

Meeting times and places:

Class time: 5:00 - 6:50 PM, Wednesdays, BSC 2202

Science Seminar: 12:45-1:45 PM, Tuesdays, BSC 1023

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Office hours: 9:00 – 11:00 AM Wednesdays or any other time by appointment

General course description: This is the capstone course for your undergraduate degree. As such, you need to prove that you are ready to become a professional biologist. Specifically, you will (1) attend and evaluate scientific presentations; (2) develop a research paper on some topic in biology, and (3) present your findings to the class. You must also take the Major Fields test to demonstrate your knowledge of biology content. Educational outcomes associated with this course include numbers 1-5 as specified by the VSU Biology Department, and general outcomes numbers 4, 5 and 7 as specified by the University.

1. Science Seminar: You must attend each of the seminar presentations during the semester, schedule to be announced. Prior to the start of each seminar you must see me in order to get an evaluation sheet that you will fill out about the seminar. The completed form must be returned to me at the end of the seminar. Each evaluation is worth 10 points. In addition, you must ask at least one question of a speaker during the semester. This question is worth 20 points, and you must write the question you asked and the speaker's answer on the evaluation form. Three important warnings: (1) No evaluation forms will be handed out once the seminar has started. So, if you get there late, you will not receive credit for attending that seminar. (2) Disruptive behavior during the seminar (talking, texting, surfing the web, etc.) will not be tolerated. I will not accept evaluation forms from anyone causing problems during a seminar. (3) Trivial questions of the speaker (e.g., what's your favorite color?) will not be counted.

Be aware that VSU policy is that missing 20% of a class results in automatic failure of that course. Thus, in the present case, if you are absent from 20% of the seminars, you will receive a grade of Unsatisfactory for this course.

2. Research Paper: Each of you must write a review paper about some topic in biology. This time around I have decided that these will be scientific biographies. At the end of the syllabus is a list of names of very prominent individuals who have made important contributions in biology. Some are still alive, some are not. You must select one person from this list and write a paper that provides a historical review of their accomplishments (what they were, how they were achieved, why they were important, and so on). Biographies will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, so if you have a particular person you wish to cover, sign up soon. If you wish to write a biography of someone not on the list, see me and we can discuss it. **The deadline for all biography approvals is Friday, August 31.** See the course schedule for other due dates relating to the research paper.

Papers must be written in the style of a journal article (the *Quarterly Review of Biology* and *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* provide excellent models) and be exhaustive reviews of the subject. The research paper is worth a total of 175 points; the grading rubric by which it will be evaluated is as follows:

- (1) Initial bibliography: 1 point for each peer-reviewed publication, to a maximum of 25
- (2) Complete rough draft of paper: 50 points, allocated as follows:
 - Bibliography: 1 point for each peer-reviewed publication, to a maximum of 25
 - Content: 15 points
 - Style: 10 points
- (3) Final paper: 100 points total
 - Bibliography: Two points for each peer-reviewed citation to a maximum of 25 (50 points)
 - Content: 25 points
 - Style: 25 points

See the course schedule, provided below, for the due dates for each of these items.

Late submission of any of the items above will be penalized at the rate of 10% per day.

3. Presentations: Presentations will consist of a talk to the class about the subject of your research paper. Your talk should be relatively brief (~ 15-20 minutes) and highlight what you view as the main issues. One way to think about this is to imagine you are teaching this material to a group of novices who will be tested on the information. Thus, be sure to fully explain all concepts and avoid too much technical jargon. The grading rubric for presentations is:

- Effective use of time: 5 points
- Content: 25 points
- Clarity/Organization: 15 points
- Effective use of media: 5 points

Each presentation is worth a maximum of 100 points, calculated as the sum of my evaluation of your presentation (maximum = 50) plus the average evaluation score of every other person in the class (maximum = 50).

Failure to give a presentation will result in a grade of Unsatisfactory for the course.

4. Major Fields Test: You must contact the VSU Testing Office to schedule a day and time to take the Major Fields test. A score of at least 140 is required to achieve a grade of Satisfactory. You must take the Major Fields test by no later than mid-term (**Thursday, October 4**). If you score less than 140, you must continue to re-take the test until you reach 140. The Biology Department will pay for your initial test; you are responsible for all fees associated with retaking the test. **No** scores on the Major Fields test will be accepted after **NOON** on **Monday, December 3**. If I have not received a score of 140 or more for you by that time, you will fail the course.

Grading: Grades will be based on a total of at least 275 points as described below. I cannot be more definitive at this time because I do not know how many Science Seminars there will be, and thus how many points will be generated from them. In addition, you need to be aware that there is a punitive attendance policy. This class requires active participation by all of you. So, if you are not here, the class will suffer dramatically. As already mentioned above, failure to attend $\geq 20\%$ of the Science Seminars will result in a grade of Unsatisfactory for this class. In addition, more than one unexcused absence from class meetings will also result in a grade of Unsatisfactory.

Presentation:	100 points
Science Seminar evaluations:	???
Review paper:	175 points

Final grades are assigned as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. To achieve a grade of Satisfactory, you must have a minimum total point count of 70% from the items listed above, and you must score at least 140 on the Major Fields test.

Boilerplate:

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.

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.

Academic Integrity:

University Prepared Statement: Academic integrity is the responsibility of all VSU faculty and students. Students are responsible for knowing and abiding by the Academic Integrity Policy as set forth in the Student Code of Conduct and the syllabus. All students are expected to do their own work and to uphold a high standard of academic ethics. Cheating (including plagiarism) will not be tolerated. The instructor reserves the right to dismiss you from the course without credit if you are caught cheating. You will be respectful of your instructor and your fellow students at all times, or you will be dismissed from the class and potentially the course.

BIOL 4900 Course Schedule

Month	Day	Classroom activity
August	15	Organizational meeting
	22	Work on research paper
	29	Perils of plagiarism; How to write a research paper
September	5	Initial bibliography due
	12	Work on research paper
	19	Rough draft of paper due
	26	Work on research paper
October	3	Research paper due Oct. 3; Initial attempt at Major Fields test must be completed by Oct. 4
	10	Set presentation schedule
	17	Work on presentation
	24	Class presentations #1 (n = 4)
	31	Class presentations #2 (n = 4)
November	7	Class presentations #3 (n = 4)
	14	Class presentations #4 (n = 4)
	21	THANKSGIVING; NO CLASS
	28	Class presentations #5 (n = 4)

Subjects for a scientific biography:

1. Jeanne Altmann
2. John Avise
3. Daniel Blumstein
4. C. Sue Carter
5. Sarah K. Collinge
6. Francis Crick
7. Richard Dawkins
8. Stephen Jay Gould
9. Peter & Rosemary Grant
10. William D. Hamilton
11. Sarah Hrdy
12. Rob Knight
13. Richard Lenski
14. Peter Marler
15. Svante Pääbo
16. Beth Shapiro
17. Andrew Sih
18. Michael Tomasello
19. J. Craig Venter
20. Edward O. Wilson