Califonia State University, Chico
Biological Sciences
BIOL 492, Seminars in Biological Sciences, SPRING 2015

Instructor: Dr. Rebecca Brunelli
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Email: rbrunelli@csuchico.edu or use Blackboard email tool
Office hours: Posted on Blackboard
Class days/time/location: Fridays, 4-5pm, Holt 170

Course Usage of Blackboard
Copies of the course syllabus, announcements and links to TurnItIn will be posted on Blackboard. You are responsible for regularly checking the online resources, which are accessed through the portal at http://portal.csuchico.edu.

Course Description and Goals
The primary goal of this course is to expose you to current research and issues in the biological sciences. While you are expected to demonstrate an understanding of fundamental biological principles coming into this course, a series of seminars such as this should serve to reinforce many of these concepts, as well as repeatedly expose you to issues of experimental design and data analysis. This course should also lead to a general improvement in your writing skills. Hopefully, listening to researchers talk about the subject they find most fascinating, and that they have devoted their lives to studying, will also inspire you to consider some type of research as a career.

Course Requirements
You must attend at least 8 of the Biological Seminar Series talks available this semester. These seminars begin at 4:00 p.m. on Friday in Holt 170 and conclude by 5pm following the Q & A period. Coffee and refreshments, thanks to Omicron, will be available at 3:30pm in Holt 171 or as listed.

Occasionally, there will be extra Biology-related seminars available during the week; these will be announced on Blackboard. If you hear of a seminar that I haven’t announced, please let me know and I will consider approving it. Do not assume a seminar is OK to attend for credit without getting my prior approval.

For each seminar you attend, you must write a paper with the following components and format:

1. **Your name**
2. **Seminar speaker’s name, title (e.g., Dr., M.S., etc.), and affiliation**
3. **Title of seminar**
4. **Date of seminar**
5. **Seminar synopsis – a 1-2 page summary of the seminar**
   For a research seminar this will include:
   a. A description of the question(s) and why it/they is/are important
   b. A statement of the hypothesis(es), if there was one
   c. A description of the methodology and experimental design
   d. A summary of the results
   e. A summary of the conclusion/discussion
For a topical seminar (a seminar on some issue such as climate change, etc., but not one describing experimental data) this will include:

a. A description of the issue the speaker is addressing
b. Why this issue is important
c. The researcher’s solution to the problem, if one was presented
d. Summarize the evidence supporting the speaker’s point of view
e. A summary of the presenter’s conclusions

6. **Include at least one question** asked by the audience at the end, as well as the speaker’s response.

7. **Summarize your overall opinion of the seminar.** Statements such as, “The speaker did a good job,” or “This was the best seminar all semester, I really enjoyed it,” are fine for starters, but the following are examples of what I’m looking for here: Do you agree with the speaker’s conclusions? Do you think the data provide an adequate way of addressing the question? Indicate any notable strengths or weaknesses of the presentation. If you cite a weakness, how do you think it could be corrected?

**Grading: Credit/No Credit**

Papers must follow the outline above, be typed, double-spaced, and submitted electronically using the TurnItIn link for each seminar on Blackboard. Papers will be graded + or – based on clarity, grammar, spelling, completeness (items 1-7), accuracy, and neatness. A paper will receive a “–” if there is a major omission (one or more of the component parts above is/are not present), if there is a major inaccuracy (a key point of the talk is incorrect), an excessive number of small inaccuracies, or if the grammar and/or spelling is full of mistakes.

Each paper is due the following Thursday by midnight.

For other seminars that I approve, the paper will be due one week after the seminar by midnight (e.g. if the seminar is on a Tuesday, the assignment will be due the following Tuesday by midnight).

Late papers will not be accepted without prior approval (you must have a serious and compelling reason for such a request; make your request well before the due date).

Your papers will be graded within one week. It is your responsibility to check grade center to see whether you got a “+” or “-”.

To receive credit in this class you must receive a “+” on ALL papers. A paper that receives a “–” must be re-written to specifications in order to receive credit. Re-written papers are due by midnight on the Monday following the return date; there will be a second TurnItIn links for make-ups for each seminar. Late rewrites will not be accepted, so you’d need to attend another seminar as a replacement. Also, failure to earn a “+” grade on your rewrites will also require that you attend another seminar.

Please keep track of your “+”s and “-”s in Blackboard grading center. It is your responsibility to earn eight “+”s.

**Helpful hints:**

While you have 6 days to write the paper, notes that are crystal clear on Friday evening frequently turn into incomprehensible mud by Thursday night. Either take very good notes, or write the paper early.

I know that you know how to write the scientific name of an organism (capitalize the first letter of the genus name, and do not capitalize the first letter of the species epithet; both are italicized (e.g., *Pan troglodytes*). So please write them correctly, or I will send the paper back!
University Policies and Campus Resources

Academic integrity
Students are expected to be familiar with the University's Academic Integrity Policy. Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at California State University, Chico, and the University's Academic Integrity Policy requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. The policy on academic integrity and other resources related to student conduct can be found at:
http://www.csuchico.edu/sjd/

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act
If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or chronic illness, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Please also contact the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) as they are the designated department responsible for approving and coordinating reasonable accommodations and services for students with disabilities. ARC will help you understand your rights and responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act and provide you further assistance with requesting and arranging accommodations.
Accessibility Resource Center online: http://www.csuchico.edu/arc/index.shtml

Student Learning Center (Optional)
The mission of the Student Learning Center (SLC) is to provide services that will assist CSU, Chico students to become independent learners. The SLC prepares and supports students in their college course work by offering a variety of programs and resources to meet student needs. The SLC facilitates the academic transition and retention of students from high schools and community colleges by providing study strategy information, content subject tutoring, and supplemental instruction. The SLC is online at http://www.csuchico.edu/slc/. The University Writing Center has been combined with the Student Learning Center