

ISCI 3103: Natural History for Middle Grades Fall 2023 Course Syllabus

Department of Biology, College of Science & Mathematics, Valdosta State University

Dr. Leslie S. Jones

Please Use Blazeview Email for Class Communication

Office: 1096 Bailey Science Center

Phone: 219-1337

VSU Email: lesliesj@valdosta.edu

Office Hours for Instructional Support will be: MW 1:00-2:00, TR 10:45-12:15

Personal Appointments will be scheduled by Blazeview email

What You Need to Know!!!

1. This is not going to be a typical Science Class

Every class will begin at 2:00 with a lab/activity relating to the Topic of the Day

The point of these will be to model **Inquiry-Oriented, Activity-Based Instruction**

The second part of class will be a presentation of scientific information to **Explain the Phenomena**

This is a 4-credit hour class for education majors so there will be **Emphasis on Pedagogy**

You are responsible for keeping notes on both lab & lecture in preparation for the Tests

2. Your Grade Depends on Your Own Effort through Weighting Decided by the Class

Attendance- 15%

Smartbook Assignments - 15%

Blazeview Assignments - 10%

Service Participation Points - 10%

KRITIK Essay Writing Assignments - 10%

Midterm Test - Multiple Choice - 20%

Comprehensive Final Exam - 20%

Attendance Is Imperative!!! It will count as 15% of the final grade

You will not understand the course enough to pass unless you are present

Absences will only be excused for good reasons and you must write a Make-up paper to be excused

(1 ss page detailing the point of the activity & its connection to the content with vocabulary defined)

Exchange contact information with several classmates - in case you need something you miss

Labs begin at 2:00, Tardiness/Early Exits will count against your Attendance Grade

Use your Cellphone to **ONLY** to capture any images that will help you remember what we did

Phones are to sit on the table (face down) and I will not police inappropriate use - I can see where your eyes are

Any Texting or Surfing Websites will be recorded without comment and points will be deducted from your grade

Service Participation Points can be accumulated through a variety of independent activities, labs, and field trips.

We will be going out to local schools to visit teachers, that are my former students, to engage their students in science labs.

KRITIK Is a Writing Program - Students Evaluate Other Students' Written Papers with Systematic, Anonymous Peer Evaluation

Writing is a way for you to learn the science and express your personal opinions

Each Unit will include 1-2 Peer-Reviewed Assignments to evaluate your knowledge

KRITIK is a new program that will help you write better by seeing what others do

The Textbook is: Environmental Science: A Global Concern - 16th Edition - Cunningham et al. 2024

There will be **Smartbook** assignments - listed on the Schedule & Posted in BV

These are due before class to introduce/remind you of the content and vocabulary that is important

For Tests, be sure to reread the parts of chapters on what was covered in class

A Midterm Test for 20% of the grade will be a multiple-choice test that starts at the beginning of class

There are ~100 questions on labs and lectures - some involve 5-point sequences

When you finish, you can submit your test & scantron - take a break until 3:30

At that time, return to class so that we can go over the correct answers right away

Scantron scores will be posted on Blazeview ASAP, but you will know how you did

The Comprehensive Final Exam will take place in the classroom Tuesday, December 5th from 2:45-4:45 pm

Everything we cover or discuss in class can be included in this final evaluation

You are expected to have a conceptual understanding of this information

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.

Personal Responsibility

You must keep track of all assignment deadlines - late work will not be accepted!!

SmartBook assignments should be completed early because those deadlines are final

If you miss a test for any reason, you must notify me within 24 hours

Make-up tests will only be given for legitimate reasons

These are probably essays since the class will already have gone over the test

The Final Exam is Tuesday, December 5th from 8am to 10am - No Exceptions

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

If that is not the grade you want for the semester, make more effort on the assignments!

Office Hours & Instructional Support

I will be in my office or the lab (1043) before this class from 1:00 - 2:00 every Mon & Wed

On Thursdays from 10:45-12:15, I will be in my office after my BIOL 1010 class

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

MY GTA, Kamajah Jones is a Masters candidate in Biology and she can help you

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

Attendance Policy

You are expected to attend all class meetings because this is a participatory class

Being tardy or leaving early will be recorded & more than 3 of these will be considered an absence

If you do miss class for any reason, you are responsible for obtaining the notes from a classmate

Anyone who misses more than 20% of the class sessions will receive a failing grade for the course

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

Required Technology Platforms:

LMS=Blazeview (BV): Learning Management System - Your VSU Account

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 for fair and accurate assessment of your essays by other students

This applies evaluation through the collective intelligence of your classmates to your eventual grade

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

CMS=McGraw Hill (MH) Connect: Course Management System - **SmartBook**

This contains a complete electronic version of the textbook - Click on the Book Cover on the right

Pre-reading will be assigned and graded in **SmartBook** - a versatile software product

This adaptive program adjusts to every student's individual skills and content knowledge

Prompts drill on vocabulary and basic concepts in preparation for class

Exercises take longer if you do not read the book - work as long as you want to get 100%

These are much "lower order" questions than you should expect on class tests

You can start early for all chapters in each unit - Missed Deadlines = 0% No Exceptions

McGraw Hill (MH) Customer Support: Call (800) 331-5094

If you have any problems with these programs, first try another Browser

Then, shut down your computer and restart it or try another computer

The MH people are supposed to take care of any problem, but in case they do not, get the Case Number

If MH does not help you, then email me in Blazeview and be sure to send me the Case Number

SCI 3103 – Course Design: Guidelines for Content & Evaluation

Enduring Understanding:

Science is the systematic study of the natural world which includes the totality of the physical and biological factors that have and continue to influence the evolution of living organisms.

Essential Questions:

How does the Theory of Evolution explain the history of life?

How have significant features of physiogeography of Georgia influenced the vast biodiversity of the state?

How does Inquiry-Oriented, Activity-Based pedagogy influence the teaching and learning of Life Science?

Basic Knowledge & Skills Students Will Acquire:

The Nature of Science as both a Body of Knowledge and Set of Processes

Principles of Ecology

Biodiversity: Taxonomic Classification, Functional Roles, & Patterns of Interaction

Evolutionary History of Living Organisms

Essential Subject Matter Covered in the 7th Grade Life Science Section of the GPS

Techniques & Standards for Field Study of Living Organisms

Strategies for Teaching 7th Grade Life Science Based on the Georgia Performance Standards

Students in ISCI 3103 will be expected to:

I. **Display** oral competence through class participation.

II. **Describe** the evolutionary processes responsible for biodiversity and explain the characteristics of major Taxa.

III. **Compare and contrast** how the abiotic factors influence the biotic features of a community of ecosystems in Georgia.

IV. **Characterize** environmental issues in Georgia, with emphasis on land preservation & loss of biodiversity.

V. **Indicate** the possession of conceptual understanding of the Nature of Science & the 7th Grade Life Science GPS.

Proof of mastery for each will be demonstrated by the knowledge & skill shown in:

I. **Attendance & Oral Participation** – Active Efforts in Class and Short Research Reports

II. **Essays Demonstrating Pedagogical Content Knowledge** – Peer Evaluated Using the Kritik Program

III. **Completion of SmartBook Assignments** – Adaptive Learning Activities associated with eBook

IV. **Community Service & Participation Points** – Teaching in Local Schools, Independent Labs & Field Trips

V. **Midterm & Final Exams** – Based on Labs, Field Trips, eBook, LearnSmart & Trips

The Georgia Standards of Excellence cover these topics and will be discussed:

S7L1. The diversity of living organisms and how they can be compared scientifically.

S7L2. How cell structures, cells, tissues, organs, and organ systems interact.

S7L3. How organisms reproduce either sexually or asexually and transfer genetic information.

S7L4. The interdependence of organisms with one another and their environments.

S7L5. The theory of evolution of living organisms through inherited characteristics.

The following facets of understanding will be built into the course assessments:

Explanation – Description of subject matter and pedagogical practices

Interpretation – Demonstration of astute reasoning and ability to make meaningful connections between concepts

Application – Explanation of the links between subject matter and science instruction

Perspective – Identification of the nature of science in our formulation of an understanding of the natural world

Empathy – Indication of the recognition of the value and need to sustain state environmental resources

Self-Knowledge – Illustration of personal reflection on the process of learning and teaching science

General Information

Everything That Must Be Stated for Everyone's Protection

Cheating Will Not Be Tolerated

Members of the class are expected to maintain high standards of integrity. This course will use the VSU Handbook Code of Ethics as a basic standard of behavior. Everyone in the class is expected to read the Biology Department Plagiarism Policy posted at: <http://www.valdosta.edu/colleges/arts-sciences/biology/documents/resources/PlagiarismPolicy.pdf>. Evidence of dishonest conduct or cheating will result in no credit for the assignment and depending on the case, a grade of "F" for the course. Do not expect leniency for claims on the grounds of not knowing better. By taking this course, you agree that all required course work may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin, a tool within BlazeVIEW. For more information on the use of Turnitin at VSU see [Turnitin for Students](#). You will be reported to the Dean of Students and letter of concern documenting the problem will be sent to the College of Education. Be aware that employers such as school systems do call that office at VSU to check on whether you have a record of infractions.

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 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. When I see examples of discrimination, it breaks my heart because it is so unfair. Therefore, as part of the course content, there will be relevant lessons on Sex & Gender to clarify the complexity of LGBTQ+ issues and the Evolution of Human Skin Color to demonstrate how "Race" was invented to justify racism.

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 Mr. Darius Thomas. To view the policy or to report an incident visit: <https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/title-ix/>

Accommodations Statement:

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/hopeconnect>.

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>;