

## **Review Paper Assignment**

EBIO 4140 – Plant Ecology – Fall 2005

**The Assignment.** Write an 8-10 page, double spaced (1" margins) paper reviewing research in a topic of your choice. The topic should be broad enough that sufficient literature is available, but not so broad as to lack substance. Please avoid descriptive "natural history" topics. I encourage you to focus on particular systems and questions of interest to you, yet keep in mind that the paper should include questions or hypotheses of a scientific nature directly related to plant ecology. You can, for example, review the literature on both sides of a current controversy in the science and explore if there's a middle ground, or seek to show what we actually do know (well supported) and don't really know (conjectures, hypotheses) about a certain advanced topic.

Plant ecology comes in a great variety of flavors – Functional ecology (autoecology), population ecology, community ecology (synecology), ecosystem ecology (biogeochemistry), and plant biogeography, for example. Take advantage of the course's textbook to get ideas – flip through chapters to see if some topic area catches your interest. Check if references at the end of the chapter pertain to this topic, particularly those under "Contemporary Research."

Before starting your paper you should discuss your topic with me and have gotten the go-ahead. You can do this via [email](#), talking to me during class breaks, or coming in during office hours. If you're having a lot of trouble let me know, and I'll be happy to provide some potential research topics.

**Sources.** Sources of information should include a mix of primary literature (papers reporting on original research) and review papers (synthesis papers of several research reports). All of your sources should be peer-reviewed. Keep in mind that the assignment is to write what amounts to a review article. Web resources may be useful for locating appropriate studies, but should not be used as references in your paper. Use the resources listed under "find articles and more" on the Chinook page of the CU Library system: <http://libraries.colorado.edu/>. In particular I recommend the "Web of Science" as a way to find appropriate literature. Do not quote your sources directly. Do all of your own writing, but cite sources of information appropriately.

**Format.** The format of the paper should include an introductory section, that states the topic of your paper and establishes its importance, as well as describing the major questions and hypotheses related to the topic of your paper. A section reviewing the published literature on the topic should follow, organized in a logical way that presents a cohesive story. Provide evidence for different views, or support statements you make, citing the appropriate literature. Use headers to help you organize your paper and direct the reader to the general subjects you are covering. The paper should conclude with a summary and synthesis of the information that has been presented in your paper.

Literature citations should follow; this section will not be counted in assessing the length of the paper (8-10 pages, double spaced, with 1" margins, as noted above). You may include figures and tables in your paper, but here too won't be included in assessing the length of the paper, and should include appropriate citations for their origin. Citations in the text and your list of references should follow a regular journal style. I recommend the style used by the journal *Ecology*: [http://www.esapubs.org/esapubs/authors\\_main.htm](http://www.esapubs.org/esapubs/authors_main.htm).

Note that EBIO has a **Writing Lab** to assist students in writing papers and reports. The Writing Lab is located in Ketchum room 308 – with a sign-up sheet on the door. Students can sign up for 30 minute or 1 hour sessions. David Daitch is the Writing Lab TA, he can be contacted by email at [daitch@colorado.edu](mailto:daitch@colorado.edu).

**Deadlines.** You can turn in a rough draft for suggestions and corrections; these are due November 17<sup>th</sup>. The final paper is due the last day of class, December 8<sup>th</sup>. Turning papers in earlier will be appreciated. Please turn in your paper as an electronic copy, i.e., as an [email](#) attachment. Please remember the [CU Honor Code](#); note that papers will be checked for plagiarism using resources of CU Information Technology Services.