

**BIOL 4900: Senior Seminar**  
**Fall Semester 2020, Section A (CRN# 23641), 1 Credit hour (0-3-1)**  
**Department of Biology, College of Science & Math, Valdosta State University**

**Section A (BC 1202): T 5:00 – 6:50 p.m.**

**Biology Seminar (BC 1023; TBA via Blazeview): T 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.**

**Instructor:** Dr. Brian C. Ring

Office: BC 2084

Office hours: **M & W** 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. VOICE OR VIDEO CHAT using MyTeams online. Go to MyVSU email > click 9 box thing by Outlook (upper left corner) > choose teams > search for me > place call

Phone: 249-4841 (Dept. office 333-5759)

email: bcring@valdosta.edu

**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)

In other words, this is the capstone course for your undergraduate biology degree. As such, you will 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 a topic in biology, and **(3)** present your findings to your senior classmates. You must also take the Major Fields test to demonstrate your knowledge of biology content and complete an exit questionnaire. 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. Biology Science Seminar:** Seminars will be announced online in BV.

**2. Review Paper & Scaffolding:** **New this semester** we will work in **groups A & B** (split for social distancing) to complete 2 group papers. More information will be provided on BV and in class.

**Scaffold Writing Process:** Scaffolding is a way to split the writing process into manageable steps to ease the process of writing. **We will break the steps into an 1) annotated bibliography, 2) paper outline noting where you will include your references from your bibliography, 3) rough draft with peer review, and 4) final paper.** As you can see from the schedule below after your topic is selected you will first turn in an annotated bibliography (upload to BV assignment) of your selected literature. In your **annotated bibliography** summarize what is presented in each citation and discuss what exact points you will present in your outline that will form citations in your paper. **Do not plagiarize your annotations as this will result in a zero for the assignment.** One common form of plagiarism is cut-and-paste or a spaghetti paste (instructor will explain). Next you will turn in an **outline** of your paper section with all references from your annotated bibliography inserted into the outline (i.e. citations). Based on progress, we will set the **rough draft** date of your section a few weeks thereafter. As incentive, the most progressed students will gain an extra week to work on their rough draft. Finally your group papers will be assembled in class before assigning presentations. **Failure to submit your section of the final paper will result in a grade of Unsatisfactory for the course (U).**

**3. Presentations:** Presentations will consist of a talk to the class about the subject of your research paper or section followed by questions and discussion. 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 use of powerpoint and/or other technologies is recommended to convey organization

and images on your topic. **Failure to give a presentation will result in a grade of Unsatisfactory for the course (U).**

**4. Major Fields Test:** You must contact the VSU Testing Office located in Powell Hall (North entrance to Bailey Science Center) to schedule a day and time to take the Biology Major Fields Test (MFT). A score of at least 140 is required to achieve a grade of Satisfactory. You must take the MFT by no later than mid-term (**Thursday, October 8, 2020**). 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 thereafter. No scores on the MFT we leave for Thanksgiving and return online only. **If I have not received a score of 140 or more for you by that time, you will receive an Unsatisfactory for the course (U).**

**ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION:** Students are expected to attend all scheduled meetings (below); 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 presentation 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.

**COURSE GRADE:**

Annotated Bibliography	+10
Outline	+10
Rough Draft	+15
Final Paper	+35
Presentation	+30
TOTAL	100 points
Each absence from scheduled class	-10
Failure to score 140 or higher on Major Field Test	-40
Failure to attend Biology Science Seminars &/or online talks	-40

OVERALL: Satisfactory (S)  $\geq$  70% of points or Unsatisfactory (U)  $<$ 70%

NOTE: Failure to provide a Bibliography, outline, and/or Rough Draft by the due dates will not allow your professor to help you prepare for the final paper and presentation and will affect your overall grade.

**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 is suggested and should adhere to the outline and annotated bibliographies you already produced:

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 and present research on the topic
  - E. Discuss experimental procedures involved in gaining information on the topic
  - F. Discuss controversial issues and changes (if any) on your topic

The main body of the paper may be organized in any way that is appropriate so long as you prepare a proper **outline** before you start your **rough draft**. You can use an historical approach, present basic theory with supporting research results or focus on controversy associated with competing ideas/theories. 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, you must use review articles, books, and professional peer reviewed 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 of original research (e.g. not review papers).

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 review/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 either of the following common APA formats:

Johnson (1995) found that *Bufo valiceps* eggs were tolerant to 3 ppt NaCl for up to eight days.

*Bufo valiceps* eggs were tolerant to 3 ppt NaCl for up to eight days (Johnson 1995).

*Bufo valiceps* eggs were tolerant to 5 ppt NaCl for up to eight days in two different studies (Harrington et al. 1995, Hampton & Ralph 1996).

References in the literature cited section should be listed in the same format as APA style, see this website for tutorials: <http://flash1r.apa.org/apastyle/basics/index.htm>

**Special notes to students:** The VSU Biology Department Plagiarism Policy (<http://www.valdosta.edu/biology/>) will be discussed in class with each student's signed receipt of acknowledgement due thereafter. Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated and will be grounds for a failing grade (U).

**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).

## BIOL 4900 Course Schedule

Week	Date:	Classroom Activities	Group Meeting
1	Aug. 18	Syllabus & Introductions, Scaffold Discussion, Literature Search & APA Proper Citation (see video above)	None
2	Aug. 25	<b>Discuss &amp; Set up Paper 1 Sections</b> Now find your Literature!	Group A
3	Sept. 01	<b>Discuss &amp; Set up Paper 2 Sections</b> Now find your Literature!	Group B
4	Sept. 08	<b>Step 1: Annotated Bibliography Due</b> (online), Plagiarism Policy (see link above)	Group A & B online submission
5	Sept. 15	<b>Step 2: Outline Due</b> & Discussion (forming the scaffold packet)- see me if needed online during class time	Group A & B online submission
6	Sept. 22	<b>Step 3: work on rough draft of your section-</b> see me if needed online during class time	None
7	Sept. 29	<b>Step 3: Rough draft of your section due</b>	Group A & B online submission
8	Oct. 06	Break for grading paper sections <b>Major Field Test Due by Midterm Oct. 08</b>	None
9	Oct. 13	<b>Step 4:</b> Compile Final Paper 1 in class	Group A
10	Oct. 20	<b>Step 4:</b> Compile Final Paper 2 in class	Group B

11	Oct. 27	Set Presentation Schedule & Complete Exit Questionnaire	Group A & B online meeting
12	Nov. 03	Class Presentations 1	Group A
13	Nov. 10	Class Presentations 2	Group B
14	Nov. 17	Class Presentations 3	TBA
--	Nov. 24	End of Semester	None