

Information AB-326 July 10 – August 7, 2011

A course at the University Centre in Svalbard, UNIS, is in some respect just another course in your studies and in others a unique experience. What makes it unique is the geographical position of UNIS at 78 degree north and the emphasis on field studies in the high arctic environments of Svalbard. As a participant in one of our graduate level courses it is therefore important that you come well prepared both for the studies as well as for the practical work in the field. You should also be prepared for intensive four weeks, week days as well as weekends. You may find much valuable general information in the Study Handbook (www.unis.no/studies). Here you will find more specific information on AB-326 such as the course outline, a reading list and some additional practical information.

Course Outline

The course will start on Monday 11th July, at 16:30 in the UNIS building. The last day of the course is Sunday 7th August. You will find a tentative course schedule and a literature list on the UNIS web-page:

http://www.unis.no/10_STUDIES/1020_Courses/Arctic_Biology/ab_326.htm

During the first week several guest lecturers and I will give theoretical introduction to different aspects of arctic flora and vegetation. You are expected to come well prepared to these lectures, see literature list.

During the first week you will also be introduced to the flora and vegetation of Svalbard on short excursions around Longyearbyen, which is also important preparation for the project work. You will be working on different projects in groups of two or three and these needs to be well prepared before we go on the cruise in the second week of the course. The cruise will be to the west and north coast of Svalbard. We will travel during the night, and work on shore on data and sample collection during the day.

The last one and a half week will be spent in Longyearbyen on sample and data analyses and report writing. Course grading will be based on an approved report and project presentation during seminars on the last day of the course (Sunday 7th August). The approved reports will be distributed to all the participants and discussed during the seminars. You will review one report and present your comments during the seminar. We are collecting a substantial amount of data during the excursion. If we find the data of one or more project worth of publishing, we will ask you to contribute also to this. If any of you wants to collect field data for your own master or PhD thesis during the course, please let me know as soon as possible and we can see how we can fit it into the schedule. As we are visiting areas which are not easily accessible, we will also collect data for different scientific projects.

Student presentations

You should prepare a short presentation (5 minutes) of your master or PhD project / project plans including maximum five PowerPoint slides giving the following information: title and

supervisor, aim, study area, methods, and results (if you have). In addition, please give a brief overview of your botanical background/experience.

Practical information

Your stay in Longyearbyen

As soon as you have been given admission to the course, you should prepare your travel arrangements to and from Longyearbyen and inform the Student administration about your arrival times. They will arrange that someone from UNIS is at the airport to meet you and guide you to the student dormitories in Nybyen. Note that Nybyen is at 3 km distance from UNIS.

Field safety

As you know, there is always a risk of running into polar bears in Svalbard. No one should travel outside town without proper protection. There are also other safety issues to consider when travelling and working in the wilderness of Svalbard. This is why we always let safety come first in all field based courses at UNIS. Please read carefully all safety information that you have or will receive from the Student administration. There will be an obligatory safety training arranged for you 12th of July. You will be given basic training in polar bear protection, boat safety, radio and satellite communication, use of emergency beacon, etc. You should meet warmly dressed at UNIS that day. Time will be announced by the Student administration.

On the ship

We will use the ship "Kvitbjørn" for accommodation and transportation during the one week cruise. All meals will be provided. If you are a vegetarian we need to inform about that as soon as you are given admission to the course. You will receive information on how to reach "Kvitbjørn" in case of an emergency.

Clothing and equipment to bring

A general advice with regard to clothing is to dress for a hike in the Scandinavian mountains in the fall. You may experience temperatures down to freezing, fog and light rain, or even snow. Remember that you will be out in the field up to 10-12 hours each day and should be dressed properly. Zodiacs will be used for transport between ship and shore and be prepared for some wet landings. We will be equipped with survival suites. We will bring necessary firearms, VHS radios and other safety equipment.



It is recommended that you bring:

- Rubber boots, good hiking boots and light rain-pants. In spite of low precipitation, the ground may be very wet in permafrost areas. We may also need to ford smaller rivers, and rubber boots and rain pants will probably keep your feet dry.
- Thermos bottle is obligatory and a box to bring your lunch on shore may be useful.
- Field diary and pencils (pen does not work in rain).
- Floras and other field guides (you can buy the flora of Svalbard here).
- Magnifying glass (lupe)
- Field knife
- Camera
- Binoculars (they are useful for other purposes than bird watching).
- Waterproof bags for clothes, cameras, other equipment. Sometimes travelling with a zodiac can be a wet experience. If you do not have a waterproof bag, pack all your clothes in plastic bags and put them in a normal backpack.

Computers

At UNIS you will have access to computers with Internet, Microsoft Office programs, the statistical package R and other more specialised software. If you have a laptop computer it might be a good idea to bring it to have on board the ship for entering data and field notes.

Costs

You will have to pay for:

- Your travel costs to and from Longyearbyen.
- Your meals and accommodation in Longyearbyen.
- Excursion fee of NOK 200 per excursion day with meals provided (standard university rate), i.e. a total of NOK 1600 (to be paid after your arrival at the UNIS reception).

Questions

If you have any questions, please e-mail to:

- studadm@unis.no for questions regarding admittance, travel and other formalities
- pernillee@unis.no for questions regarding the contents of the course

