ESRM 450

Discussions & Writing Assignment
Questions about the discussions

• Will the discussion papers be used for test material?
  – Yes, but only in a general sense (i.e., you should know the take-home messages and be able to reference the papers in your short essay answers)

• How will participation be graded?
  – Bring one or two questions to the discussion on a signed note card and turn it in at end of your session
Tips for discussions

• Read the paper(s) more than once
  – Do first read a few days in advance, then revisit paper shortly before the discussion

• Don’t have to fully comprehend statistical analysis
  – Focus on big picture: main findings and conservation implications
  – By all means note methodological/statistical issues if you spot them
Expectations for formal reviews

• Length
  – 8-10 pages, double spaced, 12-point font
  – Extra page or 2 for references (*Ecology* journal format; download an article at http://www.esajournals.org/loi/ecol)

• Critical thinking is key
  – I want to know what you think of the paper
  – Back your arguments up with research (literature review)
Formal reviews: components

• (1) Identify and describe the problem
  – What is the major issue or question being addressed?
  – What are some of the other important studies to have addressed the issue, if any?
  – What have we learned so far about the issue?

• (2) Discuss the paper’s strengths and weaknesses and place it into context
  – Is the paper novel and important?
  – How does it compare to other papers on the topic?
  – Is it important for conservation? How?
  – Would you recommend it for publication?
Formal reviews: components

• (3) Recommend ways to improve the study
  – What would you have done differently, and why?

• (4) Offer ideas for future research
  – Ideas should build on results, or seek to correct them
  – What are the next steps? Be specific.
  – Are there any ways that we can apply the results to conservation? Again, be specific.
Other Tips

• Hourglass
  – General to specific to general

• Directed literature search
  – Bring in examples that are relevant
  – Do not perform an exhaustive literature review

• Don’t maintain suspense
  – Make it clear early on how you feel about the paper, and how your review will be structured (roadmap)

• After finishing your paper
  – Proofread carefully and remove wordy or redundant sentences (most first drafts can easily be reduced by 25%)
Timeline

• Rough drafts due March 6 at end of the day (5 pm)
  – Not too rough, or we won’t be able to give you good feedback
  – Please submit electronically (Word file, not PDF)

• Comments returned by March 11
  – Please incorporate

• Final papers due March 18 by 5 pm
  – Please submit electronically (Word file or PDF)