Biol 605 Biological Seminar, Fall 2011
Mon 5-6 pm, Holt 129 or time/location TBA

Dr. Chris Ivey, 898-5812
Office Hours: Tu/Th 9-11:30, Holt 306

Objectives. In this course, students will be expected to demonstrate ability to:
1. Critically read scientific literature (identify strengths and weaknesses in published papers)
2. Articulate & defend opinions about published papers orally and in writing
3. Prepare graphics to support an oral presentation using PowerPoint or similar program
4. Summarize criticisms of assigned papers in a brief oral presentation
5. Guide class during discussion of literature


Discussion leaders
Each student will serve as discussion leader on a rotating basis (frequency depends on enrollment). Discussion leaders will begin the class at 5 pm sharp with a 20 min presentation that summarizes the salient features of the current week’s readings. Discussion leaders are expected to draw from additional literature to enrich their presentations and provide a suitable background for understanding the material. In addition, the presentation should highlight interesting or controversial issues you considered while reading the paper that might spark thoughtful discussion. Discussion leaders are also responsible for guiding the conversation productively.

Summaries and questions
Each week, all students will come to class with a brief typewritten summary of the week’s readings. Summaries are due to me in hard copy at the beginning of class – late summaries will receive no credit. The summary should be ½-1 page long, single-spaced, and include at a minimum the following: (1) the major claims/conclusions of the assigned readings (2) specific strengths presented in support of the claims (3) specific weaknesses and (4) broader significance of the paper to the discipline. In the summary, the points above should be clearly identified with numbers. Numbers 2 and 3 should not be a reiteration of the data, but a critique of the data or ideas from your perspective. Number 4 should be elaborated beyond the taxa/conclusions of the paper – consider, for example, how the findings could impact your own research, or other areas of biology. Summaries should be written in your own words – summaries that parrot phrases from the papers will receive no credit.

Finally, each summary should be concluded by three broad questions that we can draw upon to stimulate discussion. Factual questions about design/analysis or details on which you are confused are (of course) fair game for questions, but at least two of the questions should be about broader topics relevant to the reading.

Students will be evaluated on:
1. Summaries
2. Questions for discussion
3. Presentation and leading of discussions
4. Participation in discussion
5. Attendance

CSU, Chico acknowledges each student’s unique set of abilities and limitations, and works to provide all students with an enriching educational experience. Accommodations will be made, as possible, in cooperation with Disability Support Services (www.csuchico.edu/dss, Student Services Center 170, 898-5959), but it is the responsibility of the student to communicate his/her needs.