Instructor:
Dr. Jonathan Myers, Associate Professor of Biology
E-mail: jamyers@wustl.edu
Virtual help sessions on Zoom: Mon 3–4 pm, Thu 1–2 pm
Laboratory website: myersecololoylab.com
Pronouns: he/him/his

Assistant to the Instructor:
David Henderson, PhD Student
E-mail: hdavid@wustl.edu
Virtual help sessions on Zoom: To be determined
Pronouns: he/him/his

Course description:
Community ecology is an interdisciplinary field that bridges concepts in biodiversity science, biogeography, evolution and conservation. This course provides an introduction to the study of pattern and process in ecological communities with an emphasis on theoretical, experimental and quantitative approaches. Topics include: ecological and evolutionary processes that create, maintain or modify patterns of biodiversity; biodiversity and ecosystem function; island biogeography; metacommunity dynamics; niche and neutral theory; species interactions (competition, predation, food webs) and species coexistence; and effects of human-mediated environmental change (climate change, habitat alteration, invasive species) on biodiversity. The class format includes lectures, discussions, and hands-on simulations using the R language for statistical computing and graphics.

Prerequisites:
Principles of Biology II (Bio 2970) required, or permission of instructor.

After completing this course you should be able to:
1) Explain and evaluate the four fundamental ("high-level") processes of community ecology, how ecologists study them empirically, and why these processes are important for conservation and environmental sustainability.
2) Summarize, evaluate, explain and discuss primary literature in community ecology and reflect on its scientific impact.
3) Appreciate uncertainty in the field of community ecology.

Course website:
The course website will be on Canvas (mycanvas.wustl.edu). The website will contain the syllabus, current course schedule and assignments, recorded lectures and slides, a grade book, reading material, and important course announcements. You will upload all assignments to Canvas. You should check the course website on a regular basis, and to help stay up-to-date on the course, we recommend setting the option to receive an email when we post announcements. You can access help for Canvas at: mycanvas.wustl.edu/studentsupport/
Virtual course meeting times and attendance policy:
The course will be held “live” on Zoom on Monday and Wednesday from 10:00–11:15 am. You are expected to attend classes synchronously during the scheduled meeting time. Monday classes will primarily be devoted to interactive lectures, and Wednesday classes will primarily be devoted to small-group discussions of primary literature. Monday lectures will be recorded live and uploaded to Canvas after class.

Best practices and tips for attending live classes on Zoom:

Attending classes online using Zoom
Zoom is a video conferencing and recording tool that can be used on its own or within Canvas. Washington University provides a Zoom account to all faculty, students, and staff. To get started, sign in with your WUSTL Key at: gozoom.wustl.edu

Is your computer ready?
Make sure your computer is ready by test your internet connection, software, camera, and microphone using the Zoom test tool at: zoom.us/test

How do I find the Zoom meeting link for my class?
The course has two Zoom links: 1) a link for the Monday lectures; and 2) a link for the Wednesday discussions. The instructors will post both links in Canvas. It is important that you stay on top of email and that you have notifications turned on in Canvas to ensure you don’t miss any communications.

What should I expect when I join a Zoom session?
- Click the Zoom meeting link several minutes before your meeting, as you may be prompted to download Zoom to your device.
- Test your internet connection, software, camera, and microphone using the Zoom test tool at: zoom.us/test
- Follow the instructions to join.

How can I be an effective participant during a Zoom session?
During a Zoom session, use etiquette rules to manage your own audio/video, be an effective participant, and not disrupt sessions inadvertently:
- Click Mute to mute your audio, if not already done, and minimize background noise. Unmute when you wish to talk.
- To help preserve bandwidth for the Zoom session, do not record lectures. The Monday lectures will be recorded by the instructors and uploaded to Canvas following the lecture.
- Click Stop Video to stop your video and preserve bandwidth for the session. Start Video to show your video (for example, if called upon).
- In lectures, type your questions in the Chat Box, rather than asking them out loud. The instructors will provide opportunities during class to answer questions in the Chat Box.
- Use the Raise Hand button to prompt the instructor to call on you without interrupting.
- Be aware of your personal background while live on Zoom video.
- Please avoid displays that may be offensive to others.
- Please dress appropriately.
How do I find recordings of a Zoom meeting in Canvas?
The Zoom recording will be in the Canvas course in the Zoom tool > Cloud Recordings tab a few hours after class ends.

Textbook (required):

Course schedule, readings, and other assignments:
The course schedule, readings, and other assignments will be posted on Canvas.

Assessment:
The grade you earn in this course will be based on a total of 1000 points:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>400</td>
<td>Take-home exams – 2 exams (40% of final grade)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 200 points Take-home exam 1 (20%)</td>
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<td>• 200 points Take-home exam 2 (20%)</td>
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<td>250</td>
<td>Discussion preparation &amp; participation (25%)</td>
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<td>• 100 points Discussion Question Journal – 10 total (10%)</td>
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<td>• 150 points Attendance &amp; in-class participation (15%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>Presentation (20%)</td>
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<td>• 50 points Presentation proposal (5%)</td>
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<td>• 100 points Presentation (10%)</td>
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<td>• 50 points Presentation peer review (5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Open-book mini-quizzes on pre-lecture readings – 10 total (10%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>R workshop tutorial (2.5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Attendance in lecture (2.5%)</td>
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The following scale will be used to assign final course grades. If you are taking this course Credit/No Credit, you must receive a C+ or better to receive credit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
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<td>A</td>
<td>93-96%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62%</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0-59%</td>
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Take-home exams:
The goal of the take-home exams is to demonstrate your ability to *explain, evaluate* and *synthesize* fundamental concepts, observations, and approaches in community ecology. The exams will integrate reading assignments, lecture material, and primary literature from discussions. You must work independently on the exam and cannot discuss this exam with anyone. You will have one week to complete each exam. There is no final exam.

Exam re-grading policy: Every attempt will be made to grade fairly, consistently, and accurately. If you disagree with the way your answer on your individual exam was graded, you may submit a written request for a re-grade within 72 hours of receipt of your graded exam. We will examine re-grade requests at the end of the semester if your grade is borderline, at which point we reserve the right to re-grade the entire exam.
Discussion preparation and participation:
The goal of the discussions is to provide you with the opportunity to: 1) develop skills in reading primary literature; 2) summarize and critically evaluate concepts and data; 3) explain, discuss and reflect on how these research papers link to the broader conceptual framework of the course; and 4) appreciate uncertainty in the field of community ecology.

Guidelines and tips for preparing for discussions: The instructors will provide guidelines and tips on how to read, evaluate, interpret, and discuss primary literature. Some useful questions to consider while reading the paper(s) and preparing for discussions include:

1. **Reflect** on the key ideas from lecture and previous discussions:
   a) What key idea(s) emerged from lecture and the previous discussion that you found particularly interesting?
   b) How do the concepts in the paper(s) for this week connect to concepts from one or two relevant prior papers and/or lectures?

2. **Summarize** the key questions and results and practice explaining them to yourself:
   c) What is the main question the researchers are hoping to address with their study?
   d) What is/are the main hypothesis(es) they provide regarding this question?
   e) What predictions do they make regarding these hypotheses, specific to their study?
   f) What evidence do they provide to support or refute the hypotheses?
   g) How has the paper helped to resolve (or fuel) controversial topics?
   h) How might remaining disagreements, empirical gaps, or theoretical gaps be resolved through additional experiments, observations, or other approaches?
   i) What surprised, confused, or struck you most about the paper?

Discussion preparation & participation grades: Your grade for the discussions will be based on two assessments:

1. **Discussion Question Journal:**
   Writing about the discussion paper(s) encourages you to think about and engage with the text in deeper and more meaningful ways. To that end, the goals of the Discussion Question Journal are to: a) help you prepare for and participate in discussion; b) assess your ability to summarize, explain, and reflect on primary literature; c) "prime" the class for a fun and productive discussion; and d) provide current and future graduate students with a study resource to help prepare for qualifying exams in graduate school. Your journal will consist of a single document that includes entries for each discussion (10 total entries), with the journal entries ordered from newest (first page) to oldest (last page). Each entry will include short answers to 2–4 questions provided in advance by the instructors, and 3 questions that you provide for group discussion. Here are some tips for writing good discussion questions:
   a) Think about questions you would like to discuss while reading the paper(s).
   b) Strive to avoid factual types of questions that will lead to short responses (e.g., how much species diversity is there in the microbiome?) and aim to ask about deeper questions or topics that will lead to back-and-forth discussion (e.g., what factors contribute to high species diversity in the microbiome?).
   c) Try to ask a series of connected questions, as these often lead to extended discussion.
d) Whenever possible, bring in connections to past readings, themes, or topics.
e) Use quotes from the text.

Prior to each discussion, the instructors will choose selected questions from your journals for discussion. If one of your questions is selected, you should be prepared to elaborate on it in the group discussion. The due date for uploading entries to your Discussion Question Journal will be Tuesday at 11:59 p.m. We will provide an example journal entry for our first discussion.

2. **In-class participation:**
Discussions will include a mixture of small-group (3–5 students) and large-group (whole-class) discussions developed using the “jigsaw” collaborative-learning method (Hartman et al. 2017). To receive full credit for participation, you must attend synchronous discussions during the class meeting time, and make substantive contributions to discussions (e.g., by posting answers to discussion questions on the class discussion board). A substantive contribution is one that: demonstrates in-depth understanding of the assigned reading; integrates the assigned reading with lecture material or previous discussions; demonstrates clarity, creativity, and logic of the questions and arguments; and/or leads to productive discussion. Examples of non-substantive contributions include: agreeing or disagreeing with a contribution from a classmate without elaborating on your contribution; discussing peripheral or unrelated topics that move the discussion away from the main concepts relevant to the papers; and posing questions that require your peers to simply re-state facts from the paper.

**Presentations – Ecology-apolooza 2020!**
The goal of your presentation is to demonstrate your ability to evaluate and synthesize primary literature on a topic of interest to you, reflect on how this topic links to broader conceptual frameworks in the field of community ecology, and explain this topic to your peers. As a reviewer of presentations by your peers, the presentations will provide an opportunity for you to develop a deeper appreciation for the diversity of questions, approaches, and applications that motivate the careers and interests of real-world ecologists.

**Topics:** Early in the semester, you will choose a case study from the literature that provides empirical evidence for one or more of the "high-level" processes in community ecology: dispersal; ecological drift; selection; and speciation. The case study may include experimental or observational studies of organisms in the field or lab. The instructors will provide examples of classic and contemporary case studies during the first few weeks of class. You may choose one of these case studies (on a first come, first served basis) or another case study that you find exciting. The case study may be based on research conducted by a single ecologist or multiple ecologists that have studied the same concept, organisms, or ecosystems. The case study should: 1) provide a compelling example of one or more of the "high-level" processes; 2) provide an example from an ecological community comprised of two or more species (i.e., the case studies cannot come from studies of single-species populations); and 3) interest you. For case studies involving food webs or mutualistic networks (i.e., “vertical communities”; Vellend 2016), the case study must include two or more species in at least one level of the vertical community (e.g., two or more species in a “horizontal community” [Vellend 2016] of consumers [herbivores, pathogens, predators] or resources [hosts, prey, etc.]). If you are conducting graduate or undergraduate thesis research, we encourage you to choose a case study directly related to your research and to view this presentation as an opportunity to help advance your research. As an
alternative to selecting a single case study, graduate students will have the option to conduct a quantitative meta-analysis on a larger number of empirical studies focused on one or more of the "high-level" processes. You must have your case study or meta-analysis pre-approved by e-mailing Jonathan Myers a short description of your proposed case study at least 1 week before the presentation proposal is due.

**Presentation grades:** Your presentation grade will be based on two assessments:

1. **Presentation proposal:**
   After choosing your case study, you will conduct a literature search for at least 2–3 peer-reviewed journal articles focused on experimental or observational studies of the concepts, organisms, or ecosystems of interest. These papers will form the basis for your proposal and presentation. You will use these papers to write a two-page, single-spaced proposal that outlines the introduction, methods, results, and conclusions of the presentation. The proposal due date and instructions will be posted on Canvas.

2. **Presentation:**
   Your oral presentation will be shared virtually with the class using a recorded Zoom presentation (MP4 video file) that captures your slides, including transitions, and the audio for your presentation. Your webcam should be turned off for your Zoom presentation (i.e., the presentation should only include your slides and the recorded audio of your voice), and the slides should not be presented in a Presenter View mode (i.e., a view mode showing presenter notes, and etc.). You may use any program to create your slides (e.g., Powerpoint or Keynote). A brief video tutorial on how to record a Zoom meeting is available at: support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362473-Local-recording

   Presentations should be 15 minutes in length and formatted for an audience at a professional scientific conference such as the Annual Meeting of the Ecological Society of America (ESA), e.g., https://www.esa.org/saltlake/. You will be required to upload your recorded Zoom presentation (MP4 video file) to Canvas by December 4th (Friday) at 11:59 p.m. Presentations will be evaluated on content over showmanship. Grades will be based on the quality of your literature synthesis, the conceptual integration of the empirical papers with one or more of the "high-level" processes, and the clarity of presentation. The instructors will provide a grading rubric prior to the presentation due date.

3. **Presentation peer review:**
   Peer review is an important skill that facilitates professional development. During the final week of classes, you will provide written feedback on six presentations by your classmates, which will be shared anonymously with the presenters. The instructors will assign you six presentations and provide a peer-review feedback form to complete for each presentation. The due date for uploading your peer-review feedback forms to Canvas will be Dec. 16th (Wednesday) at 11:59 p.m.
Open-book mini-quizzes on pre-lecture readings:
The goals of the mini-quizzes are to 1) evaluate your understanding of key concepts from the pre-lecture reading assignments from the textbook or primary literature, and 2) foster in-depth discussion of key concepts during lecture and paper discussions. The due date for uploading mini-quizzes to Canvas will be Sunday at 11:59 p.m.

R workshop tutorial:
The goal of the R workshop is to explore the influence of drift, dispersal, and selection on community dynamics using computer simulations in R, a free software environment for statistical computing and graphics (r-project.org). The workshop will consist of an R tutorial that contains exercises and questions. Most of the tutorial can be completed during the synchronous class meeting, and the remainder can be completed asynchronously after class. The due date for uploading the tutorial to Canvas will be October 21st (Wednesday) at 11:59 p.m.

Attendance in lecture:
We expect you to attend and contribute to mini-discussions in lecture. You are responsible for all material covered in class whether or not you attend. You may miss one lecture without it counting against your attendance grade. If you anticipate that you must be absent from a class for a legitimate reason, please e-mail Jonathan Myers in advance.

Late work:
To be fair to all students and the instructors who are responsible for grading, no late work will be accepted after the item is due. You are required to keep copies of all work. We will not consider technology excuses. Please make sure to frequently back up your work to avoid losing data.

Academic integrity:
The academic integrity policy of Washington University in St. Louis states: “Effective learning, teaching and research all depend upon the ability of members of the academic community to trust one another and to trust the integrity of work that is submitted for academic credit or conducted in the wider arena of scholarly research. Such an atmosphere of mutual trust fosters the free exchange of ideas and enables all members of the community to achieve their highest potential. In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged, and work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original. Faculty, students, and administrative staff all share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment at Washington University.”

The complete policy and procedures are available at: studentconduct.wustl.edu/integrity/policy. As a student at Washington University, it is your responsibility to become familiar with, understand, and abide by the standards outlined in this policy before performing any academic work. Ignorance of these policies is not a defense in cases of infringement.

Any person found using unauthorized assistance (including plagiarism, submitting work for more than one class without obtaining permission from all instructors, copying answers from another student’s exam, or turning in group work to which you did not contribute) will be forwarded to the Committee for Student Academic Integrity. Students found guilty by the Committee will be given a grade of F for the course and be referred to the Dean for further action.
Information and resources to help you succeed:

1. COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocols:

Exceptions to course policies, expectations, and requirements (including attendance and assignment deadlines) because of a COVID-19 diagnosis, symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or exposure to a person with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 diagnosis that requires quarantine or isolation will be made in collaboration between the student and instructor. In these cases, please notify your instructor as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations.

All students on the Danforth Campus are required to complete the self-screening app before they come to campus or leave their residence hall room. To complete the screening app, visit WashU COVID-19 Screening (screening.wustl.edu) for campus access and log in with your WUSTL Key. If you do not receive a green check and pass the screening app, you are not permitted to come to campus or leave your residence hall room. You must contact Habif Health and Wellness Center immediately.

While on campus, it is imperative that students follow all public health guidelines established to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission within our community. The full set of University protocols can be found at: covid19.wustl.edu/health-safety/. This includes:

- **Complying with physical distancing requirements at all times and adhering to signage and environmental cues.** This includes not congregating before or after class as well as during breaks or class activities.

- **Complying with universal masking.** All individuals on campus must wear disposable masks or cloth face coverings while occupying indoor public settings, including: multi-person offices; hallways; stairwells; elevators; meeting rooms; classrooms; restrooms; and when in campus outdoor spaces unless they can maintain six feet of physical distance from others. *In the event that a student cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition, they should contact Habif or Disability Resources to seek an accommodation and, if an accommodation is granted, communicate with their instructor.*

- **Practicing healthy personal hygiene,** including frequent handwashing with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds and/or using hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

- **Complying with cleaning and sanitation protocols.** Students may be responsible for wiping down common surfaces after use, particularly those that might be shared with others (e.g. classroom desks). Instructions for sanitizing technology equipment can be found at: sites.wustl.edu/its/ desktop-services/sanitizing-technology-equipment/

We take your health and the health of our community very seriously. Any Danforth Campus student who is **currently diagnosed with COVID-19, is experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or has had direct contact with a person with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 diagnosis must remain home and isolate yourself from others.** Students who have symptoms and/or do not pass the screening protocol must call the Habif Health and Wellness Center at 314-935-6666 for additional instructions.
2. Academic Accommodations:

- **Reasonable Accommodations for Disabled Students** - Washington University in St. Louis supports the rights of enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity and, in compliance with federal, state, and local requirements, is committed to reasonable accommodations for individuals with documented disabilities. Disabled students for whom accommodations may be necessary must be registered with, and provide their instructors official notification through, WUSTL’s Disability Resources (students.wustl.edu/disability-resources/). Once established, responsibility for disability-related accommodations and access is shared by DR, faculty, and the student. Please contact Disability Resources at 314.935.5970 or disabilityresources@wustl.edu.

- **Sexual Assault Resources** - The University is committed to offering reasonable academic accommodations (e.g., a no-contact order, course changes) to students who are victims of relationship or sexual violence, regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. If you need to request such accommodations, please contact RSVP (information above) to schedule an appointment with an RSVP confidential and licensed counselor. Although information shared with counselors is confidential, requests for accommodations will be coordinated with the appropriate University administrators and faculty. See: RSVP Center (students.wustl.edu/relationship-sexual-violence-prevention-center/)

3. Bias Reporting:

The University has a process through which students, faculty, staff, and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice, or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the University’s Bias Report and Support System (BRSS) team. See: brss.wustl.edu.

4. Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI):

The Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) supports and advocates for undergraduate, graduate, and professional school students from underrepresented and/or marginalized populations, collaborates with campus and community partners, and promotes dialogue and social change to cultivate and foster a supportive campus climate for students of all backgrounds, cultures, and identities. See: diversityinclusion.wustl.edu/

5. Gephardt Institute:

There is a federal election happening on **November 3, 2020**. If you would like to register to vote prior to the election or request an absentee ballot, you can do so at wustl.turbovote.org. If you are ineligible to vote, you can still participate by referring your friends who are eligible to the TurboVote link to register. Additionally, everyone can contribute to the campus energy surrounding voting by starting dialogue with your peers about the importance of voting, educating yourself on American democracy and the ways public policy affect you and others, and participating in year-round forms of civic engagement beyond voting. If you have any questions about the voting process, please visit: washuvotes.wustl.edu
6. Mental Health:

Mental Health Services’ professional staff members work with students to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties, many of which can affect a student’s academic experience. These include conflicts with or worry about friends or family, concerns about eating or drinking patterns, and feelings of anxiety, depression, and thoughts of suicide. See: students.wustl.edu/mental-health-services/. Additionally, see the mental health services offered through the RSVP Center listed above.

7. Military Service Leave:

Washington University recognizes that students serving in the U.S. Armed Forces and their family members may encounter situations where military service forces them to withdraw from a course of study, sometimes with little notice. Students may contact the Office of Military and Veteran Services at (314) 935-2609 or veterans@wustl.edu and their academic dean for guidance and assistance. See: veterans.wustl.edu/policies/policy-for-military-students/

8. Preferred Name and Gender Inclusive Pronouns:

In order to affirm each person’s gender identity and lived experiences, it is important that we ask and check in with others about pronouns. This simple effort can make a profound difference in a person’s experience of safety, respect, and support. See: students.wustl.edu/gender-pronouns-information/, https://registrar.wustl.edu/student-records/ssn-name-changes/preferred-name/

9. Reporting Sexual Harassment:

If a student discusses or discloses an instance of sexual assault, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking, or if a faculty member otherwise observes or becomes aware of such an allegation, the faculty member will keep the information as private as possible, but as a faculty member of Washington University, they are required to immediately report it to the Department Chair or Dean or directly to Ms. Jessica Kennedy, the University’s Title IX Director, at (314) 935-3118, jwkennedy@wustl.edu. Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards or by contacting WUPD at (314) 935-5555 or your local law enforcement agency. See: Title IX (titleix.wustl.edu)

- Confidential Resources for Instances of Sexual Assault, Sex Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Dating Violence, Domestic Violence, or Stalking:
  If a student needs to explore options for medical care, protections, or reporting, there are free, confidential support resources and professional counseling services are available through the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention (RSVP) Center in Seigle Hall, Suite 435, rsvpcenter@wustl.edu, 314-935-3445. For after-hours emergency response services, call 314-935-6666 or 314-935-5555 and ask to speak with an RSVP Counselor on call.
10. WashU Cares:

WashU Cares, within the Health and Wellness Unit, provides resources to all students on the Danforth Campus who may be having a hard time. WashU Cares is committed to helping create a culture of caring. Through proactive, collaborative, and systemic approaches, WashU Cares works with students to identify interventions, resources, and supports that allow them to be successful. If there is a concern about the physical or mental well-being of a student, please file a report on the WashU Cares website. See: washucares.wustl.edu/

11. Contacting your course instructors:

Please feel free to email us or to stop by our virtual help sessions. Please allow 48 hours for email responses and do not wait until the last minute (e.g., after 5:00 p.m. or a weekend) to contact us, as we may be unavailable to reply. Please strive to use professional email etiquette. For example, use clear subject lines, use a salutation to open your email, sign off with your full name, and avoid using informal phrases or words such as “Hey” or textspeak. The PhD Comic below provides excellent examples of how not to compose an e-mail to us.

References:
Want to learn more? Recommended books for further reading: