Biology 5136: Current Issues in Biology

Spring 2018
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Office: SCNE 1.340, office hours: will be announced in first class

Textbook:
No Textbook is required for this course

Course Description and Prerequisites
Graduate standing

Learning Objectives
Identify, understand and critically analyze current issues in biological sciences, including but not limited to most recent topics in three major sub disciplines of biology- ecology and evolution, cell and molecular biology, and physiology and anatomy. Other major objectives of the course are to improve experimental design and hypothesis testing, and understand and experience the steps involved in scientific publication and peer review.

Outcomes for the Course
The course will provide students the opportunity to improve their skills on (1) identifying and reviewing current issues in biology from scientific and non-scientific literature- in and out of your area of research (2) designing biological experiments and asking the right questions (testable hypotheses, negative results, replication and biological variation) (3) understanding the nuts and bolts of scientific journal publishing (submission, peer review, editorial work, addressing reviewer comments, impact factor, predatory journals).

Successful completion of the course you will have acquired (1) knowledge and comprehension in current topics in various biological disciplines, (2) ability to design testable hypotheses in the given timeframe of the project/ program, (3) to be able analyze and interpret results in fields outside of your immediate research area, and (4) be able to submit manuscripts and follow them through their publication.

Assessment of learner outcomes: Students will be assessed over the course of semester based on their participation in discussions, peer review reports, assignments on scientific methods, and a final project on finding and writing an opinion paper on the next major issue in biological sciences.

Core Objectives: Scientific thinking, logical reasoning, and personal and professional responsibility, effective communication and teamwork.

Letter grades: A = 90-100%, B= 80-89.9%, C= 70-79.9%, D = 60-69.9%, F= 59.9 or less
Exams: None

**Students with Disabilities**
If you have a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects your academic performance) and would like to receive academic accommodations, please inform your instructor and contact Student Accessibility Services to schedule an appointment to initiate services. It is recommended that you schedule an appointment with Student Accessibility Services before classes start. However, accommodations can be provided at any time.

**Brownsville Campus:** Student Accessibility Services is located in Cortez Hall Room 129 and can be contacted by phone at (956) 882-7374 (Voice) or via email at accessibility@utrgv.edu.

**Edinburg Campus:** Student Accessibility Services is located in 108 University Center and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 (Voice), (956) 665-3840 (Fax), or via email at accessibility@utrgv.edu.

**Mandatory Course Evaluation Period**
Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (http://my.utrgv.edu); you will be contacted through email with further instructions. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades. Online evaluations will be available: Nov 18 – Dec 8 for full fall semester courses.

**Attendance**
Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and may be dropped from the course for excessive absences. UTRGV’s attendance policy excuses students from attending class if they are participating in officially sponsored university activities, such as athletics; for observance of religious holy days; or for military service. Students should contact the instructor in advance of the excused absence and arrange to make up missed work or examinations.

**Scholastic Integrity**
As members of a community dedicated to Honesty, Integrity and Respect, students are reminded that those who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and expulsion from the University. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism, and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All scholastic dishonesty incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students.

**Sexual Harassment, Discrimination and Violence**
In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “responsible employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at www.utrgv.edu/equity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively
strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.

**Course Drops**
According to UTRGV policy, students may drop any class without penalty earning a grade of DR until the official drop date. Following that date, students must be assigned a letter grade and can no longer drop the class. Students considering dropping the class should be aware of the “3-peat rule” and the “6-drop” rule so they can recognize how dropped classes may affect their academic success. The 6-drop rule refers to Texas law that dictates that undergraduate students may not drop more than six courses during their undergraduate career. Courses dropped at other Texas public higher education institutions will count toward the six-course drop limit. The 3-peat rule refers to additional fees charged to students who take the same class for.