Each student (individually or with a partner) will have the opportunity to lead a discussion. Discussion leadership in this class involves three components:

- Facilitating a virtual, on-line discussion
- Working with the guest faculty to structure the in-class discussion
- Facilitating the in-class discussion.

**Facilitating a virtual, on-line discussion.** The course will be using Google Groups as a forum for on-line discussion. This site is accessible only to invited participants, and you must have a gmail address to access the site. Need an invitation? Contact the course instructor for an invitation. Once you have an invitation accepted to access the site, go to [http://groups.google.com/group/uf-foundations-class](http://groups.google.com/group/uf-foundations-class) and you will see the class group. There are discussion threads for each of the group sessions identified by the date of the session. Find the appropriate thread and jump in! There are a number of settings that you can adjust to influence the way that you see the group material, the way that you are notified about group submissions, and other aspects.

After you have read the literature for the week, consider what insights you took from the readings. Some of the questions and points that you might consider for the virtual discussion and the discussion thread include:

- What major points or revelations (if any) did you get from the readings?
- Are there important linkages between theory and applications identified in the readings, or that you can see from the readings and your experience?
- What elements of the approach used by the authors were effective?
- What elements were ineffective?
- Were the conclusions justified based on the data or information provided?
- What things did you have a difficult time understanding that would benefit from clarification from the guest faculty member or other students?
- How does this work relate to broader conservation or ecological questions or issues?

This list of questions is not meant to be exhaustive, and some of these will be more relevant than others for a particular set of readings. Rather, the list is intended to get you started in your thinking.

**ALL** students have an obligation to participate in the on-line discussion... but the discussion leader has a special responsibility to get the ball rolling and for participation. Participation in the on-line discussion will be part of each student's participation grade and will be part of the grade assigned to the discussion leader as well. The goal of the virtual discussion is to begin to explore the readings and to improve the quality of in-class discussions later in the week. The topics and issues brought up in the on-line discussion will help build a foundation for the in-class discussion. **IMPORTANT: Students should not plan on tuning in to the discussion and contributing for the first time on Thursday night!** For this to be
effective (and for it to benefit you!) the discussion needs to simmer in the juices of intellectual contribution like a fine stew. Participate early and often!

**Working with the guest faculty to structure the in-class discussion.** Prior to meeting in class, the discussion leader(s) should meet with the faculty responsible for the session to refine a strategy and list of questions and directions for the in-class discussion. Faculty are busy people, so try to schedule a meeting with them well in advance. Ideally this meeting would take place the day before the class to take full advantage of the virtual discussion, but you will need to work within the constraints of your and the faculty member’s schedule as appropriate.

**Facilitating the in-class discussion.** The student discussion leader will be responsible for structuring and facilitating the in-class discussion. Many students have limited experience with this, so this is intended to provide some suggestions and thoughts on how to structure your time. Many of these ideas parallel those I have seen presented in another class ([http://www.thenagain.info/Classes/Basics/LeadingDiscussion.html](http://www.thenagain.info/Classes/Basics/LeadingDiscussion.html), accessed August 26, 2009). This and other related information on the web may give you some additional ideas.

- You are a facilitator, not a lecturer. You are expected to have read the readings carefully, have read and participated in the on-line discussion, and when appropriate, familiarize yourself with relevant material. You are not expected to have all the answers and be a subject matter expert.

- Set the stage. At the beginning of the discussion session, set the stage... what were the major points in the readings or issues that were brought up in the on-line discussion? In doing this, keep in mind the goals of the discussion. Discussion is not an end in and of itself...discussion should both sharpen your understanding of the material and those of others, and should help you develop and practice critical thinking and articulation of ideas.

- Come prepared! Give thought to how you want to run the discussion before you arrive.

- Be inclusive. Find ways to incorporate the ideas of everyone... be alert to body language and facial expressions that indicate disagreement, confusion, insight, boredom, etc., and work to keep all engaged.

- Balance directing and “going with the flow.” Discussions rarely unfold in a way that is fully predictable. This is a good thing! You need to help steer the conversation in a way that is productive and hits the key points, but not to over-dominate and over-control. If things get off-track, use your position to direct it back in a positive direction. Finding the right balance is a bit of an art that you may not be the best at first time out of the box, but it is an ability that is worth trying to cultivate.
• Be open and encourage alternative ideas... find ways to incorporate them into the discussion in a positive way. When appropriate, take the pulse of the class by asking if all agree with a particular point. Create a safe environment for people to express alternative viewpoints.