

**Valdosta State University
Biology Department
BIOL 4900: Senior Seminar
Course Syllabus, Fall 2022**

Instructor: Dr. Erin Grabarczyk

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Student drop-in hours: Wednesday 2:00 – 3:00 PM, Thursday 12:30-1:30PM, or by appointment

Biology Science Seminar Tuesday 12:45 PM - 1:35 PM BSC 3009

Senior Seminar Tuesday 5:00 PM - 6:50 PM BSC 1202

Course Description and Objectives: This is the capstone course for your undergraduate biology degree. As such, you will provide evidence that you are ready to become a professional biologist. Specifically, you will (A) attend and evaluate scientific presentations; (B) develop a research paper on a topic in biology, and (C) 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.

Pre- or Co-requisites: Completion of all required upper division biology courses.

Course Outcomes: This course meets the following educational outcomes of VSU General Education Outcomes 4, 7 and Biology Educational Outcome 1.

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 responsibility of the student to check for updates to the seminar schedule on Blazeview.

Course Assessments: The course is graded as Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. Students must meet **ALL** of the following requirements to receive a grade of Satisfactory:

Course Requirements

1. Research paper
2. Annotated bibliography
3. In-class presentation
4. A minimum score of 140 on the Major Fields Test
5. Complete the Senior Exit Questionnaire
6. Attendance & evaluation of required seminars

Grade breakdown	Poi nts
Seminar evaluations	10
Annotated bibliography	15
Review Paper	40
In-class presentation	30
Participation in Q&A during presentation by peers	5
Grand total	100

Absences during Biology seminar or scheduled class time results in **-10 points per missed session** from your final grade!

Extra credit: If you ask a question during Biology seminar (T 12:45-1:35) you will get 2 extra credit points!

Final Grade: Satisfactory (S) \geq 70 points or Unsatisfactory (U) $<$ 70 points

In case of cancelled seminars, instructor will redistribute the assigned credit into grand total and evaluation will be dependent on the review paper.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all in-person Class Sessions. If you fail to attend one of the Class Sessions 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.** Class attendance will be recorded within the first 10 minutes of class. Students that arrive after the first 10 minutes of class will be considered absent.

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 October 4th, 2022. 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 November 29th, 2022). 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, 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 questionnaire needs to be taken in online, the link will be sent to you in November. **The SEQ is mandatory to pass this class! Failure to complete the Senior Exit Questionnaire will lead to a grade of "Unsatisfactory" for the course.**

Assignments

There are three big assignments for this course: 1. An annotated bibliography, 2. A review paper on a biology subject (see below), and 3. An oral presentation of your review paper given during class.

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. **During the semester you may turn in ONE late assignment within 48 hours of the original due date to receive full credit, no questions asked.** After the one late assignment pass is used, all assignments turned in late will receive 0 points.

REVIEW PAPER TOPICS – Title must be approved by Dr. Grabarczyk!

Students will choose the topic area of interest and a specific paper title within the following topic areas:

1. Effects of Human Induced Rapid Environmental Change (HIREC) on plants or animals.
2. How humans interact with nature and what are the consequences for nature and society.

3. Rapid evolution of non-model organisms due to environmental change.
4. Animal communication and issues with detection, reception, and perception.
5. Animal-plant interactions and their importance in agroecosystems.
6. Phenotypic plasticity in non-model organisms.
7. Effects of climate change on human health, non-human animals, or plants.

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 19th, 2021. Please find the form in BlazeVIEW- Plagiarism folder.
- 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

Students should act in a mature manner in the classroom, showing consideration for their peers and instructor. Any student who consistently distracts other students or the instructor will be removed from the course. **All electronic devices must be turned off or set to silent mode in the classroom and during 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.
- **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:

*REMEMBER! You must attend all of the Biology department seminars that take place on TUESDAY 12:24-1:35PM in BSC 3009 and turn in seminar evaluation form.

Date	Topic	Assignment Due
Aug 16	Course Introduction, Organization, Topics, Scientific writing, Plagiarism policy	Read and sign Department of Biology Plagiarism Policy. Bring signed copy of the Department of Biology Plagiarism Policy for submission in class.
Aug 24	Student research-No PM Class	Paper title/topic for approval by Friday at 11:59PM
Aug 30	Library Instruction meet in Odum Room 3270 @ 5PM	
Sept 6	Student research-No PM Class	
Sept 13	Student research-No PM Class	Annotated Bibliography due by Friday at 11:59PM
Sept 20	Student research-No PM Class	
Sept 27	Student research-No PM Class	
Oct 4	Midterm	Final version of Research paper due by Friday at 11:59PM; Biology MFT completed
Oct 11	FALL BREAK – No Class	
Oct 19	Preparation for presentation – No class	
Oct 25	Student presentations – attendance required!	
Nov 1	Student presentations – attendance required!	
Nov 8	Student presentations – attendance required!	
Nov 15	Student presentations – attendance required!	
Nov 22	THANKSGIVING BREAK – No Class	
Nov 29	Senior Exit Questionnaire (to be completed in BC3018 between 5-5:30PM); Deadline for re-take/s of Major Field Test	Senior Exit Questionnaire. Deadline for re-take/s of Major Field Test

Student Checklist of Course Requirements:

- ___ Completion of the online plagiarism tutorial (By August 26th)
- ___ Annotated bibliography (Due September 16th)
- ___ Completion of MFT in Biology (≥ 140) – Submit photocopy of score to instructor. (By October 7th)
- ___ Research paper – (Due October 7th)
- ___ In-class Presentation PowerPoint – (Due 1 day before presentation)
- ___ Completion of Biology Senior Exit Questionnaire. (November 29th)
- ___ Attendance of all scheduled class periods (including all student presentation sessions)
- ___ Attendance of & submission of completed evaluation forms from Biology Department Seminars.