

**Senior Seminar  
BIOL 4900 Section B  
Fall Semester 2021**

**Instructor:** Dr. Cristina Calestani  
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**Office hours:**  
Mon 5:00-5:30 PM; Tuesday 2:00-5:00 PM; Wednesday 5:00-5:30 PM; Friday 2:00-3:00PM  
Or by appointment (please send me an email to my valdosta.edu account).

**Schedule**

Tuesday 12:45 PM – 1:35 PM BC 3009

Thursday 5:00 PM - 6:50 PM BC 2202

**Important note:** During some of the Tuesday classes students will attend the Biology Department Science Seminar. The seminar schedule has not been finalized yet, and it will be continuously updated throughout the semester. It is the student responsibility to check updates of the seminar schedule on Blazeview.

**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 the following requirements 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 outline and references 15 pts
  - o Review Paper 40 pts
  - o Oral Presentation 30 pts
  - o Science Seminar Critique 10 pts
  - o Participation (1 pt per question asked during Oral Presentations by students) 5 pts

## Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all Class Sessions and the weekly Science Seminars. If you fail to attend one of the Class Sessions or Science Seminars, 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. Seminar attendance will be recorded with the Seminar Critique form that needs to be turned-in to the Instructor by the end of the Science Seminar.

## 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 weaknesses in the curriculum. Thus, students should take the test seriously and make every effort to excel on it. Advice on how to review for the MFT in Biology will be provided in class. Completion of the MFT with a score of 140 or higher is a course requirement, and students who fail to complete the MFT will receive a grade of unsatisfactory for the course.

Each individual student is responsible for contacting the VSU Office of Testing (University Center, Entrance #5, Room 4167; Phone 229-245-3878) to make an appointment for the MFT in Biology. Students must take the MFT by Thursday October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021. A fee is assessed to take the MFT. 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 (re-take/s must be completed by Thursday December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021). The student will pay the cost for any re-take of the MFT.

The MFT in Biology consists of approximately 150 multiple choice questions in cell biology, molecular biology and genetics, organismal biology, and population biology, evolution, and ecology. Please refer to the following website <https://www.ets.org/mft/about/content/biology> for more information on the MFT and sample questions.

## Senior Exit Questionnaire

The Biology Department Exit Questionnaire is a survey that assesses students experience as a Biology Major at VSU. The link to the questionnaire will be provided by the instructor and taken in the computer room BC 3018 (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:

- 1) a review paper outline, including references, on a biology topic assigned by the instructor (see below)
- 2) a review paper developed from the outline
- 3) an oral presentation of the review paper using PowerPoint
- 4) a completed and signed Science Seminar Critique for each seminar attended. Printable critique forms are posted on Blazeview. It is the student responsibility to print out the form and bring it to the Science Seminar. The Science Seminar Critique form must be turned-in at the end of each seminar.

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 that must be approved by the instructor. Topic areas are the following:

- 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: environmental effects on sex determination

## **Cheating or Plagiarism**

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.**

**The Review Paper and the Oral Presentation will be submitted by the instructor to Turnitin/SafeAssign, for a plagiarism review.**

Students are required to read and sign the Department of Biology’s Plagiarism Policy and give it to the instructor by August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Please find the form at <http://ww2.valdosta.edu/biology/documents/PlagiarismPloicy.pdf>

For the VSU’s Academic Integrity Code please see <http://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/student-conduct-office/>

For the VSU’s Academic Honesty policies and procedure please see <http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/vp-office/academic-honesty-policies-and-procedures.php>

## **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. **Cell phones must be turned off or set to silent mode in the classroom and during the seminars.**

## **COVID-19 related policy**

As the Blazer Creed articulates, members of the VSU community are expected to live by the high standards of civility, integrity, and citizenship and embrace their responsibility as a member of the Blazer community. In recognition of this responsibility, and in response to the best available science and current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Georgia Department of Public Health, while face coverings are no longer required, individuals are strongly encouraged to continue wearing a face covering indoors. Unvaccinated individuals are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated. Vaccines remain available at no cost for all members of the university community by appointment at Student Health Services. For COVID Vaccines, please call ahead for an appointment at 229-333-5886.

## **Learning Support**

**Access Office:** 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](mailto:access@valdosta.edu).

**The Academic Support Center:** The Academic Support Center provides free peer tutoring for most core courses and some upper-division courses. It also offers time management and study skills workshops as well as other learning support services.

Call 333-7570 to make an appointment, or visit the website: <https://www.valdosta.edu/asc/>

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

**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 Office of Student Affairs.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:**

**Note: The Science Seminar schedule has not been finalized but these are the possible dates.**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
Aug 17	<b>Course Introduction</b>	
Aug. 19	<b>Library Instruction Session held in Odum 3270</b>	<b>Read and sign Department of Biology Plagiarism Policy</b>
Aug. 24	<i>Student research-No Class</i>	<b>Upload on Blazeview the proposed paper title for approval</b>
Aug. 26	<b>Scientific writing-Plagiarism</b>	
Aug. 31	<i>Student research-No Class</i>	
Sept. 2	<i>Student research-No Class</i>	
Sept. 7	<i>Student research-No Class</i>	
Sept. 9	<i>Student research-No Class</i>	<b>Paper outline and reference paper copies on BV by 5:30 PM</b>
Sept. 14	<i>Student research-No Class</i>	
Sept. 16	<i>Student research-No Class</i>	
Sept. 21	<b>Science Seminar</b>	<b>Science Seminar critique due at the end of seminar</b>
Sept. 23	<i>Student research-No Class</i>	
Sept. 28	<b>Science Seminar</b>	<b>Science Seminar critique due at the end of seminar</b>
Sept. 30	<i>Student research-No Class</i>	
Oct. 5	<b>Science Seminar</b>	<b>Science Seminar critique due at the end of seminar</b>
Oct. 7	<i>Midterm</i>	<b>Final version of the paper uploaded on BV by midnight</b>
Oct 12	<b>FALL BREAK-No Class</b>	
Oct. 14	<i>Preparation Oral Presentation-No Class</i>	
Oct. 19	<b>Science Seminar</b>	<b>Science Seminar critique due at the end of seminar</b>
Oct. 21	<i>Preparation Oral Presentation-No Class</i>	<b>Deadline for Major Field Test (first attempt)</b>
Oct. 26	<b>Science Seminar</b>	<b>Science Seminar critique due at the end of seminar</b>
Oct. 28	<b>Oral Presentations-All students must attend</b>	
Nov. 2	<b>Science Seminar</b>	<b>Science Seminar critique due at the end of seminar</b>
Nov. 4	<b>Oral Presentations-All students must attend</b>	
Nov. 9	<b>Science Seminar</b>	<b>Science Seminar critique due at the end of seminar</b>
Nov. 11	<b>Oral Presentations-All students must attend</b>	
Nov. 16	<b>Science Seminar</b>	<b>Science Seminar critique due at the end of seminar</b>
Nov. 18	<b>Oral Presentations-All students must attend</b>	
Nov. 23	<i>No class</i>	<b>Science Seminar critique due at the end of seminar</b>
Nov. 25	<b>THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY</b>	
Nov. 30	<i>No class</i>	
Dec 2	<b>Senior Exit Questionnaire (to be completed in room BC 3018)</b>	<b>Deadline for re-take/s of Major Field Test</b>