

BIOL 7900

Graduate Seminar

Spring 2023

Meeting times and places:

Science Seminar: 12:45 – 1:45 PM, Tuesdays, BSC 1023

Class Meeting: 5:00 – 6:50 PM, Thursdays, BSC 2202

Instructor: Jim Loughry

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Office hours: 10 AM- 12:00 PM Tuesdays or any other time by appointment

General course description: This is a seminar course involving a depth examination of current issues in biology. Educational outcomes associated with this course include numbers 1 and 2 as specified by the VSU Biology Department for the Master's program, and general outcomes numbers 3, 4, 5, and 7 as specified by the University.

In this course we will do three things:

1. Philosophical Debates. There are a number of longstanding controversies in biology that are rooted in philosophy and cannot easily be resolved empirically. In the first part of the course we will discuss some of these. Prior to each week's seminar, I will provide one or more short readings relevant to each topic that introduce the issue. The class will be split into two groups

the speaker before or after the talk. Papers to be discussed must be made available to the other members of the class at least one week prior to the date when they will be discussed.

Required books: None

Completion of the course requires the following:

1. Attendance at Science Seminars: Mandatory for all speakers hosted by the Biology Department, schedule to be announced.

2. Discussion Leader: As described above, each of you will lead a discussion of a manuscript for peer review, as well as one that covers the major papers authored by one of the Science Seminar speakers.

3. Participation: Seminars are about discussion. Thus, it is critical that each of you actively participate. Even when you are not leading a discussion, you are still expected to contribute. Consequently, a portion of your grade will be based on your participation in 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. This 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.

Discussion Leader, Peer Review	100 points
Discussion Leader, Science Seminar	100 points
Participation (during entire semester, but emphasis on group debates)	50 points
Attendance at Science Seminar	50 points (10 points/seminar)
Total	300 points

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BIOL 7900 Course Schedule

Month	Day	Topic	Discussion Leader(s)
January	12	Organizational meeting	NA
	19	Reductionism versus Holism	Pro-reductionism: Harris, Holley Pro-holism: Mohanty, Sanchez
	26	Teleology	Pro: Harris, Mohanty Con: Holley, Sanchez
February	2	Adaptation	Pro: Harris, Sanchez Con: Holley, Mohanty
	9	The Nature of Natural	Pro: Harris, Holley Con: Mohanty, Sanchez
	16	Theory of Mind	Pro: Harris, Sanchez Con: Holley, Mohanty
	23	Nature versus Nurture	Nature: Harris, Sanchez Nurture: Holley, Mohanty
March	2	Peer review 1	TBD
	9	Peer review 2	TBD
	16	SPRING BREAK No Class	NA
	23	Peer review 3	TBD
	30	Peer review 4	TBD
April	6	Science Seminar Preview	TBD
	13	Science Seminar Preview	TBD
	20	Science Seminar Preview	TBD
	27	Science Seminar Preview	