

**PLP2000 Plants, Plagues, and People: Modules and Schedule for Spring, 2025**

Wk	Due Date*	#	Topic
1	Jan 17 <sup>NP</sup>	1	Orientation
		2	Geologic time and the Human Speck
		3	Organic molecules: life's building blocks
	Jan 21	DO	End self sign-up for groups; all groups assigned and on-boarding opens
2	Jan 24	4	Origins of life
		5	Reading DNA, Writing Proteins
		6	Mistakes in the code (Good news? Bad news? Who knows?)
		7	Mutations and Populations
		DO	Discussion Group Onboarding: Submit "Get to Know Me"/Schedule, 11:59 PM
3	Jan 31	8	Prokaryotes: hot, fast, cheap and easy
		9	Eukaryotes: cells get organized & the invention of sex
		10	The Mechanics of Sex (no, not THAT kind of mechanics...)
		DO	Discussion Group Onboarding: Submit Team Expectations Agreement, 11:59 PM
4	Feb 07	11	Energy production and transfer: making and breaking bonds
		12	Energy storage and use: food chains to fossil fuels
		13	Sea of Life: Cells get together and make critters
		14	Sea of Life: Diversity of Life
		D1	Discussion Project #1 check-in due, 11:59 PM
5	Feb 14	RT1	Review Test #1 due by 8:00 PM
	Feb 14	15	Land Invasion, I: Plants
		16	Land Invasion, II: Fungi and Stramenopiles
6	Feb 21	17	Land Invasion, III: Animals, the Arthropods
		18	Land Invasion, IV: Animals, the Vertebrates
		19	Land Invasion, V: The Cheaters, part 1 (protozoans and flatworms)
		20	Land Invasion, V: The Cheaters, part 2 (roundworms of plants & people)
7	Feb 28	21	I'm an Amniote, and I'm ok
		22	Mammals: from belly buttons to nipples
		23	The Precarious Rise of the Mammals
		24	Primate Primer
		25	From Primates to People (Lucy's got a big ol' butt)
		D1	Discussion Project #1 due, 11:59 PM
8	Mar 07	26	Mechanisms of speciation and extinction
		27	Case Studies in Extinctions
	Mar 07	RT2	Review Test #2 due by 8:00 PM
		D1	Discussion Project #1 Peer Review & Team Assessment due, 11:59 PM
9	Mar 14	28	Hunting and Gathering to the Advent of Agriculture
		29	Early Agriculture and Domestications
		30	Human Populations: Carrying Capacities and Malthusian Limits
		31	The Rise (and fall and rise and fall ...) of Civilization: Sumerian
		32	The Rise (and fall and rise and fall ...) of Civilization: Harrapan
		33	The Rise (and fall and rise and fall ...) of Civilization: Egyptian
	Mar 17-21		Spring Break

10	Mar 28	34	Meanwhile, on other parts of the planet... Asia
		35	Peopling and Civilizations of the Americas
		36	Back in the Fertile Crescent: from States to Empires
		37	Greeks and Science
11	APR 04	38	Roman Rise, and Roman Science
		39	The Decline and Fall of Rome: Logistics & Disease
		40	Civilization and Human Diseases
		41	Density-dependent Diseases: 8 diseases that love a crowd
		42	Civilization and Plant Diseases: Infecting your food
12	Apr 11	43	The Middle Ages: Shifting Climates, Shifting People
		44	Black Death
	Apr 11	RT3	Review Test #3 due by 8:00 PM
		D2	Discussion Project #2 check-in due, 11:59 PM
13	Apr 18	45	The Columbian Exchange I: Race for Resources
		46	The Columbian Exchange II: The Unintended Exchanges
		47	Fuel for a Renaissance: Imperialism & Slavery
		48	Renaissance Culture & Science
14	Apr 23 <sup>NP</sup>	49	Industrial Revolution I: Power and Invention
		50	Industrial Revolution II: Biology and Medicine
		51	Industrial Revolution II: Culture and Consequences
		52	Global Economics and Resource Conflicts in the Modern Era
		53	Green Revolution
	Apr 23	D2	Discussion Project #2 due, 11:59 PM
15	APR 30	54	Populations, Demands, and Resource Limitations
		55	Energy Junkies
		56	Tying it All Together
		D2	Discussion Project #2 Team Assessment due, 11:59 PM
-	Apr 30	RT4	Review Test #4 due by 8:00 PM

\*This schedule is given to help you stay on track with completing the modules. You are welcome to move through the course at a faster pace, but you must take the module quizzes for each week by 8:00 pm on the posted deadline (Friday of every week, except for the final sets), complete the review tests before 8:00 pm on the scheduled test dates, and complete your discussion team assignments by 11:59 p.m. on the posted deadlines. **Quizzes and tests** will remain open for two weeks beyond the posted deadline, but **late submissions will receive a point deduction of 10% per day**. Beyond the 10<sup>th</sup> day, quizzes may be completed in order to progress through the modules, but they will receive no credit. **There is no late submission window for discussion team assignments.**

<sup>NP</sup> No late penalty: There is no late penalty for assignments due during drop-add week, or for module quizzes due on the last day of classes (Wednesday before reading days). Final discussion projects must be submitted on or before the last day of classes. (Note: Canvas will automatically apply the late deductions, but they will be manually removed after the quiz close dates.)

**PLP 2000 Syllabus: Plants, Plagues, and People (Online)**  
**Spring, 2025**

**COURSE:** PLP 2000, Section 12CF, 3 credits. This course may be used to fulfill either a Biological Sciences (B) or Humanities (H) General Education Requirement.

**e-LEARNING WEBSITE:** <https://elearning.ufl.edu/> (in Canvas)

**MEETING TIMES:** This course is semi-synchronous. Deadlines are set for completion of module sets, discussion team assignments, and review tests, but they may be completed in advance of the recommended schedule.

**TEXTS:** There is no required text for this online course. All course readings and other content are included within the course modules.

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Brantlee Spakes Richter

**OFFICE:** 2519 Fifield Hall

**OFFICE HOURS:** Video conferences or in-person meetings arranged by appointment

**PHONE:** 352-273-2014

**EMAIL:** Please use the email system within Canvas

**TEACHING ASSISTANTS:** Andrea Suazo Tejada, Vitor Silva de Moura

**CONTACTING THE INSTRUCTOR TEAM:**

**Questions about class materials or content:** Please use the discussion boards in Canvas for all general questions about class mechanics or content. If you have a question about the class or subject material, others probably share the same question, and posting it to the discussion boards allows everyone to see the question and answer, just as if you had raised your hand in class and asked the question. If you use email to ask a general class related question, you will be asked to post your question on the appropriate board, and it will be answered there. Please do not use the discussion boards for questions about specific quiz questions on a quiz that is still open, as others may not have taken the quiz yet and would have an unfair advantage by seeing the questions ahead of time.

**Individual questions, problems, or appointments:** Please use the email function in Canvas to communicate with the instructor and TAs during the semester, rather than regular university email. Email and phone messages delivered on weekdays (M-F) will generally receive a reply within two business days. Messages may not be checked between 5:00 pm Friday and 8:00 am Monday. If I plan to be out of the office or otherwise unavailable for more than one business day, I will post an announcement on the class website.

**Questions about Grading:** This is a large class, and we work as a team to manage the various components. The course TAs do the grading on the discussion team assignments. The TAs are graduate students and apprentice instructors. If you have a question or concern about a discussion assignment grade, please contact the TA first. If you have an issue that cannot be resolved with your TA, your course instructor will be happy to work with you both to reach a satisfactory understanding. For questions about exam grades, please contact your main instructor (Dr. Spakes Richter). For questions about course concepts, including quiz questions, both the instructor and the TAs are ready to help!

**Technical support:** The teaching team manages content, and the UF Help Desk manages access.

**Contact the UF help desk** immediately if you experience difficulties with accessing components of the site, including lectures, quizzes or proctored tests. If they are not able to resolve your problem ahead of a deadline, contact the instructor with your help desk ticket number and a description of the problem and steps taken to resolve it. Extensions for due dates will be granted for documented technical problems, as needed.

**Contact the instructor or a TA** if you encounter dead links, locked assignments, or conflicts between the syllabus and the Canvas site content or deadlines.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION: Plants, Plagues, and People** is a course in biohistory. We cover biology, from the nuts and bolts to the diversity of life, and we look at the ways in which organisms interact with one another, and how those interactions influence and constrain human activities. Course themes include environmental pressures, resource limitations, and diseases, and the roles that these factors play in the rise and fall of human civilizations.

**ABOUT THE ONLINE COURSE:** This is an asynchronous distance education (DE) course; it is offered via the University of Florida E-learning system (Canvas) at <http://elearning.ufl.edu/>. The class materials are delivered via a combination of video lectures and online interactive activities. The lectures and supplementary materials are organized into modules that are available online through the University of Florida E-learning system for the class. In accordance with the copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) none of the materials in the class may be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research."

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** The overall goal of this course is for students to gain knowledge of the major events in human evolution and history, as well as a basic understanding of the relationships between humans and their food, biological resources, and pathogens. By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- describe the progression of life forms on planet Earth, and explain how environmental pressures affect populations of living organisms;
- explain the value of plants to human beings, and describe the impacts that the development of agriculture and the use of fossil fuels have had on human populations and societies;
- discuss the effects of biological resource limitations on major historical events and cultural trends;
- distinguish between density-independent and crowd diseases, and describe how various diseases have affected humans and their civilizations;
- give examples of human activities that have led to increases in human, animal, and plant diseases.

**PREREQUISITES:** There are no course prerequisites for PLP2000. For the online version of this class, however, it will be assumed that you have consistent access to the internet and basic computer skills. You must be able to:

- access the course content regularly,
- navigate the course materials using the Canvas software interface,
- correspond via the email and chat functions within the class website,
- access other online content, as assigned.

For UF's student computing requirements, see: <https://training.helpdesk.ufl.edu/computing.shtml>. For help with Canvas, go to: <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>, or use the "help" link in the left-hand menu of your workspace window.

**LEARNING MODULES:** Course content is divided into 56 learning modules, organized under four units (quarters) on the Home page of the Canvas interface. Each module includes a presentation of the subject material (video lecture) and supporting materials, such as non-graded interactive quizzes or exercises, readings, videos, etc. Every module also has an associated graded quiz, which you can access directly from the module or by going through the “Quizzes” link in the course toolbox. After you complete the module, you must take the associated quiz before the weekly quiz deadline. You do not, however, have to take the quiz immediately after viewing the module. You may find it beneficial to take time to look back over your notes and study the material further before taking the quiz.

**Quizzes** for each module will typically consist of 2 or 3 questions (sometimes more) at 2 points each. Questions are drawn randomly from a question pool, so you will not receive exactly the same quiz questions as someone else taking the course. Make sure that you have viewed the module and taken notes, so you are prepared for the quiz; once you start a quiz, you will have limited time to complete it (total time is set for 90 seconds per question), and you may not exit and return later. Quiz deadlines are set according to the weekly module schedule. All module quizzes will be available from the first day of class, but must be completed prior to the weekly scheduled deadlines (8:00 PM, each Friday).

**Review tests** are non-cumulative, consist of 40 questions at 2.5 points each, and will be due after each quarterly unit, at 8:00 pm on the scheduled test deadline date. Most questions are drawn from the same banks as the module quizzes, with a few additional questions combining information from several related modules. (*Study tip:* View your quiz results and review or ask questions as needed to get clarity on any questions that you missed prior to taking the review test.) Once you begin a test, you will have 60 minutes to complete it. You may not leave the test and return later. The test will end when you hit the “submit” button, or will close automatically 60 minutes after you begin. The grade will be calculated automatically, and you will be able to see your score in your Canvas grade book within a few minutes of completion. The review tests will be proctored via the **Honorlock** system.

**Discussion Team Assignments:** You will work in small discussion groups to complete two team assignments (one for each half of the semester). Each assignment will have a “check-in” to ensure that your group is on track, and a final assignment deadline. You will have until the end of the drop/add period to select your own discussion group members; at the end of the drop/add period, all remaining students will be randomly assigned to groups. See the *Group Discussion Assignments* under the Assignments tool in Canvas for a complete description of this semester’s assignments.

**GRADES:** The course grade will be based on 56 open-book module quizzes, bi-weekly discussion group assignments, and 4 proctored review tests. The grading scale is weighted in three categories:

Component	Percent of Final Grade
Quiz Scores: 56 quizzes at 2-14 points each	30%
Review Tests: 4 tests at 100 points each	50%
Discussion Groups: 1 onboarding assignment at 10 points 2 midpoint check-ins at 10 points each 2 group assignments at 50 points each 1 peer review at 10 points	20%

**Grade calculation:** Final course grades will be determined on the following percentage scale. You will be able to keep track of your points throughout the semester in your Canvas grade book. If you find that you are not on track to achieve your desired grade, please make an appointment for additional help. Do not wait until the last set of modules to ask for help! And definitely don't wait until the semester is over, and then ask for your final grade to be "adjusted," or request that a special extra credit assignment be created for you. We are more than happy to help you individually with the course material, but you must earn your own points among the opportunities provided to everyone.

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	92-100
A-	90-91.99
B+	88-89.99
B	82-87.99
B-	80-81.99
C+	78-79.99
C	72-77.99
C-	70-71.99
D+	68-69.99
D	62-67.99
D-	60-61.99
E	0-57.99

Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory Grade Option: if the class is being taken as a "pass/fail" (S-U) credit, a satisfactory grade will be earned with the equivalent of a "C-" grade or better.

**Extra Credit:** There will be at least two small extra credit opportunities. One will be via participation in the Mediasite quizzes, found within the recorded lectures. At the end of the semester, participation data will be downloaded for the Medisite quizzes, and up to 10 points will be allocated based on the quiz questions answered out of 10 randomly-selected questions. The other planned extra credit will be a "bonus quiz" near the end of the semester; this will be a 5-point quiz covering content from the supplemental course materials. There will be no "individual" extra credit opportunities offered; the only extra credit offered will be from assignments available to the entire class.

**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION IN THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT:**

This class is fully online and semi-synchronous. That means that students are responsible for scheduling their own time to complete the modules, allowing enough time to ask questions and receive answers before the deadlines for graded quizzes and tests. **Failing to log in to an online class and complete the weekly assignments is equivalent to skipping an in-person class.** Just as "I forgot to attend class all week" would not constitute an excused absence for an in-person class, it is equally inexcusable in the online environment. Waiting until the last day is also not recommended; if you wait until the day of a quiz or test deadline and attempt to view all the modules and take all the quizzes in rapid succession, your likelihood of earning a passing grade is poor; most humans are not able to absorb, process, and retain information very well in such a situation, and it leaves no time to get clarification on anything that you did not immediately understand. While we will strive to keep the online format as interactive as possible, there will not be an instructor immediately accessible 24 hours a day, so there will be a delay between the time that you post a question and the time that we can answer it. Please allow for that time gap in planning your own class schedule.

**Missed Deadlines:** If you have plans to be out of town, or have other conflicts with a scheduled due date, you will be expected to complete the assignments **prior to the scheduled date**. This includes work hours, religious holidays, family events, participation in UF athletic programs and other official student clubs or associations, and activities/travel related to other coursework or professional development. The modules in this course are not locked down, so you can work as far ahead as needed in order to accommodate your schedule; make-up tests or deadline extensions will not be given for reasons of personal scheduling conflicts. If you have waited until the scheduled deadline, and you have an emergency that will prevent you from taking a test or quiz, you must contact the instructor as soon as possible. **Requests for an excused absence will only be accepted within one week of the scheduled deadline**, except in cases of physical or mental incapacitation, in which case petitions will be accepted within one week of the documented return date. You may be asked to provide documentation of the emergency or illness (e.g., police report of a car wreck, doctor's note for illness or injury). A missed test or quiz must be made up prior to the next test or quiz deadline. If you miss a posted deadline without an excused absence, the test or quiz will still be open for two weeks after the deadline; however, your score will reflect a 10% deduction for each day beyond the posted deadline.

**Disability Accommodations** are made as soon as possible upon receipt of an accommodation letter from the Disability Resource Center. If you are submitting a letter, it is your responsibility to communicate which specific accommodations you will need in order to fully participate in the course, as some allowed accommodations may not be applicable in the online environment and others may need to be modified for delivery within the course platform. If you have an accommodation allowing "additional time to complete out-of-class assignments," and need extra time on a particular week due to your medical condition, you must still contact the instructor within one week of the deadline to arrange for an excused absence or alternate deadline. We are more than happy to provide accommodations so that every student can get the most out of this course, and we rely on you to communicate your needs in a timely manner so that we may meet them fairly and appropriately.

**Academic Integrity** standards will be upheld vigilantly at all times in this class. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." You will be expected to keep these commitments in every aspect of your participation in this class.

It has been assumed in the development of this course that students will have access to their notes while taking the weekly online module quizzes. You are encouraged to take good notes, and use them effectively, but you are expected to use only your own notes and understanding during assessments, and you are expected to submit your own work on discussion boards and assignments. A plagiarized discussion assignment will receive an automatic zero score and a warning; if you submit a second plagiarized assignment, you will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for violation of the Honor Code. The quarterly Review Tests in this course are proctored, using an online proctoring service. You may not use notes or electronic devices during exams.

## **UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND SERVICES**

**UF Counseling Services** provides resources on campus for students having difficulties which may interfere with their academic performance. Programs are available for general therapy, stress management, anger management, math confidence, career counseling, LGBTQ support, and many other specific needs. Resources available to you include: **University Counseling Center**, 301 Peabody

Hall, 392-1575; **Student Mental Health Center**, 392-1171; **Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)**, Student Health Care Center, 392-1161; and **Career Resource Center**, Reitz Union, 392-1601.

**Accommodations** are available for students with disabilities. Students requesting accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students Office (through Students with Disabilities Office, Peabody 202, 392-1261). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student. This documentation must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. For further information, see the Disability Resource Center ([www.dso.ufl.edu/OSD/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/OSD/)).

**Software Use and Copyright:** All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

**UF Distance Education Student Complaints:** Should you have any complaints with your experience in this course, which you are unable to resolve directly with the instructor, please visit <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaints> to submit a complaint.

Please see the “Resources” link at the top of the course home page for quick access to these and other university resources.