted, the AI must be cited as shown within the NJIT Library AI citation page (https://researchguides.njit.edu/AI). If you have any questions or concerns about AI technology use in this class, please reach out to your instructor prior to submitting any assignments.

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Schedule:
A more detailed schedule including readings, Hypothesis annotations, and assignment descriptions is available on the course Canvas site.

Week	Date	Topic	Due dates
1	Tues 9/3	Introduction / What we eat	
	Thurs 9/5	Eating plants	
2	Tues 9/10	Food choice	Academic Engagement: Fall 2024 Assignment
	Thurs 9/12	Early agriculture	
3	Tues 9/17	Eating animals	
	Thurs 9/19	Student presentations of animal foods	Assignment 1 - Animal foods
4	Tues 9/24	Evolution of diet	
	Thurs 9/26	Biodiversity of crops	
5	Tues 10/1	Energetics of cooking	
	Thurs 10/3	Microbial ecology – beneficial microbes	
6	Tues 10/8	MIDTERM 1 / Dining hall diversity	MIDTERM 1
	Thurs 10/10	Microbial ecology – food safety	
7	Tues 10/15	Microbial ecology – food pathogens	Assignment 2 – Dining hall diversity
	Thurs 10/17	Pollination and agriculture	
8	Tues 10/22	Pollination services	
	Thurs 10/24	Trophic ecology – food webs	Assignment 3 - Project proposal
9	Tues 10/29	Trophic ecology cont.	
	Thurs 10/31	Nutrient cycling – Carbon cycle	
10	Tues 11/5	Nutrient cycling – Nitrogen cycle	Assignment 4 - Trophic ecology
	Thurs 11/7	Nutrient cycling – Phosphorus cycle	
11	Tues 11/12	MIDTERM 2 / Genetically modified foods	MIDTERM 2
	Thurs 11/14	Genetically modified foods	
12	Tues 11/19	Native American food systems	Assignment 5 – NA foods
	Thurs 11/21	Agroecology / Food waste	
13	Tues 11/26	Student presentations	
	Thurs 11/28	NO CLASS (Happy Thanksgiving!)	
14	Tues 12/3	Student presentations	
	Thurs 12/5	Student presentations	
15	Tues 12/10	Student presentations	
	Thurs 12/12	NO CLASS (Last day of classes is 12/11)	
	12/15-21	Final Exam, TBD	FINAL EXAM

*Do not schedule travel during the final exam period until after the NJIT final exam schedule has been posted here: https://www.njit.edu/registrar/exams/