

Meeting time and place: 5:00 - 6:50 PM, Mondays, BC 1024

Instructor: Jim Loughry

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General course description: This is a seminar course involving in-depth examination of a current issue in ecology and evolution. You will present a critique of a certain part of that topic that will be the starting point for a full discussion by all members of the seminar. 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.

This year's topic: Behavioral Ecology

Required text:

Westneat, D. F., and C. W. Fox. 2010. *Evolutionary Behavioral Ecology*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Completion of the course requires the following:

1. Presentations: Each week, one of you will lead a discussion of two chapters from the textbook. During the first class meeting we will fill in a schedule for these presentations based on the number of students enrolled (see below). Summaries should be relatively brief (~ 30-45 minutes) and highlight what you view as the main issues for debate. **DO NOT** just recap what is in the book; everyone will have read it already and we will not require a blow-by-blow retelling. Rather, try to focus on points of controversy, unanswered questions and so on.

2. Review Paper: Each of you must write a review paper about some topic in behavioral ecology. You may use one or more of your presentations as the starting point for this paper, but you are not obligated to do so. Paper topics should deal with general issues; normally, case studies of a single species or type of behavior are not acceptable (although these can be used to illustrate points in your review paper). You must get your topic approved by me no later than midterm (**Thursday, March 1**) and all papers must be turned in by **5 PM, Monday, April 23**. Topics will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, so if you have a particular area you wish to cover, sign up soon. Papers must be written in the style of a journal article (the *Quarterly Review of Biology* and *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* provide excellent models) and be exhaustive reviews of the subject. One critical part of this paper will be to provide an extensive bibliography of the literature pertaining to your topic.

3. Peer-review: You will provide a 1-2 page critique of a subset of the review papers submitted. Each paper will be reviewed by 3 other members of the class. Imagine that these papers have been submitted to a scientific journal for possible publication and you have been asked to review

them. Your reviews should emphasize the strengths and weaknesses in each paper and what the author could do to improve it. As the last part of the review, you must assign a numerical grade, based on a maximum total of 50 points. All reviews of all papers are due no later than dead day (**Tuesday, May 1**). I will then send each of you all the reviews of your paper and its averaged reviewer score (individual point scores will remain anonymous).

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.

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|------------------------|--|
| Presentations: | 100 points |
| General participation: | 50 points |
| Review paper: | 100 points (calculated as the average of the peer-review scores + 50 possible points from my own evaluation of your paper) |
| Peer review critiques | 50 points (based on my evaluation of all the reviews you submit) |
| 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. If you don't show up for one of your presentations or don't turn in your paper, then you automatically fail the course. Final grades will be based on the following point totals:

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

BIOL 7010 Course Schedule

| Month | Day | Chapters to be covered | Discussion Leader |
|----------|-----|------------------------|-------------------|
| January | 9 | Organizational meeting | NA |
| | 16 | MLK Holiday: NO CLASS | |
| | 23 | 2,3 | |
| | 30 | 4, 7 | |
| February | 6 | 5, 6 | |

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|-------|----|------------------------|----|
| | 13 | 9, 10 | |
| | 20 | 8, 11 | |
| | 27 | 12, 13 | |
| March | 5 | 19, 31 | |
| | 12 | Spring Break: NO CLASS | NA |
| | 19 | 15, 16 | |
| | 26 | 17, 18 | |
| April | 2 | 20, 21 | |
| | 9 | 22, 23 | |
| | 16 | 24, 25 | |
| | 23 | 26, 30 | |
| | 30 | 27, 28 | |