

Biology 4900: 'Senior Seminar'

Instructor: Corey Devin Anderson, Ph.D. (Preferred salutation: 'Dr. Anderson')

Biology Seminar location: Bailey Science Center, Room 1023

Dates: TBA

Time: Tu 12:30 to 1:30 PM*

*Note that Banner says 12:30 to 1:30...but you should be prepared to stay longer, as seminars often last until 1:50 PM.

Senior Seminar meeting location: Bailey Science Center, Room 1202

Section A: Tu 5:00 to 6:50 PM

Section B: Thurs 5:00 to 6:50 PM

Office: 1208 Bailey Science Center

Office Hours: Wed 9:30 to 11:30 AM

Email: coreanderson@valdosta.edu

Course description

From the VSU Undergraduate Catalog:

"Pre- or Co-requisite: Completion of all required courses in the senior curriculum for the biology major. Graded 'Satisfactory' or 'Unsatisfactory'. The capstone course in biology. Students are required to attend outside lectures chosen by the instructor. This course assesses students' 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."

Addendum:

For spring 2020, rather than focusing on an academic review paper and presentation, we will focus on job searching skills; specifically, resume and cover letter writing, as well as interviewing. You will also have to write a statement of purpose for graduate school (whether or not you plan to apply). All other aspects (seminar attendance, ETS Major Field Test, and Senior Exit Questionnaire) are still required for satisfactory completion of the course.

Standards

Education outcomes for BA/BS Degree in Biology: #1

VSU General Education Outcomes: 4 & 7

Books

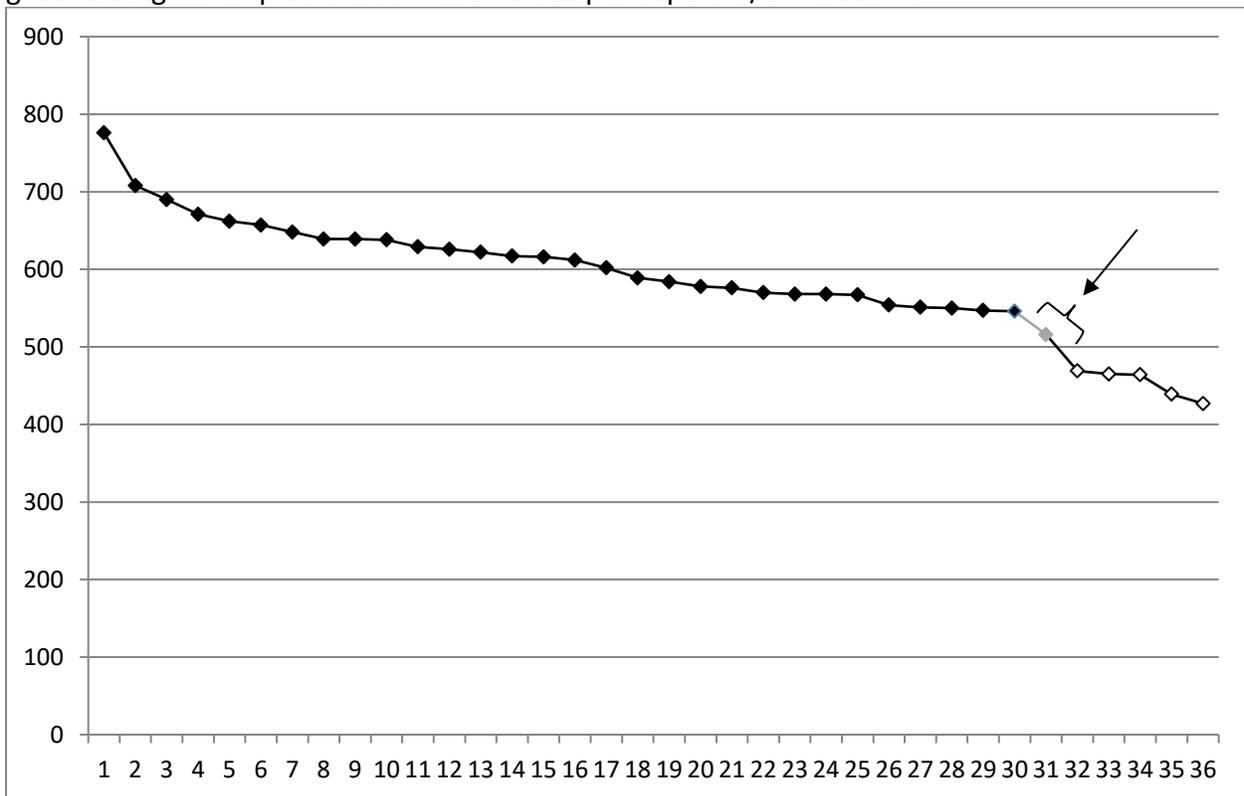
Required texts:

- 1) Spencer D (2016) Resume Psychology Resume Hacks & Traps Revealed: Beat the Machine, Be Seen, Get Hired! USA: Dirk Spencer (self-published).
- 2) Yate M (2006) Knock 'Em Dead Cover Letters, 12th edn. USA: Adams Media.

Please order from Amazon or other online sources (ASAP). You should be able to buy both books for less than \$30. A tentative schedule for reading assignments will be posted on BlazeView.

Grading

This course works on a point system. You will be evaluated based on how you perform relative to other students in the course. Students who underperform (relative to the majority of the other students in the course) will receive an 'Unsatisfactory' and will have to retake BIOL 4900 to graduate. Underperformance will be assessed by sorting the point total (in descending order) and evaluating whether there is a natural break at the bottom of the distribution. Students who fall below the natural break will receive an 'Unsatisfactory'. An example distribution is shown below. Note the natural break at the bottom of the distribution (indicated by the arrow); in this case, the 'open circles' are students that received an 'Unsatisfactory' because there was a substantial gap between their point totals and most other students. In the event that a natural break does not occur, all students that fall in the first quartile (i.e. bottom 25% of the class) may receive an 'Unsatisfactory'. All borderline cases (e.g. gray symbol) will be evaluated based on graded assignment performance and overall participation/attendance.



Specific course requirements (150 points)

- 1) Resume
 - a. First draft (= 10 points)
 - b. Final draft (= 40 points)
- 2) Cover letter
 - a. First draft (= 10 points)
 - b. Final draft (= 40 points)
- 3) Statement of Purpose
 - a. First draft (= 10 points)
 - b. Final draft (= 40 points)
- 4) Attendance
 - a. 5 points/scheduled class
 - b. 5 points/scheduled seminar
- 5) Pop quizzes
 - a. 5 points/quiz

Deductions

- Failure to complete ETS Major Field Exam by deadline of April 6th (-40 points).
- Failure to complete Senior Exit Questionnaire (-30 points).
- Failure to schedule and complete 'Focus 2' career assessment (-30 points).

Biology Seminar series

All students in BIOL 4900 are required to attend the Biology Seminar series. Seminars are on Tuesdays from 12:30 to ~ 1:50 PM in BSC 1023. You must sign in at the beginning of the seminar and turn in the evaluation form at the end of the seminar (failure to do both will result in a point deduction, specified above). The seminars are a mix of formal academic presentations and informal Q&A job talks. The seminar schedule will be posted on BlazeView and is subject to updating (so please check it weekly). It is very important that arrive on time, prior to the beginning of the seminar (walking in once a presentation has started is rude). It is OK to bring food or drink (if necessary) but please be discrete. If you exit or leave the room when the presentation is in progress, open and close the door quietly.

Senior seminar section

You must also attend your scheduled course section. There may be some 'open' weeks where there will not be a formal meeting. Dr. Anderson will post a tentative schedule on BlazeView.

Pop quizzes

It is very important that students complete any assigned reading prior to the scheduled meeting time for your section. Pop quizzes will be given to evaluate whether or not you have done the reading assignment.

Senior Exit Questionnaire

The questionnaire will be done in class. If a student misses that class, they must arrange to complete the questionnaire via the Department of Biology office (and provide confirmation).

ETS Major Field Test

The major field test is a comprehensive 150-question multiple-choice exam that is intended to assess the knowledge that you have acquired as a Biology major.

<https://www.ets.org/mft/about/content/biology>

As this exam is intended to be an assessment, we will not be preparing or practicing for the test in class. Nevertheless, to receive a 'Satisfactory' in this course, you must pass the exam with a score of 140 or higher. Failure to take the exam by the specified deadline (of April 5th) will result in a major point deduction (-40 points) that will likely result in an 'Unsatisfactory.' Failure to pass the test (with the specified score, above) will result in an 'Incomplete.' You may retake the test, as required, until you pass. The test must be scheduled via the VSU Office of Testing: 229-245-3878. It is offered daily, by appointment. There is a fee associated with the test. The Department of Biology will pay for the initial test; however, if you fail to meet the benchmark, you must retake the exam at your own expense. **A photocopy of the ETS Major Field Test score must be submitted to the instructor by April 6th.**

Focus 2 (career assessment)

After you have completed the final drafts of your resumes and cover letters, you will be required to schedule and complete the 'Focus 2' career assessment via the Career Opportunities office. **You must complete the assessment by April 21st.** There will be a form on the course BlazeView site that must be signed by the career counselor. Students who have completed 'Focus 2' in prior semesters must repeat the process anew.

<https://www.valdosta.edu/student/student-services/career-services/focus-2-instructions.php>

Plagiarism policy

Resume, cover letter, and statement of purpose writing are required elements of this course. While you will be graded partly on your ability to assimilate lessons into your revisions...you should avoid word for word copying of textbook and online examples, or other students' materials. This will be considered plagiarism and will result in a deduction (or zero) on that assignment (depending on severity).

Cell phone and computer policy

Please turn your cell/smart phones off (or on silent) when you enter the classroom or lecture hall. If you want to use your computer in class you will need special permission.

Students with disabilities

Students requiring classroom or testing accommodations because of documented disabilities should discuss their needs with the instructor at the beginning of the semester. Special arrangements should be made via the Access Office, 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 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@valdsota.edu, 1208 N. Patterson St., Valdosta State University, Valdosta, Georgia 31608, 229-333-5463.