

## ENVS/MARI 4003 Coral Reefs and Environmental Change

Faculty of Science Course Syllabus Fall 2023

Department of Earth and Environmental Science



**Class Times:** Class Times are Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:05-11:25 am

**Location:** LSC C332

**Instructor:** Dr. Sue Gass | Email: sue.gass@dal.ca

**Office Hours:** Thursdays 12:00 - 4:00 pm In person LSC 809 or on MS Teams

### **Communication guidelines**

Good communication between the Instructor and students is key to the success of students in a course. I will do my best to respond to your emails within 24 hours except over the weekend where it may be 48 hours. If you have a concern with the course, please reach out.

### **Class Description**

Coral reefs are iconic of highly diverse ecosystems and play a significant role in the economies of most countries where they exist. Cold-water corals are lesser known than their tropical relatives but also enhance the structural complexity and thus habitats within their deep ocean environments. Humans have changed coral reef environments and further changes are predicted to occur in the future. This class will introduce you to the biology of corals and the key characteristics that make up their environments. We will examine some of the major human impacts on these environments including warmer temperatures, acidification, pollution, and commercial activities. Finally, we will consider options to minimize further negative changes and ways to help sustain coral ecosystems into the future.

***Dalhousie University acknowledges that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People and pays respect to the Indigenous knowledges held by the Mi'kmaq People, and to the wisdom of their Elders past and present. The Mi'kmaq People signed Peace and Friendship Treaties with the Crown, and section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and Treaty rights. We are all Treaty people.***

***Dalhousie University also acknowledges the histories, contributions, and legacies of African Nova Scotians, who have been here for over 400 years.***

### **Course pre-requisites, exclusions**

Chem 1011/Chem 1012 and Biol 2060. Also restricted to students with six credit hours in Environmental Science or Biology or Marine Biology at or above the 3000 level. This course is an exclusion with ENVS/MARI 4005.

### **Key knowledge or skills expected of students coming into the course:**

- Student should know how to balance chemical equations
- Student should be familiar with reading scientific literature
- Students should be able to describe major drivers of and differences among marine biomes; how abiotic factors influence the distribution and abundance of organisms; and the effects of disturbance on species diversity.
- Students should be able to predict the impacts of human activities (e.g. climate change, nutrient loading) using knowledge of the major biogeochemical cycles on the planet (e.g. water, carbon and nitrogen).
- No previous knowledge of corals is required

### **Course learning outcomes:**

1. Describe the anatomy and identifying features of common tropical and cold-water corals
2. Describe taxonomic relationships among corals
3. Describe the abiotic environment of tropical and cold-water corals including nutrient cycling
4. Predict how changing environmental factors will affect corals (temperature, salinity, ocean acidification, sedimentation, excess nutrients, freshwater inputs)
5. Describe the reproductive strategies of corals and how these influence coral resilience
6. Describe how corals feed and grow
7. Describe different research methods used to study coral responses to environmental change.
8. Differentiate the functional roles of fish groups within coral reef ecosystems
9. Carry out literature-based research and communicate the current state of knowledge on a range of topics related to corals and environmental change
10. Describe localized impacts on coral reefs
11. Describe the causes, the biological process, and the ecological consequences of coral bleaching.
12. Describe how ocean acidification may or may not hinder coral growth
13. Explain the options for coral reef conservation and the challenges faced by Low-Income and High-Income countries when trying to implement these measures.
14. Describe the potential resilience of coral reefs to environmental change
15. Present and critique scientific findings from the literature to fellow students
16. Develop familiarity with the terminology used in the study of corals
17. Evaluate one potential anthropogenic intervention that could be used to protect coral reefs from climate change

## Textbook and Readings

1. The Biology of Coral Reefs, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Charles R.C. Sheppard et al., 2018 (required text). Hard copies are available at the bookstore. An e-book version can be purchased directly through Brightspace. It's the same textbook as previous years, so second-hand copies may be available. One copy is available on 2 hour reserve at the Killam Library.

Readings List – links and/or pdfs are found on Brightspace. Additional reading may be added.

1. Moberg, F. and C. Folke. (1999). Ecological goods and services of coral reef ecosystems. *Ecological Economics* 29: 215-233.
2. Sawall Y, Nicosia AM, McLaughlin K, Ito M (2022) Physiological responses and adjustments of corals to strong seasonal temperature variations (20–28°C). *J Exp Biol* 225: jeb244196.
3. Hoegh-Guldberg, O. (1999). Climate change, coral bleaching and the future of the worlds coral reefs. *Marine and Freshwater Research* 50, 839.66.
4. NOAA Coral Reef Watch. (nd). Introduction Tutorial to NOAA's Coral Reef Watch program. Accessed from: <https://coralreefwatch.noaa.gov/satellite/education/tutorial/welcome.php>
5. Hughes, T.P., J.T. Kerry, A.H. Baird, S.R. Connolly, A. Dietzel, C.M. Eakin, S.F. Heron, et al. (2018). Global warming transforms coral reef assemblages. *Nature* 556: 492-496
6. Bellwood, D.R., T.P. Hughes, C. Folke and M. Nystrom. (2004). Confronting the coral reef crisis. *Nature* 429: 827-833
7. Roberts, J.M., A. Wheeler and A. Freiwald. (2006). Reefs of the Deep: The Biology and Geology of Cold-Water. *Science* 312: 543-547.
8. Hoegh-Guldberg, O. P., J. Mumby, A. J. Hooten, R.S. Steneck, P. Greenfield, E. Gomez, C.D. Harvell et al. (2007). Coral reefs under rapid climate change and ocean acidification. *Science* 318: 1737-1742
9. Guinotte, J.M., J. Orr, S. Cairns, A. Freiwald, L. Morgan and R. Goerge. (2006). Will human-induced changes in seawater chemistry alter the distribution of deep-sea scleractinian corals? *Frontiers in Ecology and Environment* 4(3): 141–146
10. DFO (Fisheries and Oceans Canada). (2015). Coral and Sponge Conservation Strategy for Eastern Canada. Fisheries and Oceans Canada. 70 pp.
11. Mcleod, E., Anthony, K. R. N., Mumby, P. J., Maynard, J., Beeden, R., Graham, N. A. J., Heron, S. F., Hoegh-Guldberg, O., Jupiter, S., MacGowan, P., Mangubhai, S., Marshall, N., Marshall, P. A., McClanahan, T. R., Mcleod, K., Nyström, M., Obura, D., Parker, B., Possingham, H. P., ... Tamelander, J. (2019). The future of resilience-based management in coral reef ecosystems. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 233, 291–301. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2018.11.034>
12. Knowlton N, Grottoli AG, Kleypas J, Obura D, Corcoran E, de Goeij J, Felis T, Harding S, Mayfield A, Miller M, Osuka K, Peixoto R, Randall CJ, Voolstra CR, Wells S, Wild C, Ferse S. 2021. Rebuilding Coral Reefs: A Decadal Grand Challenge. *International Coral Reef Society and Future Earth Coasts*, 56 pp. <https://doi.org/10.53642/NRKY9386>

## Grading Scheme – ENVS/MARI 4003

<b>Assessment component</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
<b>Assignment 1</b> Coral morphology	10	September 26 <sup>th</sup> by midnight
<b>Assignment 2</b> Coral bleaching	10	November 1 <sup>st</sup> by midnight
<b>Midterm Exam (in class)</b>	15	Oct 3 <sup>rd</sup> in class
<b>Reading the Primary Literature</b> 3 article discussions, 2 written summaries	20	See class schedule for primary literature discussion dates – Summaries are due one week after the discussion
<b>Final group project - Interventions</b>	20	Last week of classes
<b>Course engagement</b>	5	Throughout the term
<b>Final Exam (Take home exam)</b>	20	December 8 <sup>th</sup> by midnight

### Course engagement and in-class participation

Attendance and engagement with the course material will be worth 5% of your grade. If you attend class but do not engage you will receive a 1/5, and your grade will increase the more you take advantage of opportunities to engage with the course content. The grading rubric focuses on the engagement that you demonstrate; however, your engagement may come in various ways.

Opportunities to engage with the course material come in many forms and may depend on your comfort level. It could include coming to class having done the readings and ready to answer or ask questions on the readings, contributing to small group discussions, offering feedback from your small group to the whole class, raising your hand to answer or ask questions in class, participating in whole class discussions, allowing other students to participate by not dominating discussions. If you are less comfortable speaking out in class, you could also write comments down and hand them in to the instructor after class or send an email to the instructor with a thought, question, or comment on the material. I encourage you to push yourselves outside of your comfort zone, whatever that zone may be for you. I also encourage you to practice your critical thinking skills, i.e., asking questions that arise from the readings and making connections

between course topics and with previous courses and the material in this course. Everyone is allowed two free missed classes without deductions. After that, your course engagement grade will be pro-rated based on your attendance in class.

### **Mid-term exam**

There will be a mid-term exam on the material covered up to and including Week 4. The mid-term is scheduled for **October 3<sup>rd</sup>**.

### **Assignments**

There will be 2 assignments. Assignment 1 is due before midnight on **September 26<sup>th</sup>** via Brightspace. Assignment 2 is due **November 1<sup>st</sup>** before midnight and should be submitted online via Brightspace. Assignment instructions are posted on Brightspace.

### **Primary Literature Article Discussions and Summaries**

There will be three in-class small-group discussions based on primary literature articles. You will be responsible for writing a summary for two of the articles and for leading one of the discussions in class. The summaries are due one week after the in-class of that particular article.

Your primary literature summaries are worth 20% of your grade. You will also receive a peer evaluation grade based on your performance leading the group discussion and contributing to the other student led discussions throughout the term. Your grade for the summaries will be adjusted based on the peer evaluation.

### **Intervention Project**

The Intervention Project will include working in teams to explore and share with the rest of the class an emerging technology or technique aimed at increasing coral resilience in the face of climate change. The form of the project is up to the group and could be a poster or a short film such as a whiteboard animation, or any other ideas can be put forward for consideration. All formats must be pre-approved by the instructor.

### **Final Take Home Exam**

The take-home exam will be a mix of reflective writing and content explanation. The questions will give you a chance to share with me what you've learned from the main themes of the course including information learned from the readings, lectures, and assignments. Having students think about their learning process has been shown to be beneficial to students' overall academic success. Therefore, you will reflect on where you started and what you have learned during the term, how you approached your learning, and the effectiveness of this process. It will be your chance to add your thoughts and analysis to what you have heard, read, and experienced throughout the course.

## Policy on late assignments

### **Missed or Late Academic Requirements due to Student Absence**

Dalhousie students are asked to take responsibility for their own missed deadlines (3 days or less) by contacting their instructor by email **prior to** the academic requirement deadline or scheduled time **and** by submitting a completed Student Declaration of Absence (SDA) to their instructor in case of missed or late academic requirements. The SDA form can be found on our Brightspace page under “Assignments”. Only **TWO** separate SDA forms may be submitted per term for this course. Once the SDA has been submitted, you will have three days to submit your assignment. If you miss the mid-term due to illness, you must follow the protocol as above and a make-up mid-term will be scheduled later.

If you think you are going to miss acting as a discussion leader due to illness, then you should first ask if anyone in the group is willing to switch days with you. If you are unable to switch, then please contact the instructor and we will transfer your discussion to the asynchronous discussion board.

Assignments submitted late without prior notification **and** the submission of an SDA, or without an approved extension will be deducted 10% per day. Extensions are granted with good reason and **must be requested at least one week prior** to the assignment’s original due date.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to the instructor.

### Course Policies related to Academic Integrity

Although you are allowed and in some cases encouraged to work together on course assignments, unless specifically stated in the assignment instructions, the final work that is submitted must be completed individually.

You will find that the use of AI generative tools will not be helpful to the assignments in this course because of the novel and specific nature of each assignment. You should note that the material generated by these AI programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. Further, you should be aware that use may also stifle your own independent thinking and creativity.

You may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. If you include material generated by an AI program, it should be cited like any other reference material (with due consideration for the quality of the reference, which may be poor). If your references are inaccurate or of poor quality, you will lose marks on the assignment.

Any plagiarism or other form of cheating will be dealt with severely under relevant Dalhousie University policies.

### **The Meaning of Grades**

Evaluation will be completed and expressed in raw marks throughout the course. Letter grades will be assigned only to the final distribution of marks for the course.

A+ (90-100)	B+ (77-79)	C+ (65-69)	D (50-54)
A (85-89)	B (73-76)	C (60-64)	F (<50)
A- (80-84)	B- (70-72)	C- (55-59)	

## Class schedule

Week	Topic	Lecture 1	Lecture 2	Readings
Week 1 Sept 5-8	Introduction and ecosystem services What's a coral?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the course</li> <li>• Value of coral reefs</li> <li>• Ecosystem goods and services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corals</li> <li>• Reefs</li> <li>• Coral taxonomy &amp; morphology</li> <li>• Macroalgae</li> <li>• Course expectations</li> </ul>	Chapters 1 & 2  Moberg and Folke (1999)
Week 2 Sept 11-15	Tropical corals and their abiotic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coral ID Lab Assignment 1 (due September 26<sup>th</sup>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salinity</li> <li>• Temperature</li> <li>• Light</li> <li>• Nutrients</li> </ul>	Chapter 3
Week 3 Sept 18-22	Coral growth & feeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coral calcification</li> <li>• Growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeding and symbiosis</li> </ul>	Chapter 4
Week 4 Sept 25-29	Reproduction and recruitment  <b><u>Assignment 1 due Sept 26</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reproduction</li> <li>• Recruitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review for the midterm</li> <li>• Whole class discussion on peer-reviewed literature*</li> </ul>	Chapter 4  Sawall et al. 2022*
Week 5 October 2-6	Midterm and coral bleaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Midterm in class</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to coral bleaching</li> <li>• Predicting bleaching events using remotely sensed data</li> <li>• Hotspots and DHWs</li> </ul>	Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 1999  NOAA Coral Reef Watch Introduction  Hughes et al. 2018
Week 6 Oct 9-13	Coral bleaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recording past bleaching events</li> <li>• Introduction to Assignment 2</li> </ul> <p><i>First student-led discussion of primary literature articles</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coral reef fish</li> </ul> <p><b>Guest Lecture Dr. Margie Cooper</b></p>	Chapter 6
Week 7 October 16-20	Coral reefs in the modern world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local stressors &amp; fisheries</li> </ul> <p><i>Second student led discussion of primary literature articles</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coral reef resilience and management</li> </ul>	Chapters 7, 8, 9  Bellwood et al. 2004



Week 8 Oct 23-27	Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coral reef resilience and management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the Intervention Projects</li> <li>• Time to work on projects</li> </ul>	Chapter 10 McLeod et al. 2020 Knowlton et al. 2021
Week 9 Oct 30-Nov 3	Cold-water corals  <b><u>Assignment 2 due Nov 1</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to cold-water corals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corals of Atlantic Canada</li> </ul> <i>Third student led discussion of primary literature articles</i>	Roberts et al. 2006
Week 10 Nov 13-17	Ocean acidification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tropical corals versus cold-water corals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cold-water corals and ocean acidification</li> </ul>	Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2007  Guinotte et al. 2006
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Study Break</b>			
Week 12 Nov 20-24	Cold-water coral conservation and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cold water coral conservation and management</li> </ul>	Review for take-home exam	Coral & sponge conservation strategy for Eastern Canada 2015
Week 13 Nov 27-Dec 1	<b>Final Project Presentations</b>	Final Projects	Final Projects	

# University Policies and Statements

## Recognition of Mi'kmaq Territory

Dalhousie University would like to acknowledge that the University is on Traditional Mi'kmaq Territory. The Elders in Residence program provides students with access to First Nations elders for guidance, counsel, and support. Visit or e-mail the Indigenous Student Centre at 1321 Edward St or [elders@dal.ca](mailto:elders@dal.ca). Additional information regarding the Indigenous Student Centre can be found at:

[https://www.dal.ca/campus\\_life/communities/indigenous.html](https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/communities/indigenous.html)

## Internationalization

At Dalhousie, 'thinking and acting globally' enhances the quality and impact of education, supporting learning that is "interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, global in reach, and orientated toward solving problems that extend across national borders." Additional internationalization information can be found at:

<https://www.dal.ca/about-dal/internationalization.html>

## Academic Integrity

At Dalhousie University, we are guided in all our work by the values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility, and respect. As a student, you are required to demonstrate these values in all the work you do. The University provides policies and procedures that every member of the university community is required to follow to ensure academic integrity. Additional academic integrity information can be found at:

[https://www.dal.ca/dept/university\\_secretariat/academic-integrity.html](https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/academic-integrity.html)

## Accessibility

The Student Accessibility Centre is Dalhousie's centre of expertise for matters related to student accessibility and accommodation. If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course (online or in-person) that result in barriers to your inclusion, please contact the Student Accessibility Centre ([https://www.dal.ca/campus\\_life/academic-support/accessibility.html](https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/accessibility.html)) for all courses offered by Dalhousie with

the exception of Truro. For courses offered by the Faculty of Agriculture, please contact the Student Success Centre in Truro (<https://www.dal.ca/about-dal/agricultural-campus/student-success-centre.html>)

### **Conduct in the Classroom – Culture of Respect**

Substantial and constructive dialogue on challenging issues is an important part of academic inquiry and exchange. It requires willingness to listen and tolerance of opposing points of view. Consideration of individual differences and alternative viewpoints is required of all class members, towards each other, towards instructors, and towards guest speakers. While expressions of differing perspectives are welcome and encouraged, the words and language used should remain within acceptable bounds of civility and respect.

### **Diversity and Inclusion – Culture of Respect**

Every person at Dalhousie has a right to be respected and safe. We believe inclusiveness is fundamental to education. We stand for equality. Dalhousie is strengthened in our diversity. We are a respectful and inclusive community. We are committed to being a place where everyone feels welcome and supported, which is why our Strategic Direction prioritizes fostering a culture of diversity and inclusiveness (Strategic Priority 5.2). Additional diversity and inclusion information can be found at: <http://www.dal.ca/cultureofrespect.html>

### **Student Code of Conduct**

Everyone at Dalhousie is expected to treat others with dignity and respect. The Code of Student Conduct allows Dalhousie to take disciplinary action if students don't follow this community expectation. When appropriate, violations of the code can be resolved in a reasonable and informal manner - perhaps through a restorative justice process. If an informal resolution can't be reached, or would be inappropriate, procedures exist for formal dispute resolution. The full Code of Student Conduct can be found at: [https://www.dal.ca/dept/university\\_secretariat/policies/student-life/code-of-student-conduct.html](https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/student-life/code-of-student-conduct.html)

### **Fair Dealing Policy**

The Dalhousie University Fair Dealing Policy provides guidance for the limited use of copyright protected material without the risk of infringement and without having to seek the permission of copyright owners. It is intended to provide a balance between the rights of creators and the rights of users at Dalhousie. Additional information regarding the Fair Dealing Policy can be found at:

[https://www.dal.ca/dept/university\\_secretariat/policies/academic/fair-dealing-policy-.html](https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/academic/fair-dealing-policy-.html)

### **Originality Checking Software**

The course instructor may use Dalhousie's approved originality checking software and Google to check the originality of any work submitted for credit, in accordance with the Student Submission of Assignments and Use of Originality Checking Software Policy. Students are free, without penalty of grade, to choose an alternative method of attesting to the authenticity of their work and must inform the instructor no later than the last day to add/drop classes of their intent to choose an alternate method. Additional information regarding Originality Checking Software can be found at: [https://www.dal.ca/dept/university\\_secretariat/policies/academic/student-submission-of-assignments-and-use-of-originality-checking-software-policy-.html](https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/academic/student-submission-of-assignments-and-use-of-originality-checking-software-policy-.html)

### **Student Use of Course Materials**

Course materials are designed for use as part of this course at Dalhousie University and are the property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third party copyrighted materials (such as books, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian Copyright law. Copying this course material for distribution (e.g. uploading to a commercial third-party website) may lead to a violation of Copyright law.