

## PhD Program in Plant Sciences: Marine ecology and art field excursion to Scotland

**Lecturers:** Dr Jaboury Ghazoul Professor of Ecosystem management, ETH Zurich; Dr Juanita Schläpfer, Artist and science communicator, Zurich-Basel Plant Science Center

**Location:** Oban, Scotland

**Dates:** 10-18. September 2026

**Credit Points:** 2 ECTS

**Participants:** 10 places in total are available to PhD students in Plant Sciences, Science and Policy, Ecology, Conservation and Ecosystem Management from Uni Basel, ETH Zurich and UZH; Master's students and students from other institutions are welcome if places are available.

### Course Objectives

A new integrative learning field course in marine ecology and art, to be held in Western Scotland in September 2026.

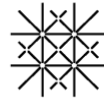
Students will investigate both the marine environment and the culture and people of the coastal area. Central to the course, is the question of what roles do our imagination and creativity play in shaping a society that values life on earth and respects the limits of its planetary boundaries?

Fed by the warming currents of the Gulf Stream and nutrient upwelling, Western Scotland has remarkably rich marine life. For millennia, coastal people lived from these resources. In recent centuries, however, many of these resources have become depleted. Efforts are now being made to rewild and use coastal and marine resources sustainably.

We will visit the people and projects involved in marine science and coastal economies, exploring marine diversity and the ecology of different coastlines, stepping back into ecological history to gain a better understanding of the foundations and basic principles of modern ecology. We will also investigate how people are restoring the marine environment and deriving new economic opportunities from it. We will participate in an oyster count for a restoration project at the research station we are staying at. We will use scientific as well as artistic documentation methods and tools.

The curriculum includes:

- Familiarization with marine diversity: algae and animal life
- Ecology and environment of coasts across a range of gradients



- Touching, sensing, categorizing nature – what does this elicit in us as humans. How can we connect to marine life and the life of other coastal residents? What are our responses as artists? As scientists?
- Lectures from experts in marine ecology, coastal restoration and re-wilding, and several workshops in art practice with professional artists, and a poet.
- Exploring the coastal fishing economy and its associated supply chain, including issues of local and sustainable supply chains.
- We will be based at the Kilchoan estate which has a seaweed farm and oyster rewilding project, we will visit the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) outside of Oban, and a local historical museum and former slate mining community.

**Learning outcomes will include:**

- learning to observe and interpret through both scientific and artistic approaches
- familiarity with species of common algae and marine creatures and their taxonomy
- fundamental ecological concepts, many of which were originally derived from studies of the marine systems of western Scotland
- understanding perspectives on the ecological and economic sustainability of fishing through interactions with fishermen and fishing industry
- an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation
- developing cultural and aesthetic sensitivities
- nature drawing, printmaking and artistic documentation skills

**Prior Knowledge:** There are no formal prerequisites.

**Individual Performance and Assessment:**

In order to obtain the credit points, participants are required to attend all course days and hand in an assignment to be carried out at home. A short written and illustrated report providing reflections on the learning process.

The details will be explained during the course. The assignment is due no later than one week after the course has ended.

Application via LINK with motivation letter.

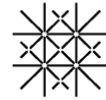
Registration is not confirmation of a place, you will be informed by email if your application is successful.

Questions: [juanita.schlaepfer@usys.ethz.ch](mailto:juanita.schlaepfer@usys.ethz.ch)



University of  
Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>

**ETH** zürich



University  
of Basel

Zurich-Basel Plant Science Center

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***Fee:***

CHF 585

The fee includes course materials, food costs for self-catering and lodging (8 nights) and transport Edinburgh to Oban.

Travel from Zürich to Edinburgh, Scotland must be booked and paid for individually.

Your acceptance on the course will be confirmed on or before 29.5.26, the course must be paid for in full by **1.6.26**.

Cancellations: Fees will only be refunded if we can fill your place from a waiting list. A CHF 100 administrative fee will be charged.