

**UNDERGRADUATE SEMINAR: BIOL 4950  
FALL 2009**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Scott R. Santos, Department of Biological Sciences  
(844-7410, santos@auburn.edu)

**OFFICE:** 128 Life Sciences. **Office hours:** 8 AM-10:00 AM Fridays

**MEETINGS:** The seminar meets from **3:30-4:45 on Thursdays** in **Rouse 112**.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** There will be no required textbook. Instead, biological research papers from the primary literature will be chosen by each student and presented by that student during the seminar. Each student is expected to make a 35-45 min presentation.

The format of the UNDERGRADUTE SEMINAR is as follows:

- 1) Prior to their presentation date, students will search the primary literature for a paper that matches their scientific interests.
- 2) The chosen paper is **REQUIRED** to be cleared by the instructor **PRIOR** to its presentation in seminar.
- 3) The student is **REQUIRED** to send the paper as a **PDF file** to the instructor via **EMAIL**. This should occur **NO LATER** than the **MONDAY** before the seminar is given.
- 4) Once the paper has been cleared, the instructor will than distribute the **PDF** to the rest of the class via **EMAIL**.

**PREREQUISITES:** A student majoring in the Biological Sciences.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION OF SPECIAL NOTE:**

- **Read the papers prior to coming to lecture.** The seminars are meant to allow students to develop and practice scientific communication skills as well as clarify and discuss scientific concepts covered in the papers.

- **Biology Major Field Test:** As part of BIOL 4950, we administer the Major Field Test (MFT). The Department of Biological Sciences Department uses this test as one means of assessing the effectiveness of our undergraduate programs. It is a 2-hour test designed to assess your basic knowledge of several major areas in Biology (e.g. cell biology, ecology, molecular biology, organismal biology, etc). It is similar to the Biology GRE and, in fact, can be used as practice for that test. You will be informed of your performance on the test and how this compares to the national average. However, your personal performance on the test will be kept confidential when the scores are used for our program assessment purposes.

This fall the exam will be given on **Saturday, October 10<sup>th</sup> from 9:00-11:00AM**. You will receive more information about the exam as we get nearer to that date.

**GENERAL POLICY and PROCEDURES:** Students should retain this document throughout the semester as a reference of what is expected in Undergraduate Seminar.

Missing seminars should be avoided at all cost. Valid reasons for absences as outlined in the Tiger Cub are: 1) **severe** illness, 2) documented personal or family emergencies, 3) official University excuses. Illness will necessitate a note from the doctor or infirmary (as will a family emergency). Official University excuses will likewise require documentation (see Tiger Cub, p. 86). Preferably, advise me beforehand regarding absences.

**SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:** Students who need special accommodations are encouraged to see me after class or in my office so we can discuss your situation, **confidentially**. Please bring your memo from The Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) to me as soon as possible; we can discuss it during your appointment. Exam accommodations should be arranged at least one week in advance. If at any time during the semester you feel that the accommodations we have put in place are not working, please consult with me and /or the professional staff in the PSD office. If you do not have a memo from the PSD office that alerts me about your accommodations, it is recommended that you make an appointment to see them in **1232 Haley Center (844-2096)**. Without this memo, no accommodations can be granted.

**Special Request:** Cell phones and pagers should be turned off for the duration of the seminar. Students will be asked to leave the classroom for the remainder of the seminar in the event one of these devices is activated during the lecture.

**GRADING:** Grades in the class will be issued on the following two criteria

- 1) **Quality and delivery of the seminar.** Some things to consider include: Was sufficient background into the research area presented so that someone not familiar with the subject matter could understand what was going on? Was the data from the paper presented in a clear and concise manner? How was the style of the presentation? This part (75%) of the grade will come from your fellow students. Grading sheets will be handed out at the beginning of class and collected by the instructor at the end.
- 2) **Participation during the seminar.** This part (25%) of the grade will come from the instructor. By participating in the seminar (such as presenting questions to the speakers), students will receive the full credit.