

**The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course;  
deviations may be necessary.**

# **BIOL 3920 Herpetology**

**Summer Semester 2023**

**Biology Department, College of Science and Math  
Valdosta State University**

**Instructor:** Dr. Adam Safer

**Office:** BSC 1211

**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Phone:** 229.333.6001 (*please email first*)

**E-mail:** absafer@valdosta.edu

*If you cannot meet me during office hours, please email; it is my preferred method of communication. I ask that you please allow 12 hours for me to respond.*

**Lectures/Labs:** Monday-Thursday, 9:35 AM - 12:35 PM. Grand Bay WMA Education Center. Please be on time.

**Recommended Text:** Herpetology: An Introductory Biology of Amphibians and Reptiles. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. By L.J. Vitt, and J. P. Caldwell (2014, Academic Press).

While the text is not required, it is an outstanding resource for the course. I highly recommend that you purchase the text, especially if you plan on continuing your studies and interests in herpetology.

**Lab Manual:** We will be using the following link and other online resources that I provide throughout the semester for lab resources. The link below takes you to UGA's Savannah River Ecology Lab page for herpetology. There you will find links to identifying the species of reptiles and amphibians native to Georgia.

*You may have to cut and paste the address into your browser.*

<https://srelherp.uga.edu/>

**Course Description:** BIOL 3920. Herpetology. 4 Hours. Prerequisites: [BIOL 1107](#), [1107L](#), [BIOL 1108](#), and 1108L. Introduction to the study of amphibians and reptiles, including anatomy, physiology, ecology, behavior, and classification coordinated with field study of local species.

### **Course Goals and Learning Outcomes:**

1. Understand taxonomic methods and apply these methods to the understanding of the evolutionary history and relationships of reptiles and amphibians.
2. Learn the form and function of the major reptile and amphibian groups and how to distinguish between these groups.
3. Understand the adaptations (i.e. anatomy and physiology) allowing reptiles and amphibians to successfully occupy various environments.
4. Appreciate the techniques used to study, observe, and collect reptiles and amphibians.
5. Become familiar with the basic features of reptile and amphibian taxa. Use these features to specifically identify selected species native to Georgia.

**Attendance:** Be on time for class and lab. You are expected to attend all lecture and lab sessions. To get the most from any course, you should attend all the scheduled classes and laboratory periods. The only way to really know what is going on in class is to show up. The undergraduate catalog states that a student, whether/online or face-to-face, a student who misses or does not participate in more than 20% of the scheduled course or course activities could be subject to receiving a failing grade in the course. At the very least, any student that misses more than 20% of classes/labs will lose 100 points (i.e. 10%) off their final grade for the semester. The full attendance/absence regulations are available in the online catalog at <http://catalog.valdosta.edu/undergraduate/academic-affairs/>

**Academic Honesty:** Plagiarism and cheating are considered forms of dishonesty and are violations of the university's policy on academic honesty. If you are caught plagiarizing or cheating, you will receive a "0" for that test or assignment. As a result, academic and disciplinary, action may be taken. Please take time to familiarize yourself with the academic honesty policy here at VSU. For more information visit <https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/academic-honesty-at-vsu.php>

**Disruptive Behavior:** Please refer to the Student Code of Conduct at <https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/student-conduct-office/student-handbook.php>

**Students with Disabilities:** 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 in Farbar Hall. 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](mailto:access@valdosta.edu).

**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 sexual harassment and sexual violence), sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, 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 University's Title IX Coordinator: the Director of the Office of Social Equity, [titleix@valdosta.edu](mailto:titleix@valdosta.edu), 1208 N. Patterson St., Valdosta State University, Valdosta, Georgia 31698, 229-333-5463.

**Extra Help with Coursework The Academic Support Center (ASC):** The Academic Support Center (ASC) provides free peer tutoring in core curriculum courses, including, math, writing, sciences, social sciences, humanities, and foreign languages. The ASC also provides supplemental instruction (tutor-led study group sessions) for historically difficult courses like biology, chemistry, geosciences, psychology, and sociology, as well as academic success workshops. New for fall 2018: 24/7 access to online tutoring through ThinkingStorm, which includes Writing Center where you can submit drafts for feedback and get help with core courses when the ASC is closed. Visit the ASC office on the main campus, located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Odum Library, or call 229-333-7570 for an appointment, or visit the website where you can make appointment for yourself ([www.valdosta.edu/asc](http://www.valdosta.edu/asc)).

**SOI Statement:** 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 through SmartEvals. 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, and they will be able to access results only after they have submitted final grades. Before final grade submission, instructors will not be able to see any responses, but they can see the percentage of students who have or have not completed their SOIs. While instructors will not be able to see student names, an automated system will send a reminder email to those who have yet to complete their SOIs. Students who withdraw or drop a course will also be sent invitations to complete the Dropped Course Survey. Complete information about the SOIs, including how to access the survey, is available on the [SOI Procedures webpage](#).

## **GRADING SCHEME**

Grades will be based on the following:

### **Exams**

#### **800 points**

There will be **4 exams** covering lecture material during the semester **worth 200 points each**, totaling **800 points**. Any topics that we cover in lecture are fair game for the tests (including information from papers, videos, and guest speakers)

Exams may include multiple choice, short answer, true-false, matching or essay questions.

***There are no make-up exams.***

### **Laboratory**

#### **200 points**

There will be **2 lab practicals** worth **60 points each**, totaling **120 points**.

Practicals may include multiple choice, short answer, true-false, matching or essay questions. The primary focus of lab practicals will be species identification and natural history but can also cover fieldtrip information and any other information we cover in lab, such as papers, videos or guest speakers.

You will be required to attend fieldtrips for a total of **80 points**. Some may be outside of class time and at night. These trips will be announced during the semester. To get credit for these trips you must keep a field logbook and submit a summary of your field experiences to me at the end of the semester.

***There are no makeup lab practicals or fieldtrips.***

### **Total Points for the course 1000**

### **Final Grades**

- A 900 and higher (90% - 100%)
- B 800-899 points (80% - 89%)
- C 700-799 points (70% - 79%)
- D 600-699 points (60% - 69%)
- F Below 599 points (below 60%)

**Students taking the class for graduate credit must complete an extra assignment/project. If you are taking this class for graduate credit, come speak with me about your assignment/project.**

*According to federal law an individual's grades will not be released to anyone but that individual. Furthermore, I will not discuss grades over the phone or email. For more information refer to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974.*

## **\*Tentative BIOL 3920 Herpetology Summer 2022 Course Schedule \***

<b><u>Week of</u></b>	<b><u>Lecture Topic(s)</u></b>	<b><u>Lab Topics</u></b>
Jun 7	Lecture 1 Intro and Lecture 2 Evolution and Taxonomy Overview	Intro/SREL site-Fieldtrips TBA
Jun 12	Lecture 3 Amphibian Evolution and Characteristics	Intro/SREL site-Fieldtrips TBA
Jun 19	Lecture 4 Amphibian Diversity and Classification	GA Amphibians/Fieldtrips TBA
Jun 26	Lecture 5 Amphibian Anatomy and Physiology (A&P)	GA Amphibians/Fieldtrips TBA
Jul 3	Lecture 6 Reptile Evolution and Characteristics	GA Amphibians/Fieldtrips TBA
Jul 10	Lectures 7 & 8: Diversity and Classification of Turtles and Crocodylians	GA Reptiles/Fieldtrips TBA
Jul 17	Lectures 9 & 10: Diversity of Tuataras and Squamates; Reptile A&P	GA Reptiles/Fieldtrips TBA
Jul 24	Lecture 10 Reptile Anatomy and Physiology (A&P)	GA Reptiles/Fieldtrips TBA

### **Test Dates**

20-Jun: Test 1 (Lectures 1-3)

6-Jul: Test 2 (Lectures 4-5)

18-Jul: Test 3 (Lectures 6-8)

26-Jul: Test 4 (Lectures 9-10)

### **Lab Practical Dates**

12-Jul: Lab Practical 1 (GA Amphibians)

25-Jul: Lab Practical 2 (GA Reptiles)

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