

**BIOL 4900 B – SENIOR SEMINAR, SPRING 2016
SYLLABUS & COURSE POLICIES**

Meeting rooms: Wednesday 3:30-5:20 BSC 1025; Thursday 4-4:50 Powell Hall Auditorium

Instructor: Dr. Mark Blackmore

Office: BSC 2028

Office Hours: Monday; Wednesday; Friday 12:15 – 1:00 PM or by appointment

Required text: None

Pre- or Co-requisites: Completion of all required courses in the senior curriculum for the biology major. (0-3-1)

Course Description: “The capstone course in biology. Students are required to attend outside lectures chosen by the instructor. This course assesses the student’s ability to research independently topics in biology, assimilate the information, and disseminate the information in an organized and understandable fashion in both written and oral forms. Besides demonstrating comprehension of their topic and competence in communication skills, students take the ETS Major Field test in biology and complete the departmental Senior Exit Questionnaire for successful course completion.” (From VSU Catalogue) **This course addresses the following learning outcomes:** “Students will express themselves clearly, logically, and precisely in writing and in speaking, and they will demonstrate competence in reading and listening.” (VSU General Education Outcome 4) “Develop and test hypotheses, collect and analyze data, and present the results and conclusions in both written and oral formats used in peer-reviewed journals and at scientific meetings.” (Biology Department Educational Outcome 1)

The seminar is intended to assess a student’s abilities to investigate, analyze and summarize an area of current biological knowledge and to communicate that knowledge to peers. Each student will select a topic approved by the instructor. Using resources from the library, interlibrary loan, and the Internet, the student will research information on the selected topic, organize it into a written paper and present it in the form of a lecture to the class. Demonstrated comprehension of topic and competence in oral and written communication skills are required to satisfactorily meet the course requirements. Oral and written skill will be graded equally. **To successfully complete the course, students are required to attend all scheduled Science Seminars; take the ETS Major Field test in biology and score at least 140; participate in class discussions, and complete the department Senior Exit Questionnaire.** Details regarding grading are provided below. **Grade: Satisfactory (S) ≥ 70% of points or Unsatisfactory (U) <70%**

ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION: Students are expected to attend all scheduled meetings; any student who cannot attend one or more sessions should discuss this with the instructor prior to the absence. It is expected that all members of the class will participate in a brief discussion after each paper is given. Therefore, be prepared to ask meaningful questions, critique the quality of the material presented and raise meaningful issues related to the topic discussed.

General Topics for Senior Seminar Section B – Fall 2016

Students will choose a specific topic related to one of the following general areas:

1. Genetically Modified Organisms
2. Bioethical Questions
3. Human-driven Extinctions
4. Examples of Climate Change and Related Environmental Effects
5. Collapsing Populations and Loss of Biological Diversity

COURSE GRADE:

The final grade will be determined as follows:

Outline of paper with most references turned in (DUE September 21)	+10
Evaluation of written paper based on how well the topic has been researched and on how well the paper follows the guidelines above.	+40
Oral presentation	+40
Participation in discussions	<u>+10</u>
	Total = 100
<i>Deductions</i>	
Each absence from class	- 10
Failure to turn in assignments on time	- 10
Failure to score 140 or higher on Major Field Test	- 40
Failure to complete Exit Questionnaire	- 20

Format of the Written Paper

This document may not exceed 15 double-spaced, typed pages (12 point font), excluding figures, tables and bibliography. The following format should be used:

1. Main body of the paper
 - A. Introduce the topic
 - B. Present concepts and theories relevant to the topic
 - C. Define key terms
 - D. Present basic information gained by past research on the topic
 - E. Discuss experimental procedures involved in gaining information on the topic
 - F. Discuss controversial issues and changes (if any) in how this topic is perceived
 - G. Present past and current research work on this topic

The main body of the paper may be organized in any way that is appropriate. You can use an historical approach, present basic theory with supporting research results or focus on controversy and dissent associated with competing ideas. The way in which the paper is written depends largely on the student's perspective of the topic. If there are any questions, please consult the instructor before starting to write.

When researching information, use review articles, books, government publications and professional journals which provide research results central to the topic examined. The Literature Cited section (see below) must include AT LEAST 10 references (more is better) appropriately cited in the body of the manuscript; at least 7 of these references must be scientific articles from peer-reviewed journals.

2. Summary

The summary should *briefly* restate the major points in the body of the paper and not present any new information. It should not exceed two paragraphs in length. No references should be cited in the summary. The summary is, in a sense, the equivalent of the abstract of a research paper.

3. Literature Cited

All sources of information used in the paper should be cited. In the body of the paper citations should follow the University of Wisconsin's CSE style guide found at: http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocCSE_NameYear.html

The Oral Presentation

Each student will be assigned a half-hour time slot to present the results of their research in spoken and audio-visual format to the class and any visitors. It should be prepared using PowerPoint and illustrated. Presentations must be 20 - 25 minutes in length plus 5 -10 minutes for questions from the class. The talk should present the information found in the written paper but the paper may not be read to the class. This presentation should be extemporaneous or presented from memory or with the aid of index cards. This presentation need not follow that of the written paper exactly: the oral presentation may be better presented in a different format. Speakers are reminded to talk at a moderate pace (neither too fast nor too slow), and to speak clearly.

Special notes to students:

To protect the privacy of each student, grades will not be posted at any time nor will they be revealed over the telephone. Students are advised to consult the VSU web site

Academic Integrity:

Academic Honesty Policy: Cheating, plagiarism (submitting another person's material as one's own, or doing work for another person which will receive academic credit) are all impermissible. This includes the use of unauthorized books, notebooks, or other sources in order to secure or give help during an assignment or exam, the unauthorized copying of examinations, assignments, reports, or term papers, or the presentation of unacknowledged material as if it were your own work.

Students are responsible for knowing, understanding and complying with the VSU Biology Department Policy on Plagiarism found at <http://www.valdosta.edu/colleges/arts-sciences/biology/documents/resources/PlagiarismPolicy.pdf>
Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated and will be grounds for a failing (U) grade.

If substantial evidence exists for a violation of this policy, the student(s) involved will receive a grade of 'U' for the course and an official record will be filed following the Academic Integrity Response along with a letter to the Dean of Students. See also:

<http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/AcademicHonestyPoliciesandProcedures.shtml>
<https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/academic-honesty-at-vsuh.php>

Special needs: Students requesting classroom accommodations or modifications due to a documented disability must contact the Access Office for Students with Disabilities located in Farber Hall. The phone numbers are 245-2498 (V/VP) and 219-1348 (TTY).

Administration of online Student Opinion of Instruction (SOI):

At the end of the term, all students will be expected to complete an online Student Opinion of Instruction survey (SOI) that will be available on BANNER. Students will receive an email notification through their VSU email address when the SOI is available (generally at least one week before the end of the term). SOI responses are anonymous to instructors/administrators. Instructors will be able to view only a summary of all responses after they have submitted final grades. While instructors will not be able to view individual responses or to access any of the data until after final grade submission, they will be able to see which students have or have not completed their SOIs. These compliance and non-compliance reports will not be available once instructors are able to access the results. Complete information about the SOIs, including how to access the survey and a timetable for this term is available at SOI Procedures and Timelines (located at <http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academicaffairs/sois/welcome.php>).

Title IX Statement: Valdosta State University (VSU) is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive work and learning environment free from discrimination and harassment. VSU is dedicated to creating an environment where all campus community members feel valued, respected, and included. Valdosta State University prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex (including sexual harassment and sexual violence), sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age national origin, disability, genetic information, or veteran status, in the University's programs and activities as required by applicable laws and regulations such as Title IX. The individual designated with responsibility for coordination of compliance efforts and receipt of inquiries concerning nondiscrimination policies is the University's Title IX Coordinator: the Director of the Office of Social Equity, titleix@valdosta.edu, 1208 N. Patterson St., N. Patterson St., Valdosta State University, Valdosta, Georgia 31698, 229-333-5463.