

SOCIOECOLOGY OF MARINE MEGAFAUNA

FW 499/599 (CRN 32468),
3 CREDITS, T/TH 12-4:50PM, IN PERSON (HMSC)

Animal social behavior is, essentially, collective solutions to the fundamental individual problems in life—eat, not be eaten, reproduce. In a world of plenty risks and limited resources, animals race to be quicker than others, fight to have privileged access, and team up to share efforts and gains. The collection of these individual decisions gives rise to a wide variety of animal social systems we observe in nature, from solitary predators to aggregating prey to multilevel societies, and everything in between. But how does the marine environment shape these animal social systems? And how does the emergence of this new environment—the social environment—changes our predictions about how marine animals behave?

In this 3-credit summer course, we will investigate the answers to these and other pressing questions by drawing from principles in Animal Behavior and Behavioral Ecology. We will contextualize how animals behave collectively in the marine realm, how the trade-offs of such group living shape the nature, quality and patterning of their social relationships, and how their resultant social lives can influence their ecology and evolution.

The course combines a series of short lectures, with journal-club style debates of the primary literature on marine vertebrates, as well as field activities and hands-on labs to experiment with the analytical toolbox for studying animal societies in the wild.

Recommended: 200-level Bio series; FW302; background in vertebrate ecology or animal behavior is desirable. Any familiarity with programming (especially R language) is desirable for some of the laboratory assignments.

Instructor: Mauricio Cantor, assistant professor

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Additional course information: classes.oregonstate.edu