

**Senior Seminar
BIOL 4900 Section A (CRN# 82012)
Fall Semester 2022**

Instructor: Dr. John G. Phillips (he/him)
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Office (Student) hours: **Monday 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM** **Wednesday 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM**
Or by appointment (please send me an email to my valdosta.edu account with “appointment” in the subject line and I will accommodate as time permits).

Schedule **Monday 5:00 PM - 6:50 PM BC 1202** **In class discussion, review and presentation**
Tuesday 12:45 PM - 1:35 PM BC 1023 **Biology Science Seminar**

Blazeview [Senior Seminar – BIOL 4900A](#)

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’s responsibility to check updates of the seminar schedule on Blazeview.

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

I. Course Description and Objectives: 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 (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. 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.

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

III. 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. A minimum score of 140 on the Major Fields Test
2. Complete the Senior Exit Questionnaire
3. **OVERALL: Satisfactory (S) ≥ 70% of points or Unsatisfactory (U) <70%**
 - i. Summaries for all the Senior Seminars ----- total ----- 10 pts
 - ii. Annotated Bibliography ----- 15 pts
 - iii. Review Paper ----- 40 pts
 - iv. Oral presentation ----- 30 pts
 - v. Participation in Q&A during oral presentation by peers ---- 5 pts

Total 100 pts

No attendance to Tuesday senior seminar ----- (-10 pts per seminar)

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

IV. Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all 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.** 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.

V. 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 3rd, 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, 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.

VI. 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 **BC3018 between 5-5:30PM** on November 29th, 2022 (BlazeVIEW has link to complete the survey). ***Failure to complete the Senior Exit Questionnaire will lead to a grade of “Unsatisfactory” for the course.***

VII. Assignments

The assignments will consist of: a review paper on a biology subject assigned by the Instructor; the review paper outline including references (annotated bibliography) (due before completing the paper); an oral presentation of the review paper using PowerPoint slides. 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.

VIII. REVIEW PAPER TOPICS - Title must be approved by Dr. Phillips!

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

1. **Biogeographic Patterns** – any model system of your choice (e.g., animal, plant etc.) OR for a geographic region (e.g. southeastern United States, Apalachicola River Drainage)
2. **Adaptive Radiation** – Some groups of organisms exhibit extraordinary diversity as an adaptation to ecological landscapes. Pick a system(s) and explain why?
3. **Coevolution** – Two or more species who are directly impacting each other’s evolution (e.g. predator-prey, parasite-host, etc.)
4. **Invasion Biology** – Particularly in the southeast US, we have an unprecedented number of species invasions occurring. Pick a group of taxa or a region and tell me why?!?!?!?
5. **Extreme Adaptations** – Science is COOL! The natural world is full of mind-boggling adaptations as organisms respond to live in different habitats!
6. **Genomic Architecture** – We are learning more everyday about how genomes impact the external traits of organisms. Explore some of the causes and consequences associated with these.

7. **Trait diversification** – Some species develop unique traits to handle ecological challenges. Pick one/some and tell me about it!

IX. 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 15th, 2022. 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>

X. 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. **All electronic devices must be turned off or set to silent mode in the classroom and during seminars.**

XI. 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.**

XII. 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:

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

Date	Topic	Assignment Due
Aug 15	Course Introduction, Organization, Topics, Scientific writing, Plagiarism policy	Bring signed copy of the Department of Biology Plagiarism Policy for submission in class.
Aug 16	<i>No class.</i>	Explore BV for syllabus, Read and sign Department of Biology Plagiarism Policy
Aug 22	Library Instructions in Odum Room #2633	
Aug 23	<i>No class.</i>	Science Seminar critique due end of seminar
Aug 29	<i>Student research-No Class</i>	HAVE YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC SELECTED! Upload the title with one source from your bibliography
Aug 30	<i>No class.</i>	Science Seminar critique due end of seminar
Sept 5	<i>LABOR Day - No Class</i>	Upload two more sources from your bibliography
Sept 6	Senior Science Seminar - TBD	Science Seminar critique due end of seminar
Sept 12	<i>Student research-No Class</i>	Upload Annotated Bibliography electronic copy by 5 PM
Sept 13	Senior Science Seminar - TBD	Science Seminar critique due end of seminar
Sept 19	<i>Student research-No Class</i>	
Sept 20	Senior Science Seminar - TBD	Science Seminar critique due end of seminar
Sept 26	<i>Student research-No Class</i>	
Sept 27	Senior Science Seminar - TBD	Science Seminar critique due end of seminar
Oct 3	Midterm week	Final version of Research paper upload to BlazeVIEW due by 8PM; Biology MFT completed
Oct 4	Senior Science Seminar - TBD	Science Seminar critique due end of seminar
Oct 10	FALL BREAK – No Class	
Oct 11	FALL BREAK – No Class	
Oct 17	Overview of Oral presentation guidelines and Q&A	
Oct 18	Senior Science Seminar - TBD	Science Seminar critique due end of seminar
Oct 24	<i>Preparation for Oral presentation – No class</i>	
Oct 25	Senior Science Seminar - TBD	Science Seminar critique due end of seminar
Oct 31	Oral Presentations-All students must attend	
Nov 1	Senior Science Seminar – Mind-Body Interactions Dr. Jonghoon Kang, VSU:	Science Seminar critique due end of seminar
Nov 7	Oral Presentations-All students must attend	
Nov 8	Senior Science Seminar – Dr. Rebecca Zimler, FL Dept. Health & VSU alumnus	Science Seminar critique due end of seminar
Nov 14	Oral Presentations-All students must attend	
Nov 15	Senior Science Seminar - TBD	Science Seminar critique due end of seminar
Nov 21	THANKSGIVING BREAK - No Class	
Nov 22	THANKSGIVING BREAK - No Class	
Nov 28	Senior Exit Questionnaire (to be completed in BC3018 between 5-5:30PM); Deadline for re-take/s of Major Field Test	Senior Exit Questionnaire (to be completed in BC3018 between 5-5:30PM); Deadline for re-take/s of Major Field Test

Student Checklist of Course Requirements:

- ___ Completion of the online plagiarism tutorial (By August 23rd)
- ___ Annotated bibliography (Due September 12th)
- ___ Completion of MFT in Biology (≥ 140) – Submit photocopy of score to instructor. (by October 3rd)
- ___ Research paper – (Due October 4th)
- ___ In-class Presentation PowerPoint (via email) – (Due 1 week before presentation)
- ___ Completion of Biology Senior Exit Questionnaire. (November 28th)
- ___ Attendance of all scheduled class periods (including all student presentation sessions)
- ___ Attendance of & submission of completed evaluation forms from Biology Department Seminars.