

# Pastoralist Nomads and Wildlife Conservation

AFS/ANTH/BIOL 248  
St. Lawrence University  
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## Instructor Information:

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## General Course Information:

The Maasai are a traditionally nomadic pastoralist people who have lived in East Africa together with wildlife for hundreds of years. Human development has been encroaching on wildlife habitat, resulting in the restriction of wildlife to smaller and more isolated areas, some of which lie inside fenced parks and reserves. In some areas of East Africa, Maasai have shifted from traditional livestock grazing to agriculture, which leads to increased conflict with wildlife. On this course we will investigate the relationship between wildlife conservation and the Maasai people, through study at the Maasai Mara National Reserve, one of the most visited game parks in Africa and partially managed by the Maasai, and through interaction with the Maasai community at the Shompole Group Ranch, a communally owned area in southern Kenya where the local community has undertaken a community-based conservation and ecotourism project. We will be off the beaten path, experiencing Kenya in a unique and remarkable way.

## Course Logistics:

This course takes place entirely in Kenya but includes orientation sessions in Canton prior to departure and pre-trip homework assignments to help prepare you to maximize your experience while in Kenya. Students must apply for admission to the course.

## Course Orientation:

There will be 3 required course orientation sessions prior to departure for Kenya. At the first of these sessions, you will purchase your coursepack (the set of readings required for the course). We will also pass out a gear list and other items you need in order to prepare for the trip.

## Required Readings:

Most of the readings for this course will be available in a course pack which you will pick up at the first course orientation session. Some additional readings will be provided in country. All of the readings are required.

In addition to the coursepack, each student should obtain, prior to leaving for Kenya, the following items, to be brought with you to Kenya:

- Spiral bound notebook to serve as your Academic Journal
- Rite-In-The-Rain field notebook to serve as your notebook for field exercises
- Spiral bound notebook in which to make e.g. lecture, discussion notes (NOT the same books as your Academic Journal)

- Pair of binoculars (can be purchased or borrowed; must be 7 or 8 X NOT higher or lower).

You may also wish to bring a notebook of some kind to serve as a personal journal.

**Course Structure, Assignments and Grading:**

This course will be organized around direct experiences, readings, lectures, discussions, field exercises, and critical reflections in the form of both a journal assignment and a synthetic paper. We will be on the road for almost the entire trip and thus you will need to adopt new work habits – there will be down times scheduled during which you will need to do assigned work. In addition, because we will be traveling together in a small group, a portion of your grade will be based on your attitude while abroad. We expect you to do your share to pitch in and keep things running smoothly. Celia and Sinnary, as well as a professional staff and guest presenters in Kenya, will be your guides, but we are collectively responsible for the success of the trip.

Your grade in this course will be based on the following components. Note that these are subject to change as this will be a dynamic trip and we will be trying to make the most of opportunities that present themselves to us.

Course component	Approximate % of final grade
Pre-trip assignments	10%
Journal assignments (done in Kenya)	3@10% each, 30% total
Field exercises (done in Kenya – see below)	30%
Course participation (see note below)	10%
Final synthesis paper	20%

Course Participation: We will evaluate this from two perspectives. One perspective will be your academic participation, by which we mean the degree to which you prepare for discussions by thoroughly doing the reading assignments, engage in group discussions, ask questions during guest presentations, focus and engage during lectures, etc. The other perspective will be your social participation, by which we mean the degree to which you work to make this trip a success for everyone. Lending a hand to set up equipment, maintaining a cheerful attitude after hours of driving hot, dusty roads, being quiet in your tent when others are trying to sleep, and maintaining an open, interested and flexible attitude about the trip are examples of positive social contributions we will be looking for.

Field Exercises: We will conduct a variety of field exercises over the time-span of this course. These will include learning to keep field notes, to identify wildlife of a variety of species, learning and implementing scientifically rigorous methods for counting game, learning to identify a variety of plants that are useful to wildlife and livestock (including learning the local names for the plants), and learning to write a scientific report. You will be responsible for maintaining data sheets, entering data into the computer, and analyzing the data at various points during the semester. In Shompole you will take a field exam to test your animal identification skills.

Your final paper will be due, via e-mail, to Celia and Sinnary (email addresses above), by 5 pm on 31<sup>st</sup> May. This is a firm deadline and extensions will not be granted to due additional travel plans or the fact that you may be staying on for an additional course while in Kenya. You will be given the specific assignment when you are in Kenya, but note that the final product should be typed, double-spaced, 12-pt, Time New Roman font. Grades will be assigned after the course is completed, once Celia and Sinnary have a chance to read all of your work.

### Approximate Itinerary

NOTE: Details of the itinerary may be subject to change depending on local conditions including weather and the availability of our community partners. However this is the broad outline based on our successful field courses in 2008 and 2010.

Day 0 (May 15): TRAVEL

Meet at JFK, depart together for London pm.

Day 1 (May 16): TRAVEL

Depart for Nairobi from London

Arrive Nairobi pm, night at SLU campus in Karen

Day 2 (May 17): To Narok

Visit to a Maasai educational institution

Night in Narok at a hotel

Day 3 (May 18): To Maasai Mara – move into camp on Group Ranch

Afternoon Game Drive

Evening discussion of conservation issues

Day 4 (May 19): Maasai Mara – in camp on Group Ranch

Morning Game Drive with game counting exercise

Afternoon lecture/discussion

Day 5 (May 20): Maasai Mara – in camp on Group Ranch

Morning Game Drive with game counting exercise

Afternoon visit to Maasai village; overnight in the village

Day 6 (May 21): Maasai Mara – in camp on Group Ranch

Morning in Maasai village; discussion of social and cultural issues with the community

Mid day return to camp

Evening wrap up discussions of conservation in this area and the participation of the Maasai in the costs and benefits of conservation

Day 7 (May 22): Return to Nairobi

Overnight at SLU campus in Karen

Day 8 (May 23): To Shompole Group Ranch

Via Magadi town, Lake Magadi (Bird Rock and Hot Springs) and Oloika trading center  
Arrive in Shompole mid afternoon – into camp

Day 9 (May 24): At Shompole Group Ranch

Morning meeting with community members  
Evening game drive

Day 10 (May 25): At Shompole Group Ranch

Morning Game Drive with Game Counting exercise  
Afternoon visit to Ol Kiramatian Group Ranch, discussion of activities there

Day 11 (May 26): At Shompole Group Ranch

Morning exam on animal identification  
Afternoon to Maasai host families for one night homestay, participation in herding and household activities

Day 12 (May 27): At Shompole Group Ranch

Morning return from homestays  
Afternoon in camp  
Evening wrap up discussions

Day 13 (May 28): Return to Nairobi – at SLU campus in Karen

Work on final papers

Day 14 (May 29): In Nairobi – at SLU campus in Karen

Morning visit to Red Rose School  
Lunch on campus  
Rest of day to work on final papers

Day 15 (May 30): In Nairobi – at SLU campus in Karen

Morning visit to elephant orphanage  
Lunch on campus  
Rest of day to work on final papers

Day 16 (May 31): In Nairobi – at SLU campus in Karen

Morning visit to Giraffe Center  
Lunch on campus  
Rest of day to work on final papers – due by email at 5 pm on May 31<sup>st</sup>! NO extensions!  
Fly from Nairobi (those not staying on for a second course)