

Meeting time and place:

Science Seminar: 4:00 – 4:50 PM, Thursdays, Student Union Theater

Class Meeting: 5:00 – 6:50 PM, Thursdays, BSC 1024

Instructor: Jim Loughry

Office: BSC 2087

Phone: 333-5765

Email: jloughry@valdosta.edu

General course description: This course involves discussion and analysis of current topics in biology. Educational outcomes associated with this course include numbers 1 and 2 as specified by the VSU Biology Department for its Master's program, and general outcomes numbers 3, 4, 5, and 7 as specified by the University.

Completion of the course requires the following:

1. Attendance at the Science Seminar: Mandatory for all speakers hosted by the Biology Department. While optional, it is expected that you will attend at least half of the talks hosted by other departments.

2. Discussion Leader: Class meeting times will be devoted to discussion of current topics in biology. Each student will lead the discussion once during the semester. The topic for discussion is up to you, but there can be no duplication. Topics will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. Thus, if you have a topic you would really like to discuss, be sure to request it early. While not mandatory, it is strongly encouraged that, during weeks in which Biology is hosting a seminar speaker, you find papers and focus discussion on the subject of the speaker's talk.

In order to initiate discussion, you must provide 2-3 readings from the primary literature one week before your presentation (i.e., the readings should be ready for distribution during the class meeting prior to the one you will lead). Seminars should encourage free-flowing debate, so no formal (i.e., Powerpoint) presentation is required. You should also avoid re-reading the papers during class. Everyone in the class should have read the papers, so the goal is to critically evaluate the issues these papers raise. Thus, your main focus should be to provide an outline of key points, strengths and weaknesses in each paper, and other points for discussion.

3. Position Paper: In addition to leading discussion one week, each of you must write a brief summary and critique of someone else's topic. The goal of these position papers is to first summarize the class discussion about the topic, then augment and expand on this with additional information from the primary literature. Only one person can write a position paper per topic. Thus, everyone will have their topic reviewed by someone else. Just as with seminar topics, choices about position papers are first-come, first-served. Position papers should be approximately 5 pages in length, plus a bibliography. Each is due 2 weeks after the in-class discussion of the topic.

4. Participation: As already stated, seminars are about discussion. Thus, it is critical that each of you actively participate. Consequently, a portion of your grade will be based on your contributions to each week's discussion.

Grading: Grades will be based on a total of 300 points as described below. In addition, you need to be aware that there is a punitive attendance policy. The seminar requires active participation by all of you. So, if you are not here, the class will suffer dramatically. Consequently, for each unexcused absence, you will lose one letter grade off your final grade.

1. Discussion Leader	100 points
2. Position Paper	100 points
3. General participation:	100 points
Total	300

Evaluating the above is admittedly subjective. I will start the seminar assuming everyone has an A. So long as you do your job, that will not change. However, if you don't show up or don't participate, then your grade will start to fall. Final grades will be based on the following point totals:

- A = 270 - 300
- B = 240 - 269
- C = 210 - 239
- D = 180 - 209

BIOL 7900 Tentative Course Schedule

Month	Date	Seminar Speaker & Topic	Discussion Leader	Position Paper Writer
January	13	None	Organizational Meeting	NA
	20**	Puchon-Marine Biol. Cook-Comp. Sci.	Ashlie Kuli	
	25**	Anderson-Landscape Ecol	Jennifer Newsome	
	27	Breneiser-Psych.		
February	3	???	Lance Perry	
	10	???	Stephanie Yarbrough	
	17	???	Arjun Adhikari	
	24*	Gerardo-Micro/Entomol.	Lynda Bernhardt	

March	3*	Kimbro-Marine Biol.	Heera Malik	
	10*	Craig-Biol.	Ryan Bare	
	17	None	SPRING BREAK: No Meeting	NA
	24	???	Adarsh Gopinath	
	31	???	Bucky Shiver	
April	7	???	Charles Wright	
	14	???	Will Wright	
	21*	Johnson-Plant Bio/Syst.	Josh Salter	
	28	None	Sofia Sucar	

* Dates when the Biology Department is hosting the Science Seminar speaker. Attendance at the Science Seminar is **mandatory** on these days.

** Dates when candidates for faculty positions in the Biology Department will be presenting a seminar. Because these are scheduled from 12:30-1:30 PM, attendance is not mandatory, but it is expected that all students without a scheduling conflict will be present. Note that some of these seminars will be given on Tuesdays, not Thursdays.