

Course: SS: Advanced Ecology, Evolution and Behavior, Biology 4984, CRN 96946

Fall 2008

Time: Tuesday & Thursday 330-445pm

Location: Tuesday: Johnson Student Center (GBJ) 100
Thursday: Fralin Auditorium

Professor: Dr. Lisa Belden

Office: 4092C Derring Hall

Phone: 231-2505

Office hours: Monday 130-330pm or by appointment

Email: belden@vt.edu [please type "EEB" in the subject so I know the message is class related]

Course overview:

This capstone course is intended for junior and senior level students with an interest in ecology, evolution, and behavior (EEB). The course will be centered around the EEB seminar series that is sponsored by the Department of Biological Sciences. For this seminar series, approximately 13 biologists from around the nation are brought to Virginia Tech each semester to present their research. The specific topics range broadly depending on the semester, but all are focused on some aspect of ecology, evolution or behavior. This is a writing intensive course (2 ViEWS credits).

Course structure:

Tuesdays

On Tuesdays, we will discuss a scientific article relating to the Thursday seminar. During the article discussion, I will provide additional relevant material so that you have sufficient background information to understand the seminar, and you will provide questions and comments on the article to serve as discussion points (see "participation in class" below).

Thursdays

Each week, you will attend the seminar on Thursday afternoon. Following the seminar, we will briefly discuss the seminar and review the main concepts that were covered. You will also write a one page, single-spaced summary of the seminar that will be submitted for grading (see "seminar summaries" below).

Course evaluation:

You will be evaluated in two areas:

(1) Participation in class (40% of your grade)

Participation will be a key element of learning in this course, as the course will be largely based on discussions of the seminar content and the scientific literature. You will be expected to read the assigned article each week. You should bring to class one piece of paper for me, which should contain: (1) three questions relating to the assigned paper, and (2) a list of concepts and vocabulary from the paper that you looked up, or other additional information relating to the topic.

Total points possible- 144 points (12 seminars x 12 points each).

Your worksheets for these days are worth 10 points each. Plus you can get an additional 2 points/week if you are an active participant in the discussion.

(2) Seminar summaries (60% of your grade)

You must submit summaries for a total of eight of the 12 seminars this semester. For three seminars, you will be submit a one-page, single-spaced (1" margins, 12 pt. Times font) summary addressing: (1) the main points of the seminar, (2) where the research fits in the broad scope of biology and (3) your personal thoughts on whether it is an exciting field. The remaining five summaries will be: (1) a National Geographic type article for interested non-specialists, (2) a newspaper article for the general public, (3) short-fiction, (4) a poem and (5) a piece of art. You must submit a summary in each of these formats. The focus of all of these summaries, regardless of format, should be on conveying scientific knowledge. These summaries must be turned in first thing in class on Tuesday, following the Thursday seminar. The summaries will not be accepted late.

Total points possible- 200 points (10 seminars x 20 points each)

Each of these summaries will be worth 20 points (12 points- articulating scientific knowledge well in the appropriate format, 2 points- grammar, 2 points- spelling, 2 points- sentence structure, 2 points- paragraph structure and ease of reading). The exception to this is the art project, for which all 20 points will be in articulating scientific knowledge well in the appropriate format.

You have the option to revise and resubmit two of your seminar summaries during the course of the semester. These revisions must be turned in to me within 7 days of the day I hand back the grades. Your score will increase a maximum of 5 points following revision, and will not exceed 20 points.

Other information:

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. All writing must be in your own words- do not "borrow" words from the authors of the papers or from your classmates. If you need more clarification on this, please see me. All cases of plagiarism will be referred to the University Honor Court.

If you need any special accommodations for the course, please see me as soon as possible.