

Biology 4900 A: Senior Seminar Fall 2023 Course Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Leslie S. Jones

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Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday 1:00-2:00, Tuesday & Thursday from 10:45 – 12:15

Please Use Blazeview (BV) for all class communication.

Course Meetings:

This class officially meets for instruction from 5:00 – 6:50 on Tuesday afternoons.

Tuesdays from 12:40 to 12:45 in 1023 BSC, you are expected to attend the Biology Seminar Series.

There are not always seminars, so check the department schedule.

If you miss any class or seminar, I expect to receive an email in Blazeview (BV).

I promise we will end early and not meet without a reason.

Course Description:

As the capstone course to finish your biology major, we will touch on the breadth of life science.

You can expect to review different aspects of your prior coursework and learn new information.

Ultimately, this class should leave you with a sense of the purpose of your college education.

This course appraises students' ability to independently research current topics in biological science. Students are expected to competently present "state of the art" information in both oral and written formats.

Assessment:

As seniors, I assume that you will display a responsible attitude & satisfy the requirements with pride. It is very unwise to take a minimalist approach, doing as little as possible can backfire. Treat the course as a job so that I can give you a strong recommendation after graduation.

Biology 4900 is ultimately graded on an S/U (Pass/Fail) basis.

Multiple individual assignments will be recorded & averaged in Blazeview (BV).

You are required to complete the:

ETS Major Field Test in Biology at a Score of above 140.

Biology Department Senior Exit Questionnaire

A passing grade for the course depends on scoring at least 70% on each of these:

BV Grades: Topic with Written Thesis,

Attendance & Participation

BV & Other Assignments

Kritik Drafts

Oral Report

Any work not submitted by the deadline in Kritik will receive a zero.

BV deadlines will be more flexible or lenient.

I will not hesitate to assign an Unsatisfactory final grade if your work is below the standard (70%).

Personal Responsibility

You must keep track of all assignment deadlines – late work might not be accepted!!

Kritik assignments should be completed early because those deadlines are final.

Your grades will be posted in Blazeview, so that you will know where you stand.

If it does not look like you are going to pass, make more effort on the assignments!

Emails

Please Use My Blazeview (BV) Email for All Class Matters!!!

My VSU email: lesliesj@valdosta.edu should only be used if it is urgent

To be safe, you need to Check Your Blazeview Email OFTEN (several times per week) for updates

Class emails are not text messages and are expected to be written coherently.

My title is **Dr. Jones** and you should start any email with that included in a greeting.

The first thing you should do is tell me **which of my classes you are in** because I have several.

The next sentence should contain the **reason for your message**.

After you explain yourself, you should close the message properly.

Attendance

Every student is expected to attend all class sessions and the scheduled Biology Seminars.

If there is a good reason for missing any sessions, please notify me
(preferably in advance, by BV email).

Attendance grades will be seriously reduced for any unexcused absence.

Missing more than 20% of the class meetings or seminars can result in automatic failure.

Here is how your attendance grade will be calculated:

No Absences at ALL	125%
1 Absence	100%
2 Absences	75%
3 Absences	50%
4 Absences	25%
More than 4	0%
More than 6	Course Failure

Instructional Support & Office Hours

If you can't come to my office hours, send a BV email to arrange an appointment at another time.

I may be in the lab (1043) from 1:00 – 2:00 every Mon & Wed, if I am not in my office.

Tues & Thurs from 10:45-12:15 I will be in my office.

The ASC – Academic Success center provides unlimited, in-person, free tutoring. 229-333-7570
email asc@valdosta.edu, or visit the website www.valdosta.edu/asc for more information

VSU provides 10 hours of free tutoring via Tutor.com (Available 24/7)– Click the BV Link

Required Technology Platforms

LMS

Blazeview (BV): VSU's Learning Management System – Check your account on a regular basis

This will be used for **ALL** class communication, writing assignments, and access to various resources (<http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/elearning/blazeview-d2l.php>)

KRITIK

A peer-grading platform designed to allow students to grade and learn from each other.

Your participation as an evaluator will strengthen your content knowledge & writing skills.

Other Valuable Resources

Library Reference Consultant – Odum Library (333-7149)

VSU Academic Success Center – Odum Library (333-7370)

The Quarterly Review of Biology – Instructions to Authors

Council of Biological Educators (CBE) Style Manual

<https://quizlet.com/36614086/biology-major-field-test-study-set-flash-cards/>

Biology 4900 Research Project

Topic Choice

The presentations for the course will focus on "Anomalous Natural Strategies of Reproduction." Research topics must be selected immediately. A list of 3 choices (ranked in order of preference) should be submitted by BV email right away because each person will do a different topic. Individuals will be given preference in the order in which the email messages are received.

Primary Articles

As soon as the topic is confirmed, it is important to look for several sources of original research. A primary paper is the original publication of a scientific finding by the investigator(s) in a "reputable journal." One paper will be used for the class on paraphrasing during the third class session. Four more must be summarized as noted on the course schedule. At least five papers must be covered in detail as the body of the paper. These are to be compared and contrasted in the Analysis section. You must obtain printed copies of any primary paper you plan to use. All 5 reprints must be submitted with your final paper. These should have handwritten notes on the pages that show you read and used them.

Bibliography

These projects are to be based on scientific research and must cite at least 5 primary scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals. Other secondary sources such as books, review articles, and reputable scientific web sites may be used to complete the Introduction, Background, Analysis, & Conclusion sections. An excellent synopsis of the APA Reference Style Format is uploaded in Blazeview. You must use these guidelines!!! By the third week, a preliminary set of references with annotations is due. The annotations are a 3-4 sentence description of the source, in your own words that follows each properly formatted reference citation.

Review Papers & Other Sources

Scientific reviews may be used for identifying primary articles and obtaining general information for the Background, Introduction, and Conclusion. These must be from reputable scientific journals. Tertiary sources such as textbooks, popular articles or books and websites can be used for information but are not usually cited.

Thesis Statement

The topic of your research must ultimately be stated, in your own words, in a concise descriptive thesis statement that is the proposition or focus of your study. This must be included in the Introduction and restated in the Conclusion. Every part of the rest of the paper should connect to and support that thesis statement.

Background

Look into the history and details about the research practices contributing to your subject. Assemble a basic grounding of the science, methodologies, and technology that have contributed knowledge to the topic you will be researching. Background science clarifies the context of the work and makes the oral presentation more comprehensible to your audience.

Analysis

A very significant part of your paper will be demonstrating your ability to synthesize the 5 primary papers you presented in a way that shows you know how they relate to each other. Essentially this section involves comparing and contrasting them by stating the similarities or pointing out the differences. These can focus on the research methods or the findings.

Written Paper

Detailed instructions for the formal paper will be given out and discussed in class. These will be 10 – 12 pages long, excluding title page, figures, images, and references. Two electronic copies of the Initial Draft of the complete paper must be submitted. One in Blazeview which will be run through the Turnitin Software to check for plagiarism and the other will be critiqued by your classmates in Kritik. Revisions should be made and a paper copy of the Final Paper must be submitted along with photocopies of the primary papers by April 15th. If these are not adequate, revisions must be made immediately. Failure to complete a satisfactory paper, by the deadline, will result in automatic failure or an Unsatisfactory grade for the course.

Oral PowerPoint Presentation

The oral reports will be delivered as dynamic, visual PowerPoint presentations. Slides with pure text are not permitted. Include at least one illustration or photograph on every slide. Video clips of the organism are encouraged. Presentation dates will be assigned with 5 presenters each week. Each group of presenters is encouraged to make their class meeting as pleasant as possible with refreshments. At least 10-12 slides for the presentation must be checked by the Monday of the week of the presentation. Each person is expected to speak for about 15 minutes followed by 5 minutes for questions.

Biology 4900 Additional Course Requirements & Information

Major Field Test



This is a comprehensive, standardized examination of your content knowledge that is prepared by the Educational Testing Service and will be taken in the UC room 4167. The department uses these scores to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and the biology program. There will be class discussions about how to review for the test so that everyone can increase their confidence in their grounding in biological science. The Biology Department will pay for the first test. Any student scoring below 140 points will be required to repeat the test at their own expense until their score is satisfactory.

You will need to make an appointment on the website: www.valdosta.edu/testing. There is a button that says "Testing Appointments." Choose the group **Biology Major Field Test** and complete the required information. They suggest making appointments early since due to other exams there may not be seats available to test in their office on a given day. You must schedule at least 18 hours in advance of your desired appointment time. There is a \$25 fee for all retests after the initial attempt. You have the option to receive a copy of your score report after every administration of the MFT in that office. If you have any questions, please contact their office at (229) 245-3878.

Department Exit Questionnaire

This is a survey that assesses your experiences as a Biology Major at VSU. There will be a link on BV to the electronic version.

Academic Honesty

Members of the class are expected to maintain high standards of integrity. Dishonesty will not be tolerated; evidence of cheating will result in a grade of "Unsatisfactory" for the course and referral to the Office of Student Conduct for disciplinary action. Always cite any source of original information. Never copy text from a website, classmate, or book and represent it as your own work. The VSU Biology Department Statement on Plagiarism <https://www.valdosta.edu/biology/documents/resources/PlagiarismPolicy.pdf> clarifies common types of academic misconduct.

VSU's Academic Integrity Code <http://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/studentconduct-office/> and VSU's Academic Honesty Policies <http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academicaffairs/vp-office/academic-honesty-policies-and-procedures.php> contain additional guidance.

The Draft of your paper will be submitted by the instructor to Turnitin/SafeAssign, for a plagiarism review. For more information on the use of Turnitin at VSU see "Turnitin for Students."

Submission of Papers that use AI and are not original papers written by the student will result in failure. This course will use Turnitin AI detection to check for the use of Chat GPT and other AI-generated content in student papers. This will identify instances of plagiarism.

Turnitin will be used as a "tool that can help promote academic integrity by checking student papers for originality. Turnitin's advanced algorithms can detect subtle instances of plagiarism, including those that involve the use of AI." This is to ensure that you "are submitting original work and that academic standards are being upheld."

Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act

Grades cannot be posted by Name or Social Security Number. Scores and student work will not be given over the telephone, by email or to another student. Faculty members can't speak to parents without a the student signing a consent form that is filed in the registrar's office.

Statement of Social Justice Commitment & Student Support

As an educator, I have a strong personal commitment to teaching the principles of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) to all of my students. For me this is the most important part of being an American and is not a political issue. I support all students regardless of immigration status or country of origin. As a Dreamer Ally, I support Dreamer students and promote their sense of belonging and safety as they pursue their higher education goals. A helpful site is: https://international.uoregon.edu/immigration_faq. I commit to not sharing your status with anyone if you reveal it to me. I also remind you that **when interacting with faculty, staff, and offices around campus you are never required to reveal your immigration status.**

Non-Discrimination and Title IX Statement

Valdosta State University (VSU) upholds all applicable laws and policies regarding discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex (including sexual harassment and pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, religion, age, veteran status, political affiliation, or disability. The University prohibits specific forms of behavior that violate Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs and activities that receive federal funding. VSU considers sex discrimination in any form to be a serious offense. Title IX refers to all forms of sex discrimination committed against others, including but not limited to: sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, and sexual violence by other employees, students or third parties and gender inequity or unfair treatment based on an individual's sex/gender. The designated Title IX Coordinator for VSU is Ms. Selensia Holmes To view the policy or to report an incident visit: <https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/title-ix/>

Accommodations Statements

Students with disabilities who are experiencing barriers in this course may contact the Access Office (<https://www.valdosta.edu/student/disability/>) for assistance in determining and implementing reasonable accommodations. Please note, you will be required to provide documentation from an appropriately licensed medical professional indicating the requested accommodations are medically necessary. The Access Office is located in University Center Room 4136 Entrance 5. The phone numbers are 229-245-2498 (V), 229-375-5871. For more information, please visit VSU's Access Office or email: access@valdosta.edu.

To request reasonable accommodations for pregnancy and childbirth, please contact the Christina Kidd 333-5941. Mental Health services are available and treatment does work. You can learn more about confidential mental health services available on campus at <https://www.valdosta.edu/hopecconnect>. If you, or someone you know, needs support, is distressed, or exhibits concerning behavior, help by making a referral to the BIT Team: <https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/bit.php>.