

**BIOL 4900 A – SENIOR SEMINAR, SPRING 2014  
SYLLABUS & COURSE POLICIES**

**Meeting rooms: Thursday 2-3:50 BSC 222; Thursday 4-4:50 Powell Hall Auditorium**

**Instructor: Dr. Mark Blackmore**

**Office: BSC 2218**

**Office Hours: Office Hours: M, W, Th, F 1:30-2:30 or by appointment**

**Required texts: J. Diamond “Guns, Germs and Steel;” E. Wilson “Biophilia”**

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in communication skills, students take the ETS M  
Senior Exit Questionnaire for successful course c

**This course addresses the following learning outcomes:** “Students will express themselves clearly, logically, and precisely in writing and in speaking, and they will demonstrate competence in reading and listening.” (VSU General Education Outcome 4) “Develop and test hypotheses, collect and analyze data, and present the results and conclusions in both written and oral formats used in peer-reviewed journals and at scientific meetings.” (Biology Department Educational Outcome 1)

The seminar is intended to assess a student’s abilities to investigate, analyze and summarize an area of current biological knowledge and to communicate that knowledge to peers. Each student will select a topic approved by the instructor. Using resources from the library, interlibrary loan, and the Internet, the student will research information on the selected topic, organize it into a written paper and present it in the form of a lecture to the class. Demonstrated comprehension of topic and competence in oral and written communication skills are required to satisfactorily meet the course requirements. Oral and written skill will be graded equally. To successfully complete the course, students are required to attend all scheduled Science Seminars ( <http://www.valdosta.edu/colleges/arts-sciences/science-seminars/2014-spring/> ); take the ETS Major Field test in biology and score at least 140; participate in class discussions, and complete the department Senior Exit Questionnaire. Details regarding grading are provided below. **Grade: Satisfactory (S) ≥ 70% of points or Unsatisfactory (U) <70%**

**ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION:** Students are expected to attend all scheduled class meetings and Science Seminars; any student who cannot attend one or more sessions should discuss this with the instructor prior to the absence. It is expected that all members of the class will participate in class discussions. Come prepared to ask meaningful questions, critique the quality of the material presented and raise meaningful issues related to the topics discussed.

**COURSE GRADE:** Student performance is graded “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory.” Student performance must meet or exceed all of the following requirements to receive a “satisfactory” grade:

1. No more than two unexcused absences
2. Minimum score of 140 on the Major Fields Test
3. Complete the Senior Exit Questionnaire
4. Earn at least 70% of points for the following
  - Review paper (40 pt)
  - Oral presentation (30 pt)

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### **Format of the Written Paper**

This document may not exceed 15 double-spaced, typed pages (12 point font), excluding figures, tables and bibliography. The following format should be used:

1. Main body of the paper
  - A. Introduce the topic
  - B. Present concepts and theories relevant to the topic
  - C. Define key terms
  - D. Present basic information gained by past research on the topic
  - E. Discuss experimental procedures involved in gaining information on the topic
  - F. Discuss controversial issues and changes (ixd2 0 Td ( )Tj>>BDC02(3(n)8(f)1 (an)4(v)8w(a)43(h)8(e t(s)6(

**Major Field Test:** The ETS Major Field Test is a comprehensive, standardized test designed to evaluate the student's general knowledge in the sub-disciplines of biology. The test scores will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the department's curriculum, and VSU's scores will be compared to the national average to identify possible weak areas in our curriculum. Thus, students should take the test seriously and make every effort to excel on it. Completion of the ETS Major Field Test with a score of 140 or higher is a course requirement, and students who fail to complete the ETS Major Field Test will receive a grade of unsatisfactory for the course.

*Each individual student is responsible for contacting the VSU Testing Office (Powell Hall-West, First Floor, Room 1120; Telephone 229-245-3878) and arranging a time to take the ETS Major Field Test in Biology. Students must schedule the Major Field Test by September 26th, 2013. A fee is assessed to take the Major Field Test. The Biology Department will pay the fee for each student to take the test once. Students who fail to score at least 140 on the test must re-take it until a score of 140 is achieved. The student will bear the cost for any re-take of the Major Field Test.*

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