

**NR 5884 TS: Biodiversity Policy**  
Offered: Summer I (12-week)

**INSTRUCTOR:** Wil Burns, Ph.D., [wilburns@vt.edu](mailto:wilburns@vt.edu)

**REQUIRED TEXT:** All readings will be provided by the instructor.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Conservation biologists warn that we are in the midst of a great “extinction crisis,” with millions of species threatened due to habitat destruction, climate change, and other anthropogenic factors. This course focuses on examining how we are (and should be) constructing legal regimes and effective political institutions to conserve Earth’s endangered forms of life across multiple levels (ecosystem, landscape, species, populations, and genetic diversity). We will examine US legal and political responses to biodiversity loss, with a focus on the Endangered Species Act, as well as the role of international law, especially treaty regimes. We will look at how law is(n’t) succeeding in preserving life on Earth, and pay particular attention to the most effective legal practices to conserve biodiversity.

**SUBJECT MATTER:**

Schema of biodiversity and major causes of biodiversity loss

Domestic laws to protect biodiversity

International treaties and soft law approaches to protecting biodiversity

Role of non-wildlife treaty regimes in biodiversity conservation

Market-based approaches to preserving biodiversity