

**Senior Seminar
BIOL 4900 Section A
Spring Semester 2017**

Instructor: Dr. Cristina Calestani
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Office hours:

Tuesday 10 am – 12:00 pm

Thursday 11 am - 12:00 pm

Or by appointment (please send me an email to my valdosta.edu account with “appointment” in the subject line).

Schedule

Tuesday 3:30-5:20 pm BC 1202
Thursday 4:00-4:50 pm Powell Hall Auditorium

Pre- or Co-requisites: completion of all required upper division biology courses.

Course Description and Objectives (from the Undergraduate Catalog): Graded “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory”. The capstone course in biology. Students are required to attend outside lectures chosen by the instructor. This course assesses students’ abilities to research independently topics in biology, assimilate the information, and disseminate the information in an organized and understandable fashion in both oral and written forms. Besides demonstrating comprehension of their topic and competence in communication skill, students take the ETS Major Field test in biology and complete the Senior Exit Questionnaire for successful course completion.

Course Outcomes. This course meets the following educational outcomes:
VSU General Education Outcomes 4, 7
Biology Educational Outcome 1

Course Assessments and Grading

The course is graded as “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory”. Student performance needs to meet all of the following requirements in order to receive a grade of “Satisfactory”:

- 1) No more than three unexcused absences
- 2) A minimum score of 140 on the Major Fields Test
- 3) Complete the Senior Exit Questionnaire
- 4) Earn at least 70% of points for the following:
 - o Review Paper (50 pts)
 - o Oral presentation (40 pts)
 - o Review Paper outline and references (10 pts)

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all Class Sessions. If you fail to attend one of the Class Sessions you must provide documented evidence (e.g. from doctor, police, etc.) that circumstances beyond your control prevented you from attending. Students with more than three unexcused absences will receive an “Unsatisfactory” grade for the course. In

class attendance will be recorded within the first 10 minutes of class. Students arriving after the first 10 minutes of class will be considered absent.

Major Field Test

The Major Field Test is a comprehensive, standardized test prepared by the Educational Testing Service and designed to evaluate the student's general knowledge in biology. The test scores will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Biology Department's curriculum. VSU student scores are also compared to the national average to identify possible weak areas in the curriculum. Thus, students should take the test seriously and make every effort to excel on it. Advices on how to review for the MFT will be provided in class. Completion of the ETS Major Field Test with a score of 140 or higher is a course requirement, and students who fail to complete the ETS Major Field Test will receive a grade of unsatisfactory for the course.

Each individual student is responsible for contacting the VSU Testing Office (Powell Hall-East, First Floor, Room 1131; Telephone 229-245-3878) and arranging a time to take the ETS Major Field Test in Biology. A fee is assessed to take the Major Field Test. The Biology Department will pay the fee for each student to take the test once. Students who fail to score at least 140 on the test must re-take it until a score of 140 is achieved. The student will bear the cost for any re-taking of the Major Field Test.

Senior Exit Questionnaire

The Biology Department Exit Questionnaire is a survey that assesses students experience as a Biology Major at VSU. The questionnaire will be provided by the Instructor and taken in class (see schedule). Failure to complete the Senior Exit Questionnaire will lead to a grade of "Unsatisfactory" for the course.

Assignments

The assignments will consist of: a review paper on a biology subject assigned by the Instructor; the review paper outline including references (due before completing the paper); an oral presentation of the review paper using PowerPoint slides. Instructions and rubrics for all assignments will be provided on the course Blazeview website. See schedule at the end of the syllabus for due dates of assignments. **No assignments will be accepted after the due date.** Assignments not turned in will receive 0 points.

REVIEW PAPER TOPICS

Students will choose the topic area of interest and a specific paper title within the following topic areas:

- 1) Biotechnology: nutritional enhancement of crops
- 2) Gene therapy
- 3) Stem cells/Regenerative medicine
- 4) Enhancement of crop resistance to the environment (e.g. drought, salinity, temperature stress, pathogens)
- 5) Genomics: personalized medicine
- 6) Genetics (inheritance of human diseases)
- 7) Reproductive Biology: invasive species, environmental effects on sex determination

The specific title must be approved by the Instructor.

Cheating or Plagiarism

For VSU's Academic Integrity Code please

see <http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/AcademicHonestyPoliciesandProcedures.shtml>.

For VSU's Academic Honesty please see <http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/AcademicHonestyatVSU.shtml>.

Students are required to read and sign the Department of Biology's Plagiarism Policy and give it to the Instructor <http://www.valdosta.edu/colleges/arts-sciences/biology/documents/resources/PlagiarismPolicy.pdf>

The Review Paper and the Oral Presentation will be submitted by the Instructor to Turnitin/SafeAssign, for a plagiarism review. Incidents of cheating or plagiarism will result in an automatic "Unsatisfactory" grade for the course and referral to The Office of Student Conduct for disciplinary action.

Behavior in the Classroom

It is assumed that all students will act in a mature manner in the classroom, showing consideration for their peers and the Instructor. Any student who consistently distracts other students or the instructor will be removed from the course. **All electronic devices must be turned off or set to silent mode in the classroom and during seminars.**

Learning Support

□ **The Student Success Center:** The Student Success Center (SSC) provides free peer tutoring in core courses, the top four of which are math, writing, Spanish, and biology/chemistry. It also offers time management and study skills workshops as well as provides free professional academic advising and on-campus job information in one location: Langdale Residence Hall. Help is available to all VSU students. Call 333-7570 to make an appointment, or visit the website: www.valdosta.edu/ssc.

□ **Odum Library** provides a variety of services to assist classroom instruction, including library instruction, course reserves, and interlibrary loan. Please see <http://www.valdosta.edu/library/services/faculty.shtml> for further information.

The course will have two embedded librarians to address students' technical questions on the use of the library tools for references searches.

Classroom Accommodations

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). For VSU's Access Office please see <http://www.valdosta.edu/access/facresources.shtml>

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

Date	Topic	Assignment Due
Jan 10	Course Introduction	
Jan 12	Student research-No Class	
Jan 17	Scientific writing-Plagiarism-Final topic selection	
Jan 19	Student research-No Class	
Jan 24	Library Instruction Session Odum 3270	Read and Sign Department of Biology Plagiarism Policy
Jan 26	Student research-No Class	
Jan 31	Student research-No Class	
Feb 2	Student research-No Class	
Feb 7	Student research-No Class	
Feb 9	Student research-No Class	
Feb 14	Student research-No Class	Paper outline with list of references uploaded on Blazeview by midnight
Feb 16	Student research-No Class	
Feb 21	Student research-No Class	
Feb 23	Student research-No Class	
Feb 28	Senior Exit Questionnaire (to be completed in class)	
March 2	Student research-No Class	
March 7	Oral Presentations-All students must attend	
March 9	Student research-No Class	
March 14	SPRING BREAK-NO CLASS	
March 16	SPRING BREAK-NO CLASS	
March 21	Oral Presentations-All students must attend	Deadline for Major Field Test Final version of the paper uploaded on Blazeview by midnight
March 23	Student research-No Class	
March 28	Student research-No Class	
March 30	Student research-No Class	
April 4	Oral Presentations-All students must attend	
April 6	Student research-No Class	
Apr 11	Oral Presentations-All students must attend	
Apr 13	Student research-No Class	
Apr 18	Oral Presentations-All students must attend	
Apr 20	Student research-No Class	
Apr 25	Oral Presentations-All students must attend	
Apr 27	Deadline for re-take/s of Major Field Test	