

Microbial Ecology

Code: 100773
ECTS Credits: 6

Degree	Type	Year	Semester
2500250 Biology	OT	4	0

Contact

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Use of languages

Principal working language: catalan (cat)
Some groups entirely in English: No
Some groups entirely in Catalan: Yes
Some groups entirely in Spanish: No

Teachers

Olga Sánchez Martínez

Prerequisites

Although no official prerequisite exists, students are advised to review the concepts that refer to the microbial world, studied previously. Also, it is advisable to have a good knowledge of the courses completed in the degree of Microbiology, as well as on other courses done simultaneously during the second semester.

Objectives and Contextualisation

It is a mandatory course, nuclear of the degree of Microbiology, that introduces the student in the principles and terminology, as well as in the methods of study of Microbial Ecology. The objectives of the course are:

1. Acquire the basic concepts and methods of study of Microbial Ecology.
2. Display knowledge of the microorganisms in their natural habitats and the environmental factors that affect their distribution.
3. Recognize the main relationships established between microorganisms and other living organisms, such as plants and animals.
4. Understand the role of microorganisms in biogeochemical cycles.

Skills

- Be able to analyse and synthesise
- Be able to organise and plan.
- Develop critical thinking and reasoning and communicate ideas effectively, both in the mother tongue and in other languages.
- Develop independent learning strategies.
- Understand the processes that determine the functioning of living beings in each of their levels of organisation.

Learning outcomes

1. Be able to analyse and synthesise.
2. Be able to organise and plan.
3. Develop critical thinking and reasoning and communicate ideas effectively, both in the mother tongue and in other languages.
4. Develop independent learning strategies.
5. Identify the role of the different microbial groups in the environment and in the cycles of the elements, and their environmental implications.

Content

I. INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

1. Microbial Ecology: concept and historical development

Historical development. Microbial Ecology today. Concepts of Microbial Ecology.

2. Methods of study of Microbial Ecology (I)

Characteristics and objectives of the Microbial Ecology sampling. Sampling devices in different habitats. Preservation of samples.

3. Methods of study (II)

Quantification of microorganisms in the natural environment. Estimation of biomass. Estimation of microbial biodiversity with molecular techniques.

4. Methods of study (III)

Detection and measurement of microbial activity.

II. MICROORGANISMS IN THEIR NATURAL HABITATS

5. Microbial communities and abiotic factors

Microbial ecosystems: structure and dynamics. Environmental factors affecting the distribution of microorganisms. Extreme environments.

6. Microorganisms in their natural habitats: marine and freshwater environments

Introduction to natural environments. Water as a natural habitat. Lotic and lentic ecosystems. Coastal marine ecosystems. Open sea. Benthic environments of the deep sea.

7. Microorganisms in their natural habitats: terrestrial ecosystems

Soil composition and formation. Soil as a microbial habitat. The biosphere of the subsoil.

III. INTERACTIONS BETWEEN POPULATIONS

8. Interactions between microbial populations

Interactions within the same population. Transmission of chemical signals between microorganisms: quorum sensing. Neutralism. Positive interactions: commensalism, synergism and mutualism. Negative interactions: competition, amensalism, predation and parasitism.

9. Interactions between plants and microorganisms

Rhizosphere. Mycorrhizae. Fixation of nitrogen in the radical nodules. Philosphere.

10. Interactions between microorganisms and animals

Contribution of microorganisms to animal nutrition. Predation of animals by fungi. Other symbiotic relationships.

IV. BIOGEOCHEMICAL CYCLES

11. Microorganisms in nutrient cycles I

Carbon cycle: transfer of carbon through the trophic networks. Hydrogen cycle. Oxygen cycle.

12. Microorganisms in nutrient cycles II

Nitrogen, sulfur and phosphorus, iron and other elements cycles. Interrelations between cycles of different elements.

Methodology

The course of Microbial Ecology consists of two modules, which have been programmed in an integrated way so that the student will have to relate throughout the course the content and activities scheduled to reach the skills indicated in section 5 of this guide.

The two modules are:

Theoretical lectures. Within this module, master or expository lectures represent the main activity to be performed in the classroom and allow basic concepts to be transmitted to a large number of students in a relatively short time. They will be complemented with Powerpoint presentations and diverse didactic material that will be delivered to the students at the beginning of the course.

Seminars. They are group work sessions with a small number of students, based on work proposed by the teachers, that the students will work autonomously and will be discussed or exposed later in the classroom.

Additional Information:

In order to support the training activities mentioned above, individual tutorials can be carried out at the request of the students at the teachers' office Olga Sánchez (C3-335) and Maira Martínez-Alonso (C3-329).

The student will have at the Moodle space all the documentation delivered by the teacher for the good monitoring of the subject. He / she will also be able to consult the teaching space of the Degree Coordination to obtain updated information.

Activities

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
Type: Directed			
Seminars	12	0.48	4, 3, 5, 1
Theoretical lectures	34	1.36	5, 1
Type: Supervised			
Individual/group tutorials	4	0.16	4, 3, 5, 1, 2
Type: Autonomous			
Bibliography search	15	0.6	4
Estudy	35	1.4	4, 5, 1, 2

Preparation of oral presentation	15	0.6	3, 1, 2
Text reading	20	0.8	4, 1
Work writing	10	0.4	3

Evaluation

The evaluation of the course will be individual and continuous through the following tests:

Assessment of the theoretical lectures module (70% of the overall mark): During the course two written exams of this module will be scheduled, which are eliminatory. Each test will have a weight of 50% of the mark of the module and it will be necessary to obtain a score equal or superior to 5 to average them; otherwise, the student will have to take a final second-chance examination that will include the theoretical contents of the whole module. Each exam will consist of multiple choice and / or true / false test questions, which will allow to assess a large part of the contents, and / or short answer questions aimed at assessing whether the key conceptual objectives have been achieved.

Assessment of the seminars module (30% of the overall mark): The evaluation will include the following aspects:

1. Oral presentation of the work done (15% of the overall mark).
2. Written tests of oral presentations consisting of multiple choice and / or true / false test questions (10% of the overall mark).
3. Preparation of a written report of the oral presentation (5% of the overall mark).

Final considerations:

To pass the course the student must obtain a score of 5 or higher in each module. Students who do not pass any of the modules will be able to pass them on the date scheduled for the second-chance examination of the course. The presentation of the student to raise the mark involves the renunciation to that obtained with the partial exams and he / she will have to perform the re-assessment of all contents of the course on the day scheduled for that purpose.

From the second course registration, those students repeating the course will not have to carry out the teaching activities, nor the assessment of those skills passed in the seminars module. That is, the mark obtained in the seminars module will be saved, as long as it has been passed.

A student will be considered as Not Assessable if he / she does less than 50% of the assessment activities.

Evaluation activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
Seminars module assessment	30	2	0.08	4, 3, 5, 1, 2
Theoretical lectures module assessment	70	3	0.12	3, 5, 1

Bibliography

Text books:

Atlas RM, Bartha R (2002). Ecología microbiana y microbiología ambiental. 4ª ed., Pearson Educación SA.

Kirchman DL (2012). Processes in microbial ecology. Oxford University Press.

Madigan M, Martinko JM, Bender KS, Buckley DH, Stahl DA (2015). Brock, biología de los microorganismos, 14ª ed., Pearson Educación SA.

Madigan M, Martinko JM, Bender KS, Buckley DH, Stahl DA (2014). Brock Biology of Microorganisms. 14ª ed. Pearson SA.

Wiley J, Sherwood LM, Woolverton CJ (2008). Microbiología de Prescott, Harley y Klein, 7ª ed., MacGraw-Hill.

Wiley J, Sherwood LM, Woolverton CJ (2013). Prescott's Microbiology. 9ª ed. MacGraw-Hill.