

Biology 4900 CRN 21292
Senior Seminar Spring 2017
Room 2202 – Thursday 2:00 – 2:50 pm
Science Seminar talk - Thursday - 4:00 – 4:50 pm

Instructor: John Elder

Office: 2088 Biology/Chemistry Bldg.

Phone: 333-5762

Email: jfelder@valdosta.edu

Class Meeting Time: To be discussed in detail at the first meeting.

During the first half of the semester, this class will meet once a week. The class time will be broken into two components. The first hour will be time to discuss expectations, to provide instruction, and to work with student projects. For the final hour of the regular scheduled class time, students are expected to attend the weekly VSU Science Seminar as a course requirement.

Students are required to attend Science Seminar Talks to be discussed and defined at the first meeting.

Beginning at midterm week, (**Wednesday, March 2nd**) this class will meet for 2 hours to accommodate student talks .

Office Hours: 12:00-2:00 pm Thursday or by appointment. I also have an open door policy. I encourage students to drop by whenever they may need help with the course. Please understand however that under these circumstances, you may have to wait until I am free of other things.

Course description: This student seminar is considered the capstone course of your curriculum. That means that the course should be taken seriously and senior level work is expected from all students enrolled for ALL aspects of the course.

Overall, this is a thesis based course with a goal of demonstrating the student's ability to conduct scholarly research, synthesize their research findings into a coherent body of information and to produce a professional quality presentation of their findings.

Each student will select a topic from a list provided by the instructor (or provide a possible topic of their own for approval by the instructor) into which they will conduct scholarly, literature based research. Students will use their literature research to write a significant thesis paper, as well as develop and give a professional presentation to the class.

BIOL 4900 students are required to write a 12-15 page thesis based on a minimum of 25 references and to present a 30 minute talk based on their thesis research.

During this course, students will also take the "**Major Fields**" test in biology. Students are required to register with the **Powell Hall Testing Office** in accordance with the Testing Offices scheduling policies. This is a comprehensive, standardized test designed to evaluate the students overall knowledge in the major sub-disciplines of life science. Students must achieve a **minimum score of 140 points on the Major Fields Test in order to pass the seminar class**. The first attempt of the test will be paid for by the Biology department and may **be retaken at the student's expense (\$25 per try)**. Students failing to achieve this minimum score by the end of the term will receive a grade of "unsatisfactory" for the course and must retake the test at their own expense.

Grading: Overall grade for the course will be evaluated on a 10 point scale. **NO CURVE**. *Grades for this course are satisfactory or unsatisfactory. A total score of 80% is required in addition to the required Major Fields Test score to earn a satisfactory, passing grade.*

The contribution of each assignment to the final grade will be:

Final Thesis Paper :	40%
(Proper format 10%, proper references 10%, Well and sensibly written 10%, Composition and understanding 10%)	
Presentation:	40%
(Organization 10%, Information 10%, Professional presentation 10%, Understanding and interest 10%)	
Attendance/ assignments/ participation	10%
(average of all graded assignments)	
Major Fields test	<u>10%</u>
(required score of 140 Or better)	
Total	100%

Please note, this course is a SENIOR capstone course and your work and participation should reflect the pre-professional level of performance due such a course. Attendance, participation and good attitude is mandatory. You must attend and support your fellow students. Note that this part of the grade is weighted sufficiently as to cost one a letter grade. Since we have only meet once a week, one miss hurts and cannot be made up. Also note, participation means what it says. Sitting there like a lump is insufficient. ROUTINE contribution is necessary for ALL students. The standardized field test is also worth a letter grade, take it seriously. Please see attached pages for specific instructions and expectations for each assignment.

ABSENTEE POLICY: Attendance is mandatory to do well in this course. I will allow one class meeting and one seminar to be missed. Any student missing more than that will receive a grade of *Unsatisfactory*. I assume that students in this class are adults and are responsible for their own attendance and work habits. Students should also be aware of the following university policies about which I have no choice enforcing : **(1) Students who miss 20% of lecture time will receive an automatic failing grade for the course. (2) Students who do not regularly attend lecture, as determined by taking class role, by the proof role date will be automatically dropped from the class. (3) Students who neither drop nor attend class by the midterm date will receive an automatic F for the course.**

DROPPING A COURSE WITHOUT PENALTY: In order to officially drop a course without penalty, a student must obtain and fill out a drop/add form from the Registrar's Office, acquire appropriate signatures, and return the completed form to the Registrar's Office before the designated date (published in the academic calendar). If you don't officially withdraw, and instead just stop coming to class, you will receive an U for the course

PRIVACY ACT (FERPA): THE FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA) prohibits the public posting of grades by social security number or in any manner personally identifiable to the individual student. No grades can be given by email or over the telephone, as positive identification cannot be made by this manner.

ACCESS STATEMENT: Students with disabilities who are experiencing barriers in this course may contact the Access Office for assistance in determining and implementing reasonable accommodations. The **Access Office is located in Farbar Hall**. The phone numbers are 229-245-2498 (V), 229-375-5871 (VP) and 229-219-1348 (TTY). For more information, please visit VSU's Access Office or email: access@valdosta.edu.

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 pregnancy status, 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: **Maggie Viverette, Director of the**

Office of Social Equity, titleix@valosta.edu, 1208 N. Patterson St., Valdosta State University, Valdosta, Georgia 31608, 229-333-5463.

Important Dates:

January 12, 2017	1st class
19, 2017	detailed instructions
26, 2017	topic choice due
February 2, 2017	reference list due
23, 2017	paper outline due
March 2, 2017	Last day to take Major Fields Test, Student talks begin - class meets every week - 2 hours
April 6, 2017	Paper draft due - Senior Questionnaire
April 27, 2017	Final Paper draft due – last date to turn in a passing score on Major Fields test

Instructions for Seminar Talk Presentation

1. Talks are expected to be professional in nature.
 - a) Delivered on assigned date
 - b) Well delivered
 - c) Well spoken
 - d) Practiced
 - e) Substantial / non-superficial
 - f) Demonstrate a clear mastery and understanding of the topic and relevant biology
2. Talks should last from 20 to 25 minutes and an additional 5 or 10 minutes should be allowed at the end for questions and discussions.
3. Talks should be prepared using Powerpoint
 - a) Note: Powerpoint allows for vast amounts of graphic design for presentation slides. However, nifty graphics, animations, sound effects, movies, etc. do not contribute to the grade. What matters in technical presentations is a smooth, clear, organized talk with graphics that are effective in illustrating points of interest. Information and understanding counts, cartoon graphics do not. Good graphics matter only in so far as they actually contribute to the clarity of the presentation. Please do not waste huge amounts of your time on meaningless, computer graphic tricks assuming they will generate a better grade.
4. Talks should be well organized summaries of:
 - a) Introduction of the topic
 - b) Explanation of the biology/ interest/ problem
 - c) Discussion of the technical aspects of the science and methods used to study the question
 - d) Discussion of what the data drawn from these methodologies are
 - e) Conclusions drawn from the data - what do the data mean?
 - f) Your opinions and /or projections based upon your research.
5. If any reference material is directly cited, citations should be included on the relevant slide.
6. Handouts may be prepared directly from Powerpoint and given to the class as a guide if so desired
7. You are expected to be practiced and ready to deliver your seminar on the date assigned. No exceptions other than dire medical emergency will be made. We simply do not have the time. Missed seminar dates will result in a zero for that part of the class - NO KIDDING.

Instructions for the Thesis Paper

1. Choose a topic from the list provided, or, suggest one of your own for approval by the instructor. Choose a topic, or some aspect of that topic, which can be reasonably and thoroughly discussed in the confines of this assignment. Avoid being too broad and general.
2. Research that topic well in the literature. Note that information content is critical. Specific, detailed and well, understood information to support your thesis is required.
3. An outline of the general paper is due to the instructor February 23. This outline should cover the basic premise of the paper, it's general sections and structure and include much specific information. It also must include a list of references gathered to that date. Take these seriously, as they will be one chance for me to give you feedback on your progress **BEFORE** a grade is written.
4. Paper texts should be at least 12 double spaced, pages in length. A maximum length of no more than 15 pages is required. Text must be in Times New Roman font and have a 10 point font size. One inch margins are required.
 - a) Paper length does NOT include references, they are an extra requirement.
 - b) Paper length does NOT include the Abstract or title page, they are extra requirements.
 - c) Paper length does NOT include figures. If figures are used, each figure must be on it's own page and have an appropriate figure caption as formatted in the "*Instruction to Authors*"
 - d) Any funny business with type size, margins, heading spacing, etc., in order to gain paper length will cost one letter grade on the paper.
 - e) Papers must be well written.
 - i) Correct English is required
 - ii) Correct punctuation is required
 - iii) Clear, readable, understandable, complete sentences are required.
 - iv) Bulleted or numbered lists are not allowed
 - v) **If quotations are used, they must be short and to the point and they must be appropriately cited. Any funny business with copying long quotes to fill space will cost the paper a letter grade.**
 - vi) **Also note, due to the ease of copying and pasting text with computers, many examples of cheating through plagiarism of this sort have become common. Any funny business of this sort will result in the paper being rejected and receiving a grade of zero for the course. Do not cut and paste text from web sources or other student papers. This is ridiculously easy to detect, prove and potentially may result in dismissal from the university. All theses will be computer scanned for plagiarism.**
5. Text should follow the formats and requirements of the CSE (Council of Science Editors) in all regards. **NO exceptions to these instructions will be accepted. This is exactly the same format you would use to publish a paper of your own.** That means **every detail**; margins, headings, spellings, punctuation, abbreviations, and literature citation formats. Ignoring any aspect of this format will cost the paper a letter grade.
6. Each paper must have a summary abstract at the beginning. Abstracts are limited to no more than 250 words. Abstracts should be on a separate page and this page should not be numbered.
7. Each paper should have a title page. Text should be centered on the title page. It should contain only: Paper title, authors name, course name and number, and the date on which the paper is submitted. This page should not be numbered
8. **Text:**
 - a) Begin numbering pages with the introduction page and continue numbering through the references
 - b) Papers should contain the following sections identified by headings: Abstract, Introduction, Materials and Methods (if appropriate), Results/Discussion, Conclusions, References.
9. Each paper should be well supported by ample references. References must be properly cited in text where appropriate and listed in correct format, in alphabetical order, in the reference section of the paper. Since students always ask: a minimum of 25 are required, however, most will need to find more to do their topic justice. And, yes, I will take off even if 25 are used, but the topic is not well developed and supported.
 - a) **References MUST come from professional, peer reviewed, primary research or secondary review sources.**
 - b) **References MAY NOT be web pages. Uh uh, no way, no how!** And I do not care what "information technology" propaganda and brain washing you may have absorbed about the wonderfulness of the internet. You may use the web to search data bases and find appropriate, original literature. You may use the internet to find and download original, full text articles. You may use Galileo to locate abstracts and citations, but you **MUST** find, read and include the entire article from the peer, reviewed journal. **Any references cited simply as web pages will be discounted from the grade - heavily.**