CHEM 5375 – Stable Isotope Biogeochemistry  
Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences Spring 2020

A. COURSE INFORMATION
Course number/section: CHEM 5375.001
Class meeting time: TR 8:00 – 9:15 am
Class location: OCNR 255
Course Website: https://bb9.tamucc.edu/

B. INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION
Instructor: Dr. J. David Felix
Office location: NRC 3102
Office hours: T 12 to 2 pm, W 3 to 5 pm, R 1 to 2 pm
Telephone: 4180
e-mail: joseph.felix@tamucc.edu
Appointments: via email

C. COURSE DESCRIPTION
Catalog Course Description
This course will focus on the stable isotope biogeochemistry of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur across the biosphere, atmosphere, geosphere and hydrosphere. The course will also cover stable isotope history, theory, language and instrumentation. Knowledge gained in this course will provide students with the ability to apply stable isotope techniques to their future and ongoing research when applicable.

PREREQUISITES AND COREQUISITES
Prerequisites
General Chemistry

D. SUGGESTED TEXTBOOK(S), READINGS AND SUPPLIES
Hoeffs, J. (2015) Stable Isotope Geochemistry. XV, 389. Springer. 10.1007/978-3-319-19716-6

Available online
Zachary Sharp. Principles of Stable Isotope Geochemistry, 2nd Ed.  
http://digitalrepository.unm.edu/unm_oer/1/

E. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT
Assessment is a process used by instructors to help improve learning. Assessment is essential for effective learning because it provides feedback to both students and instructors. A critical step in this process is making clear the course’s student learning outcomes that describe what students are expected to learn to be successful in the course. The student learning outcomes for this course are listed below. By collecting data and sharing it with students on how well they are accomplishing these learning outcomes students can more efficiently and effectively focus their learning efforts. This information can also help instructors identify challenging areas for students and adjust their teaching approach to facilitate learning.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Comprehend and communicate stable isotope theory, language and instrumentation
2. Understand the of application of stable isotope techniques to investigate several key biogeochemical cycles
3. Apply stable isotope studies to their individual research
4. Critically review stable isotope journal articles
5. Present stable isotope study results to a group of their peers

F. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND ACTIVITIES

Instructional methods will include power point lectures, problem sets, student projects and presentations, peer reviews, and class discussion.

The students will choose a research topic and two related journal articles at the beginning of the course. The scientific journal articles will be presented and discussed in class to provide students with literature review skills and the ability to present stable isotope topics. The students will present the summary of the chosen journal articles in class followed by a peer review and discussion. This will provide students with peer feedback and constructive discussion in a scientific setting.

G. MAJOR COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>% of FINAL GRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation/discussion</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take home problem sets</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper review summary</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Presentation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer review</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
H. COURSE CONTENT/SCHEDULE

Schedules, topics, assignments and due dates are all tentative due to possible scheduling conflicts and length of presentation and discussion time. All changes will be announced to students in class and through blackboard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE (BY DAY OR WEEK)</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS / DUE DATE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>Course introduction, History</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/28</td>
<td>General isotope background, terminology, Fractionation, Instrumentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>Carbon/Carbon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/11</td>
<td>Hydrogen/Lab tour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/18</td>
<td>Oxygen/Oxygen</td>
<td>Discussion summary papers assigned</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2) journal articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Homework 1 problem set assigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/25</td>
<td>Nitrogen/Nitrogen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>Sulfur/Sulfur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/10</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/17</td>
<td>Hydrosphere/Oceans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/24</td>
<td>Biosphere/ Paleoclimateology</td>
<td>Homework 1 problem set due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Homework 2 problem set assigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/31</td>
<td>Paleoclimateology/Misc topics/elements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/7</td>
<td>Misc topics/elements</td>
<td>Presentation draft due</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/14</td>
<td>Presentations/peer review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/21</td>
<td>Presentations/peer review</td>
<td>Homework 2 problem set due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28</td>
<td>Presentations/peer review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>Final discussion</td>
<td>Summary paper due</td>
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Note: Changes in this course schedule may be necessary and will be announced to the class by the Instructor. The assignments shown are directly related to the Student Learning Outcomes described in Section F.

I. COURSE POLICIES

Attendance/Tardiness
There is no attendance policy but 15% of the grade is class discussion.

**Late Work and Make-up Exams**
Late work will not be accepted.

**Extra Credit**
N/A

**Cell Phone/Laptop/Food Use**
Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. The use of cell phones, pagers, CD players, headphones and similar electronic devices is not allowed in class. Keep these devices in your bags, not on the tables. You may be asked to refrain from using a laptop in class.

**Missed Exam**
Late work will not be accepted.

**Participation**
15% of the course grade is based on class discussion.

### J. COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

- **Academic Integrity (University)**
  University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a failing grade.

- **Classroom/Professional Behavior**
  Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms,
labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

- **Statement of Civility**
  Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

- **Deadline for Dropping a Course with a Grade of W (University)**
  I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. **Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course.** Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Please consult the Academic Calendar ([http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/calendar/](http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/calendar/)) for the last day to drop a course.

- **Grade Appeals (College of Science and Engineering)**
  As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules website at [http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html](http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html), and the College of Science and Engineering Grade Appeals webpage at [http://sci.tamucc.edu/students/GradeAppeal.html](http://sci.tamucc.edu/students/GradeAppeal.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the chair or director of the appropriate department or school, the Office of the College of Science and Engineering Dean, or the Office of the Provost.

- **Disability Services**
  The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you
believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call (361) 825-5816 or visit Disability Services in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/

- **Statement of Academic Continuity**
  In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

K. **OTHER INFORMATION**

- **Academic Advising**
  The College of Science & Engineering requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. Meetings are by appointment only; advisors do not take walk-ins. Please call or stop by the Advising Center to check availability and schedule an appointment. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Center for Instruction 350 or can be reached at (361) 825-3928.

**GENERAL DISCLAIMER**
I reserve the right to modify the information, schedule, assignments, deadlines, and course policies in this syllabus if and when necessary. I will announce such changes in a timely manner during regularly scheduled lecture periods.