
Biology Department, College of Arts & Sciences, Valdosta State University
FALL 2021---COURSE SYLLABUS*

BIOL 7900 Section A CRN 85024 - 2 credit hours

Class meetings: Tuesdays, 5:00 pm – 6:50 pm, Room 2202, Bailey Science Center

Instructor: Dr. Jenifer Turco **Email:** jturco@valdosta.edu
Telephone: 229-249-4845 **Office:** 2091 Bailey Science Center
Office Hours: Mon., 12:30 – 2:45 pm; Tues., 4:15 – 4:45 pm; Thurs., 4:15 – 5:30 pm; or by appointment.
Important-exception: Due to other responsibilities, the instructor may not be available for office hours on Thursday, August 19.

Course Description: BIOL 7900. Graduate Seminar. 2 Hours.

Prerequisites: Acceptance into the graduate program in biology. Discussion and critical analysis of peer-reviewed literature in biology and related sciences. Students must take this course once for credit. This course may be repeated for a maximum of three times for credit.

Please note that BlazeView will be used during this class. In particular, Students should be able to use the Discussions and Assignments features in BlazeView.

SPECIAL NOTES TO STUDENTS:

FACE COVERINGS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

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**. Individuals are also encouraged to practice social distancing when possible. **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.

ALTERNATE EDUCATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS (STUDENTS)

Alternate Educational Arrangement (AEA) or accommodations granted to students for Fall 2020 or Spring 2021 due to increased risk for severe illness with COVID-19 will end no later than June 30, 2021. All students are expected to return to their traditional educational arrangement beginning with the start of the Fall 2021 semester. Lack of vaccination is not grounds for a request for continuing an AEA or accommodation.

*****Please note that qualified individuals with a disability can submit requests for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) academic accommodations through the Access Office.**

COVID OPERATIONS & CLASSROOM NOTIFICATIONS: The Student Health Center continues to offer COVID testing, COVID vaccination, and monitors the daily reports of COVID+ individuals. Contact tracing is also ongoing. Faculty will receive a notice from the Dean of Students for any student that has a verified reason to be absent from class. If you do not receive the notification, you should request that the student contact the Office of Student Affairs at 229-333-5941.

QUARANTINE AND ISOLATION

Students, faculty, and staff who have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 are not required to quarantine if they have been fully vaccinated against the virus and show no symptoms. Individuals who have not yet been fully vaccinated and who have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, show symptoms, or anyone diagnosed as COVID-19 positive should continue to self-report in the MyVSU Portal.

ALL GUIDANCE LISTED HERE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE BASED ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH. VSU RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ADJUST PLANS AS NECESSARY.

***This is a tentative syllabus. Changes to this syllabus will be announced during class; alternatively, changes may be posted on BlazeView.**

As the instructor, I am committed to making this class a positive learning experience for everyone. There is no way to know what will happen as the semester progresses. However, please do not worry. I will do my best to be flexible and work with you as the semester unfolds.

ADDITIONAL NOTES TO STUDENTS:

1. **Please do not come to the classroom or my office if you are sick.** Also, please note that, if you must be absent due to a quarantine or isolation requirement for COVID-19, you should report this situation via the COVID-19 Self Reporting Link in MyVSU and through the Dean of Students Office. You may report other absences through the Dean of Students Office as well.
2. **Food and drink may not be consumed in the classroom.** If you carry a bottle of water or other beverage with you, please be sure that it is sealed and put away **before** you enter the classroom. We will be taking a 10 minute break half-way through the class period.
3. No disruptive behavior will be tolerated during class. A student who engages in disruptive behavior will be asked to leave.
4. In order to respect the privacy of each student, grades will not be posted or given out by telephone.
5. Students should consult the VSU Student Handbook, Catalog, Semester Calendar, Schedule of Classes, & Registration Guide (all available online) for information about VSU policies and procedures regarding registration, drop/add, and withdrawal. October 7 is midterm, and the last day to withdraw is October 14. Students are not permitted to withdraw after midterm except in cases of hardship.
6. 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.
7. 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 individuals designated with responsibility for coordination of compliance efforts and receipt of inquiries concerning nondiscrimination policies are the University's Title IX Coordinators. The names and contact information for the Title IX Coordinators at VSU are given at the following link:
<https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/finance-admin/human-resources/employee-matters/sexual-misconduct-title-ix/title-ix-coordinators.php>
8. Cell phones, music players, and other electronic devices may not be used at any time in class.
9. Students are expected to read and adhere to the following: (i) the VSU Student Code of Conduct as described in the VSU Student Handbook and (ii) the Biology Department policy on plagiarism (available online through the departmental Web site). The instructor may use a variety of methods for detecting cheating and plagiarism. Cheating or plagiarism will result in a grade of "0" for the assignment. In addition, the instructor may complete a Report of Academic Dishonesty and submit it to the VSU Student Conduct Office. A student who cheats or plagiarizes on more than one assignment will receive a grade of "F" in the course.
10. At the end of the term, all students will be expected to complete an online Student Opinion of Instruction survey (SOI) that will be available on BANNER. Students will receive an email notification through their VSU email address when the SOI is available (generally at least one week before the end of the term). SOI responses are anonymous to instructors/administrators. Instructors will be able to view only a summary of all responses after they have submitted final grades. While instructors will not be able to view individual responses or to access any of the data until after final grade submission, they will be able to see which students have or have not completed their SOIs. These compliance and non-compliance reports will not be available once instructors are able to access the results. Complete information about the SOIs, including how to access the survey and a timetable for this term is available at [SOI Procedures and Timelines](#) (located at <http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/sois/welcome.php>).

Educational Outcomes and Course Objectives.

The **Biology Graduate Educational Outcomes** are available in the VSU Graduate Catalog and are numbered 1 through 4. This catalog is available online through <http://www.valdosta.edu>. This course addresses Biology Graduate Educational Outcomes 1 and 2, which are stated below.

1. To demonstrate competency in factual content and interpretation of the major biological concept areas of cell and molecular biology, genetics, organismal biology, and evolution and ecology.
2. To demonstrate the ability to identify significant biological research questions, develop research protocols, and properly analyze research questions through the use of the scientific method.

Specific Course Objectives:

1. To explore various areas of biology and related sciences.
2. To develop students' abilities to present, critically analyze, and discuss research papers.
3. To increase students' knowledge of biology and related sciences.

Specific Course Requirements:

In this course, each student will obtain reliable information about scientific topics, use the information collected to give various types of presentations/seminars, and **participate in discussions related to scientific topics**. Before each class, all students are expected to read the relevant articles for that week, evaluate the articles critically, and come to class prepared to discuss the articles/topics. It is suggested that students print out their own copies of the relevant articles for each class, use the copies to record notes and questions related to the articles, and bring their copies to class on the day the topic/articles will be covered. This will facilitate participation in the discussions.

The instructor will provide a list of possible topics for the course on the first day of class. Students will suggest additional topics for the list. The students and instructor will then work together to prepare the specific schedule for the presentations, "debates", and discussions. Each presentation and "debate" will be followed by a relevant discussion.

The list of topics provided by the instructor includes links to some articles that may be discussed during the initial class periods. Thereafter, students must provide links to the articles they will be using and covering during their presentations one week ahead of time. The instructor must approve scientific articles that are primary sources before they are made available to the class.

"DEBATES" AND PRESENTATIONS/SEMINARS. It is anticipated that, during the semester, each student will participate in one "debate" and give four, 35- to 40-minute seminars or presentations. A relevant question-and answer/discussion period will follow each "debate" or other presentation. Students should learn about the topics, think critically about them, and become comfortable expressing themselves.

Importantly, a presentation/seminar (or "debate") must provide "in-depth" consideration of the articles being covered. For a seminar presentation focusing on a formal scientific article that is a primary source, one must cover: the question(s) asked, experiments performed, results obtained, and significance of the research. The methods used in the research should also be explained in general terms. Students must use PowerPoint software for their formal presentations, and a substantial number of the figures and/or tables from the primary source must be covered in detail during a seminar. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation must be posted in BlazeView immediately after the seminar. In addition, a copy of any notes used during the presentation must be posted in BlazeView immediately after the seminar. **The "debates" will be presentations in which a single student presents two different viewpoints on a particular biological issue.**

Topics chosen by students and the order of presentations will be discussed during the first few class periods. In general, once a topic has been chosen, it cannot be changed.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION. Students should NOT read their presentations to the class. In addition, students should avoid using direct quotations during their seminar presentations. Each student should take care to use his/her own words to express himself/herself during a presentation, as this will convey understanding of the material.

Scheduling Policies:

Due to time constraints, it is important that "debates", presentations/seminars, and discussions take place at the scheduled times. The instructor should be notified as soon as possible if a problem such as illness or a serious emergency occurs such that a student cannot give a presentation as scheduled.

Attendance Policies:

Students are expected to attend all class meetings and all "debates", presentations/seminars, and discussions, **unless they are sick or have a serious emergency.** Students are expected to come to class on time and to participate for the entire class period.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:

Tues.	Aug. 17	General course information Distribution of list of possible topics for “debates” and seminar presentations. Addition of topics to list by students Questions and general discussion about class Topics/articles to be discussed on Aug. 31
Tues.	Aug. 24	Selection of topics & establishment of schedule for debates and seminars What is a “primary source”? Discussion about effective PowerPoint slides and seminars Topics/articles to be discussed on Aug. 31 Reminder that links to articles should be sent to students one week ahead of time
Tues.	Aug. 31	Distribution of schedule for student seminar presentations & discussion leading <u>Informal</u> discussions about topics/articles as agreed on Aug. 17 and Aug. 24
Tues.	Sept. 7	“Debate” 1-all will discuss – student will provide links to resources 1 week ahead of time
Tues.	Sept. 14	“Debate” 2- all will discuss – student will provide links to resources 1 week ahead of time
Tues.	Sept. 21	Seminar presentation #1 on primary source (instructor)- all will read & discuss sources
Tues.	Sept. 28	Seminar presentation #2 on primary source (student)- all will read & discuss sources
Tues.	Oct. 5	Seminar presentation #3 on primary source (student)- all will read & discuss sources
<u>Fall Break</u>		
Tues.	Oct. 19	Formal presentation #4 on thesis research (student)- all will participate in discussion
Tues.	Oct. 26	Formal presentation #5 on thesis research (student)- all will participate in discussion
Tues.	Nov. 2	Presentation #6, Less formal presentation on papers related to thesis research (student)- all will read & discuss sources
Tues.	Nov. 9	Presentation #7, Less formal presentation on papers related to thesis research (student)- all will read & discuss sources
Tues.	Nov. 16	Presentation #8 – “Teaching style” presentation on a microbiology topic (student)- All will read at least the abstracts of the sources, but are not required to read the sources in detail.
Tues.	Nov. 23	Presentation #9– “Teaching style” presentation on a microbiology topic (student)- All will read at least the abstracts of the sources, but are not required to read the sources in detail.
<u>Thanksgiving Holiday</u>		
Tues.	Nov. 30	General discussion about the course and topics discussed <u>Also: Make-up time for a “debate” or seminar/presentation (in case a student was sick or had an emergency and could not speak at the scheduled time).</u>
Tues.	Dec. 7	5:00-7:00 pm, Final Exam period (This course will not have a final exam.) <u>However, this exam period may be used as a “last-resort” make-up time for a “debate” or seminar/presentation (in case a student was sick or had a documented, serious emergency and could not speak at the scheduled time).</u> Please leave this time open and plan to attend in case this is necessary.

Grading:

Points for the course are allocated as follows:

“Debate”.....	150 points
Seminar presentation on primary source.....	150 points
Presentation on thesis research.....	150 points
Presentation on papers related to thesis research.....	150 points
“Teaching style” presentation on a microbiology topic.....	150 points
Participation in discussions.....	250 points

TOTAL	1000 points

Grading scale: 900-1000, A 800-899, B 700-799, C 600-699, D ≤599 F

In order to pass the class, a student must:

1. Give the 5 indicated presentations
2. Participate in discussions

Additional, important comments on grading:

Participation is very important in this course. Each student is expected to complete all assignments and participate in all discussions. I will start the semester assuming everyone has an A. So long as you do your job, that will not change. However, if you don't participate or don't do your assignments, then your grade will start to fall.

Please note that, due to the current pandemic, it is possible that modifications may need to be made in this course.