



Oregon State University Extension Master Naturalist Online Course Syllabus

Below is a complete overview of the Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Master Naturalist Online Course, including course expectations and where to locate content. Please take the time to read this syllabus in its entirety, as it will likely answer most of your immediate questions. ***To see a schedule for the course, including when each new topic will be available, when each assignment is due, and to plan for the pre-scheduled live webinar question and answer sessions, scroll to the bottom of this page.***

General Course Description

In this course, you will learn science-based information about Oregon's natural history and sustainable natural resources management. For those of you wanting to become a full OSU Extension Master Naturalist, this online course is your first step. It is designed to provide you a basic overview, leaving room for more in-depth and specific information in subsequent Master Naturalist Ecoregion courses taught in-person, in the field, and at locations around Oregon, as well as through your own learning pursuits. Further details about this are covered later in this syllabus and in the course Introduction (Week 1).

This course is designed for anyone who is interested in learning more about what makes Oregon ecologically distinct and how its landscapes are managed. A basic understanding of some nature-related concepts is helpful, but definitely not required. The knowledge you learn here may one day support your volunteer activities as an OSU Extension Master Naturalist.

This course is divided into seven topics, plus an Introduction to the OSU Extension Master Naturalist Program, spread over eight consecutive weeks. The seven topics will examine ecoregions (geographically and ecologically distinct regions of Oregon), geology and earth processes, watersheds, ecological and wildlife management principles, forests, rangelands, and climate change. An additional four weeks will be available at the end of the first eight weeks for taking the final exam and time to catch up if you happen to fall behind.

On average, you should expect to spend three to six hours per week reading the materials for each course topic, completing assignments, posting answers to the course website, completing weekly quizzes, and reading and responding to discussion posts of your fellow classmates. Some topics will require less time while others will require more. None of the topics are very technical, as this is meant to be an introduction to each topic.

IMPORTANT: The amount of time you put into this course is entirely up to you. The more you dig into the materials presented to you, the more time it will take, but hopefully more gratifying, too. Please manage your time accordingly to keep up with the course schedule as closely as possible. Past participants have found it difficult to catch up once they have fallen behind too far.

The OSU Extension Master Naturalist Online Course is hosted in OSU's Canvas™ online learning website. **You will have full access to the course when the course starts. In the coming days, you will receive an email from OSU's WorkSpace containing log-in and access instructions for Canvas.** This email next Monday will have instructions on accessing the course through the same system you used to register for the course, a system called Ideal-Logic. Once you access the course, you will continue to have access to the content beyond the course schedule. Please note: The *Final Exam* will only be available for a limited time.



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Instructor

Jason O'Brien, M.S. (degrees in Wildlife Ecology and Natural Resources Interpretation - 1996, 2000)

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E-mail: jason.OBrien@oregonstate.edu **(best method to reach me)**

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Please note: For general questions, the best way to contact your instructor is via email. For topic-related questions, posting them in the discussion forums, located in Canvas, is best.

Technical Difficulties

- For Canvas support, start by clicking the Help button, located in the left sidebar of the course, for 24/7 support via instant chat or phone. You can also search in the [Canvas Student Guide](#).
- Because our streamlined registration method now relies on your own choice of email or social media login, you may manage/update or recover your password through the provider you choose (ex: Google, Yahoo!, Facebook).
- For best results, it is recommended to access Canvas using a supported and updated web browser. To see the list of supported browsers, or get information on how to update your browser, view [Canvas Guide: Which browsers does Canvas support?](#)
- For any other technical questions, contact OSU WorkSpace by emailing workspace@oregonstate.edu or calling 541-737-4197 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. PT Monday through Friday.
- **IMPORTANT:** You will occasionally receive course announcements via email. The email will say you can click on a link to view the announcement in the course webpage. However, all links will redirect you to Canvas in a way that will be inaccessible to you. These links are intended for matriculated OSU students with an authenticated OSU login. Learners taking Extension or WorkSpace courses must always access their Canvas course via **Ideal-Logic (<https://apps.ideal-logic.com/osupace>)**

Course Details

Method of Instruction: All content for this course is found in Canvas and is accessible through [Ideal-Logic](#), which requires you to log in using a username and password, which is explained in an email from OSU WorkSpace.

Course topic readings and all materials are available entirely online, via an interactive website, assignments, supplemental materials, and discussion forums. This content is organized and accessible via a main content menu. The course is designed to be flexible to different learning styles: from individuals who are more self-directed to those who require more interaction with fellow classmates and the instructor. As the instructor, I am here to monitor group interaction through discussions, answer questions, and elaborate upon course content each week. I am not in charge of leading your discussions within the course.

Goals/Outcomes: The **goal** of this online course is to introduce you to basic natural history, ecology, and sustainable natural resources management concepts and practices in Oregon based upon the most current science available. The point isn't to make you an expert in any one subject, but to provide a



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solid foundation upon which to build continual learning. Each topic contains **learning outcomes** which are meant to set clear expectations for you and help focus your learning. Ultimately, this course is designed to equip you with information and various scientific and management perspectives to be better informed about decisions related to Oregon's landscapes and how we as humans interact with them. We hope it also enhances your appreciation of the natural beauty that abounds throughout Oregon. For anyone interested in becoming a full OSU Extension Master Naturalist and volunteer, we hope this course becomes a valuable resource and reference, and a springboard into the more in-depth Ecoregion courses and your personal life-long learning.

Why Management? We sometimes get a question about why a naturalist course would cover topics on land management. While we understand that the natural world is full of amazing interrelationships and species, no one course could do such things justice – personal passions and life-long learning fuel exploration in any number of specific topics. This course is meant to dip into those interactions while placing them in a contemporary context of the way our land exists today due to the history of natural resources use, abuse, alteration, and ongoing change that relates to both human and non-human factors. Context of these things, we feel, is important and essential to being a well-rounded OSU Extension Master Naturalist.

Modules: The main content (reading material) for this course is found in the *Modules* section within Canvas. You access the *Modules* section by clicking on its link in the left sidebar (main course menu) of the course website. The *Modules* section contains each topic covered in the course broken down by week. Within each topic are the learning outcomes, *Readings*, *Discussions*, *Assignments*, and *Quizzes*. There is a predictable hierarchy and organization in *Modules* week to week, so you shouldn't get lost. If you do, please ask and I'll help you get acquainted to the course environment. And, don't be afraid to ask your fellow classmates by posting a question in Does Anyone Have an Answer to This Question? discussion forum (*Discussions* will be explained later).

Course Readings and Resources: The main reading material for this course is found within the weekly *Modules* in a section called *Readings*. *Readings* are in the form of embedded presentations organized within topics. The *Readings* are divided into Sections and Pages. Each week, a new *Module* will become available to you. For the names given to each of these *Module Readings*, see the Topic column in the schedule located at the end of this syllabus.

As you read embedded presentations in a weekly *Module*, you will see highlighted words, which are links - to diagrams, photos, graphs, videos, or websites - to provide more detail on the subject. These are an integral part of the content, so please don't skip these. At the end of each embedded presentation, additional materials are found in *Digging Deeper*, located on the last page. These materials give you further content on the subjects. It is my hope that you do not stop at the main *Readings*, but choose to "dig deeper" into the topics for a fuller look into the topics. A *Resources* section exists within each *Module*. These are documents, websites, videos, etc., available for you to explore on your own if you wish.

Printed Version: Some past participants have indicated they prefer to read the content offline, as a printed hard copy or downloaded file. You will find a linked PDF above each embedded presentation. Please note, however, that printed copies do not contain the integrated dynamic links to images, videos, websites, and other content mentioned earlier. The printable version will retain the highlighted formatting where a link exists, but these are not likely to work. If you choose to print or download, please take time to review the topic and the additional interactive content online.



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Topic Availability: Throughout the course, each weekly *Module* will be automatically released to you according to the schedule listed in the table below. Once new topics are made available to you, all associated content will remain open and available for the duration of the course. For example, the topic on Ecoregions will be available once the course starts and continuing as long as you wish to gain access to the course in the future. No content will be made available in advance of its scheduled release without extenuating circumstances, arranged on a case-by-case basis with the instructor.

Assignments: Each topic has an *Assignment*. The *Assignment* is designed for you to explore the topics in a more in-depth and creative way. Some *Assignments* will ask you to leave the computer and go outside, explore, and take notes, or contact a natural resources professional, while others will ask you to apply the course content and your knowledge to a specific scenario. Each *Assignment* can be done within a short drive of your house or less.

IMPORTANT: *Assignments* are to be posted to the corresponding *Discussion* (see next section for details), located in each of the weekly *Modules*. **Some students inevitably post their *Assignments* in the *Discussion* for another topic, not the one associated with the associated topic. If you have any problems finding a particular weekly *Discussion*, please contact me. It is very likely that your *Assignment* will go unseen and not responded to if it appears in the wrong week.**

Discussion Forums: *This is where you will post your Assignments.* Canvas has a place to initiate dialog about course content, located in the *Discussions* section of the course. The purpose of this, beyond where you put your *Assignments*, is to encourage active and lively discussion about the topics presented in this course. Think of *Discussions* as taking the place of the in-person classroom discussion, where you traditionally interact with the instructor, make a comment, converse with your fellow classmates, or further elaborate on the topic being taught. Treat *Discussions* as your way to engage your fellow participants, share insights and experiences related to the course topics, pose questions to the class at large, and post your *Assignment*.

Groups: *Discussions* will be organized by groups. At the beginning of the course, you will be assigned a group by me, the instructor. Groups will be divided equally, but every effort will be made to sort you by geographical location. You will be notified of which group you are in during the first week of class. Groups are designed to facilitate your participation in *Discussions*. For each *Discussion*, you will post your own *Assignment*, and then within your group you will interact with each other to discuss the topics and ideas each of you presented. Some groups have found that having a Group Leader helps keep a group engaged and accountable. If your Group wishes to organize a leader each week, you are welcome to do so on your own. Depending upon where each of you live, it may be possible for your group to get together in-person throughout the course. Such opportunities are entirely optional, and will be left to your Group to plan.

How much involvement in Discussions is recommended/required: I ask that each week you post your own *Assignment*, read and respond to the posts of each of the members of your group, plus, read and/or respond to at least one post from someone in another group – pick new people each week. *Discussions* can be a very active place to share your *Assignments*, carry on conversations among fellow classmates, and discuss topics. The number of posts can add up fast, but should be manageable within your smaller group. It would be time consuming to read all the posts from other Groups, but it is enriching to see what others in the course have contributed.



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Instructor role within Discussions: The purpose of this course is to engage each other during the learning process. As your instructor, I will endeavor to read as many of your posts as possible, but it is not my job to respond to your posts – that’s why the course has Groups. I may occasionally chime in, but due to other Master Naturalist program duties, my interaction is necessarily limited. However, once a week, I will send out to everyone in a single email my own response about the week’s topic and *Assignment*. The purpose of this is to encapsulate key concepts and remain engaged in the learning process myself.

IMPORTANT: I have discovered that the amount of interaction in *Discussions* decreases weekly, and that only a percentage of the entire class consistently participates throughout the entirety of the course. It is understandable that for some of you, *Discussions* won’t be an ideal resource, or fit within your personal learning style. For others, time may be a constraint. And some of you may find that you run into difficulties using new technology and you’ll become frustrated with it, which may cause you to give up. **I completely understand this, but don’t give up without first seeking help from myself or OSU WorkSpace.** I would encourage you to give *Discussions* a chance and really try to stay engaged in it throughout the entire course. It will be the job of your collective Group to encourage continued participation, look after each other, and provide support and encouragement. The course will be better for it and everyone, including you, will benefit!

Quizzes/Final Exam: Quizzes are available for each topic to give you a way to assess what you’ve learned. The types of questions include multiple choice, multiple answer, and true/false. Please take advantage of these Quizzes after completing each weekly *Module Reading*. You may retake Quizzes as many times as you would like. Think of the quizzes as self-assessments and practice for the *Final Exam*.

A *Final Exam* will be given at the end of the course. In order to earn your Certificate of Completion, **and thus qualify you to become an OSU Extension Master Naturalist**, you must answer correctly at least 70% of the questions. The goal of this *Final Exam* is not to test how well you can remember and regurgitate items presented during the course, but to instead test how well you can carefully consider a question and utilize proper resource materials to formulate an answer. Thus, you are allowed and encouraged to use all course materials, including the embedded presentations and all other course resources to help you complete the *Final Exam*. **For the *Final Exam*, you may only take it once, so please consider answers carefully.**

IMPORTANT: The *Final Exam* will be released to you during the Course Wrap-up period, and will be available until the end of the course.

No extension past this date will be given for the *Final Exam* without extenuating circumstances. Arrangements with me must be made, otherwise, I will assume you have decided not to complete the course.

Missed Modules: Because course *Modules* will remain open during and after the week in which they are scheduled, you will be able to make up any coursework that you might have missed. Simply work through the missed *Module* at a steady pace. Once you fall behind, however, it may be difficult to catch up – so please plan accordingly if you know you’ll miss a week or more. **If you have planned absences, please contact me in advance of missing one or more weeks so that I can help you access course content in advance of your absence if needed. You may also wish to notify your Group for those weeks so they know to expect your absence from the *Discussions*.**



Final Important Items

The contents of this syllabus, the course, and course schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, or if the instructor deems it necessary. This is a very rare occurrence, however.

Policy on Class Participation: It is up to you to actively participate in this course via the completion of *Readings, Assignments, Discussions, Quizzes, and Final Exam*. The *Assignments* and course *Discussions* are **highly recommended**, but you will not be graded on your performance of these tasks. However, you are likely to acquire and retain more knowledge, and to enjoy your online learning experience more, if you are actively engaged in the course. Thus, you are strongly encouraged to complete all *Readings*, to challenge yourself with the *Assignments*, and to post or respond to posts in the *Discussions* forums on a weekly basis. Because this is an online experience, new to many of you, the more engaged you make it, the more social and enjoyable it becomes for everyone, including your instructor.

Missing Class/Falling Behind: While there are no set meeting times when it comes to accessing the course content online, and you are free to set your own schedule (with the exception of the webinar sessions), I recommend that you keep up with the weekly schedule as much as possible.

IMPORTANT: If, however, you run into a problem that keeps you from participating, please let me know immediately. I have no way of knowing if your inactivity is because you are unable to participate due to something serious, schedule related, or if you just don't like the course and decided not to continue. If it's something of a serious nature, there are ways in which we can accommodate your participation at a different pace or in another course at a later date. **Please email me if problems occur that prevent your continued participation, and I will offer suggestions and make a judgment based upon your situation.**

Conduct in this Online Classroom & Webinar Sessions: In an academic community, students and instructors each have responsibility to maintain an appropriate learning environment, whether online or in the classroom. Students and instructors have the responsibility to treat each other with understanding, dignity, and respect. Students and instructors are expected to conduct themselves in the course (e.g., in *Discussions*, email postings, within Groups) in compliance with the OSU's regulations regarding civility and the [Student Conduct Code](#). Each of us will be expected to treat all others with the same respect as we would want afforded ourselves. Disrespectful behavior to others (such as harassing behavior, personal insults, inappropriate language) or disruptive behaviors in the course (such as persistent and unreasonable demands for time and attention both in and out of the Canvas course) is unacceptable and can result in dismissal from this course. Thank you very much for your cooperation!

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Past Sponsors: The OSU Extension Master Naturalist Program would not have happened without the generosity of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources Extension, Extension 4-H Youth Development Programs, Oregon Sea Grant Extension, as well as the Oregon Department of Forestry and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (Oregon State Parks). Each of these entities provided grant funding in the first years of the Program. If you know someone representing these groups, tell them thank you!



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OSU Extension Master Naturalist - Sample Online Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Topic	Assignment (all assignments are to be posted to Discussions)	Due Date:
Week 1	January 22 – January 27	Welcome and Introduction; Orientation to Canvas	Introduce yourself on the Discussion Board	11:59pm Pacific Time (PT), January 28
Week 2	January 28 – February 3	Oregon Ecoregions	Review and describe an Oregon Conservation Strategy Species and Habitat	11:59pm PT, February 4
Webinar	January 29: Live Question & Answer Webinar - Log in details are provided on the Canvas course website.			11:00am-12:00pm
Webinar	January 29: Live Question & Answer Webinar - Log in details are provided on the Canvas course website.			7:00pm-8:00pm
Week 3	February 4 – February 10	Oregon's Geology and Earth Processes	Create a geological profile of your place	11:59pm PT, February 11
Week 4	February 11 – February 17	Oregon Watersheds	Find and describe your watershed	11:59pm PT, February 18
Week 5	February 18 – February 24	Principles of Ecology and Wildlife Management	Create a food web	11:59pm PT, February 25
Week 6	February 25 – March 3	Oregon Forests	Discuss the pros and cons of forest management through the lens of wildfire	11:59pm PT, March 4
Week 7	March 4 – March 10	Oregon Rangelands	Create a Rangeland wildlife species profile	11:59pm PT, March 11
Week 8	March 11 – March 17	Climate Change	Discussion about adapting to climate change	11:59pm PT, March 18
Spring Break for OSU and Corvallis School District – Instructor will be taking vacation with family this week, and will not be available. Please contact OSU WorkSpace for assistance.				
Weeks 9-12	March 18 – April 13	<i>Final Exam; Course Wrap-up & Catch-up</i>	NO ASSIGNMENTS EXCEPT FINAL EXAM: All course content will be accessible so you can catch up on course <i>Readings, Assignments and Discussions</i> . Content past these dates, except for the <i>Final Exam</i> , will remain available indefinitely by going to https://apps.ideal-logic.com/osupace	Final Exam: 11:59pm PT, April 13

Please Note: This course schedule is just for example purposes.