

Subject: Coral Reef Ecology Field Summer Course in Panama

2016 SUMMER COURSE ANNOUNCEMENT (June 15-July 10)

FIELD COURSE IN CORAL REEF ECOLOGY (CRE B-16)

COURSE LOCATION: Bocas del Toro Biological Station, Boca del Drago, Isla Colon, Republic of Panama. The biological station is located on a hill facing the Caribbean Sea. Coral reef, sea grass and mangrove ecosystems lie out in front of the station and lowland tropical rain forests lie directly behind. This juxtaposition of the two most biologically diverse ecosystems provides tremendous opportunities for education and research. See: <http://www.itec-edu.org/> for details.

INSTRUCTOR: **Dr. Alfred Beulig**, Institute for Tropical Ecology and Conservation, and New College of Florida, 5800 Bay Shore Rd., Sarasota, FL 34243, email: beulig@ncf.edu <<mailto:beulig@ncf.edu>> Specialties: Behavior of fish, reef morphology, hydrodynamics, reef symbioses, reef trophic dynamics, behavioral ecology of reef organisms.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

NOTE: Diving certification is not necessary to enroll in this course, but is recommended. For SCUBA-certified (PADI, NAUI, or SSI certified) students who will be diving, there is a \$100 Lab Fee with this course which covers dive tank air fill costs. Students with SCUBA certification are expected to bring their own BC, regulators, mask/fins/snorkel and proof of certification.

This course is designed to provide the student with a sound foundation in ecological concepts, techniques and experimental design in field research as applied to coral reef ecosystems. The material covered is equivalent to a university upper level course in coral reef field ecology.

The course will begin with a global ecosystem perspective and then will progressively narrow to assess the way in which local reefs are influenced by both global and local phenomena. We will focus in depth on Caribbean reefs using the reef at Bocas del Toro as an example. We will provide a brief introduction to plate tectonics as a basis for understanding the production of substrate for reefs and their distribution in the biosphere. In this context we will discuss several theories of the origins of reefs and characterize a general reef community. The major reef biota that inform the character of reefs will be discussed in terms of their anatomy, physiology, ecological requirements, roles on the reef and overall impact. We will examine and discuss some controversial formulations of community structure such as the role of competition, stochastic vs deterministic models in reef organization, diversity/stability relationships and trophic dynamics. Sampling methodology will be discussed with regard to the peculiar demands of the reef setting and we will examine several experimental designs and sampling schemes with regard to their strengths and weaknesses as well as their theoretical bases.

FORMAL LECTURES: Lectures will present topics that provide a background for the fieldwork in an interactive discussion format. Topics are selected to permit students to develop an awareness of the objectives of research on coral reefs as well as an appreciation of current theoretical and practical issues in ecology.

FIELD WORK BRIEFINGS: Prior to departing for the reef site, dive teams will be formed and the objectives for the day will be outlined and discussed. Assignments will be made to the dive teams and coordinated.

READINGS: Assignments relating to lecture topics will be made from the texts and supplementary research articles provided in the library as well as journal articles.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Garrison, Tom. Oceanography Latest Ed., Wadsworth, New York.

Humann, Paul. Reef Coral Identification, New World, Jacksonville, FL.

Humann, Paul. Reef Creature Identification, New World, Jacksonville, FL.

Humann, Paul. Reef Fishes Identification, New World, Jacksonville, FL

(Note: Instructor will provide list of other important books on coral reef ecology on request.)

GROUP EXERCISES: During the first week, students will visit several sites in the vicinity of the station to familiarize themselves with the area and to do reconnaissance observations that may lead to hypotheses that could be tested in individual projects. Students will be organized into dive team groups and will carry out field observations or data collection by which they will gain experience in the local area to help decide upon a likely study site. These experiences will prepare students to carry out individual research projects. In the evenings, students will participate in "debriefing sessions" during which they will try to identify the reef organisms they saw during the dives of the day and

record the common name and scientific name of the species in a debriefing log.

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PROJECTS: Each student will be expected to prepare a grant proposal for an original project in consultation with faculty. Projects may be suggested by observations made during group exercises or from the research literature, and will be evaluated on the basis of feasibility in the available time, soundness of experimental design and concept. During the final week of the course, data analysis and writing of project reports will be carried out and students will present their results orally in an end-of-course symposium. They will present the research report on their findings in the form of a journal article for evaluation.

FORMAL LECTURE TOPICS

- Fundamentals of oceanography, global ecology.
- Plate tectonics, formation of ocean basins, continents and ocean

currents.

- Evolution of Caribbean and tropical Central American environment.
- Reef morphology, distribution of reef systems.
- Coral reef community study - sampling methods, distribution and

abundance of organisms.

- Biology of coral reef organisms: Porifera and crypto-fauna.
- Biology of coral reef organisms: echinoderms, arthropods and

annelids.

- Biology of coral reef organisms: fishes.
- Biology of coral reef organisms: algae and plants.
- The coral reef as ecosystem: How are reefs organized?
- Competition theory, diversity.
- Ecosystem stability: are coral reefs more stable than temperate

ecosystems?

- Stability, resilience and fragility; are these concepts relevant to reefs?
- Anthropogenic effects on reefs.

COURSE LENGTH: ITEC Summer field courses are four weeks in length. CRE B-16 will run from June 15 through July 10, 2016.

TUITION: \$2250 USD. Tuition fee includes all lodgings, meals and airport transfers in Bocas del Toro. The tuition also covers transportation and lodging during the three-day cloud forest field trip on the mainland to the town of Boquete. A \$100 USD lab fee to cover dive tank air costs is required for this course.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: May 15, 2016. The course is limited to 10 students and applications will be evaluated as they arrive. If you believe that your application may arrive late, notify ITEC.

GRADING AND COURSE CREDIT: Up to 6 units of credit will be given, 3 for the lecture portion and 3 for the field/lab portion. A letter grade and an written evaluation will be assigned based on grant proposals, journal article, oral presentation as well as attendance and participation in lecture/ discussion and engagement in the material. In the field/lab portion, students will be evaluated on the basis of safe diving practice, development of observational and data collecting skills, reliability as a dive partner and preparedness to go into the field with data collecting equipment and dive gear in order and ready. Other, less tangibles such as personal attitude, motivation and contribution to the course will also be noted. Course credit must be arranged at the student's institution. Contact ITEC for details.

APPLICATIONS can be found at: <http://itec-edu.org/education-programs/application/>.

CONTACT: **Institute for Tropical Ecology and Conservation**, 2911 NW 40th PL, Gainesville, FL 32605, Phone: 352-367-9128 <<file:///localhost/tel/352-367-9128>> , itec@itec-edu.org <<mailto:itec@itec-edu.org>> , <http://www.itec-edu.org/> ITEC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1996.

Peter N. Lahanas, Ph.D.
Executive Director

**Institute for Tropical Ecology
and Conservation (ITEC)**
2911 NW 40th Place
Gainesville, FL 32605, USA

phn: 352-367-9128

web: <http://www.itec-edu.org>

In Panama: 011-507-6853-2134
peterlahanas@gmail.com

Bocas del Toro Biological Station
Boca del Drago, Isla Colon, Panama
Field Station Manager, Enrique Dixon
011-507-6624-9246