

## BIOLOGY 486 (BIOLOGY MAJORS SEMINAR)

### SYLLABUS, FALL 2005

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Vonnie D.C. Shields (Smith, 357; Phone 410-704-3130; email: vshields@towson.edu)

**OFFICE HOURS:** M, W, F (10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. or by appointment)

**CLASSROOM LOCATION:** Smith 271 (Thursday, 12:30-2:20 p.m.)

**TEXTBOOK:** None

**COURSE WEBSITE:** <http://bbweb.towson.edu>; find "Biology Majors Seminar, FA '05" on Blackboard (under my name)

**Prerequisites:** Ten credit hours in biology beyond the core of Biology 201, 202, 205, and 207.

**Grading:** Grading is based on the instructor's evaluation of your seminar presentations, abstracts and bibliographies submitted, participation in asking questions of your classmates, and peer evaluations of your presentations. See below for more specific details.

Initial presentation	10 points
First seminar (Power Point presentation)	40 points
Second seminar (Power Point presentation)	80 points
*Abstracts and bibliographies for presentation 1	10 points
*Abstracts and bibliographies for presentation 2	10 points
Participation in question and answer	20 points
Peer evaluations	30 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>200 points</b>

\***Abstracts** must be between **400-500 words** in length including purpose, major points, and conclusions.

#### **PLEASE NOTE:**

**Abstracts** (including title), **bibliography**, **copy of your journal paper**, and **Power Point presentation** are **due the day before** your seminar presentation and must be **given or sent electronically to the instructor**.

#### **Class Schedule:**

9/1	Course goals, choosing a research topic, seminar preparation, peer-evaluations.
9/8	Preparing an effective Power Point presentation.
9/15	No class
9/22	Initial presentations (1-8)
9/29	Initial presentations (9-16); <b>Topics for first presentation due.</b>
10/6	4 presentations (Seminars 1-4)
10/13	4 presentations (Seminars 5-8)

- 10/20 4 presentations (Seminars 9-12)  
 10/27 4 presentations (Seminars 13-16)  
 11/3 Discussion regarding presentation of first seminars. **Topics for second presentation due.**  
 11/10 4 presentations (Seminars 1-4)  
 11/17 4 presentations (Seminars 5-8)  
 11/24 4 presentations (Seminars 9-12)  
 12/1 4 presentations (Seminars 13-16)  
 12/8 Discussion regarding presentation of second seminars and final wrap up.

### **Expectations:**

- a) **Attendance is mandatory.** Students with a **valid** (i.e. medical, death in family, family emergency) excuse must provide the instructor with **valid** written documentation. Failure to do so will result in the loss of a full letter grade.
- b) **Initial presentations** must be 5-10 minutes and must **fully explain** the main idea presented in the transparency. The **remaining two seminars** must each be at least 20 minutes in length, with 5-10 minutes for questions and discussion.
- c) Seminars must be presented **as scheduled**. **Failure to comply will result in a reduction of one letter grade for the course.**
- d) **The instructor must approve all topics and selected papers in advance**. **Failure to comply will result in a reduction of one letter grade for the course.**

**Percentage cut-offs for letter grades:** A = 92-100%; A- = 89-91.9, B+ = 86-88.9; B = 82-85.9%; B- = 79-81.9; C+ = 76-78.9, C = 70-75.9,%; C- = 69-69.9, D+ = 66-68.9, D = 60-65.9, F = <60%.

**Cheating and Plagiarism Policy:** Any form of **cheating or plagiarism** will not be tolerated. Any one caught **cheating** will receive an F for the course. This includes using a presentation from a previous course. Cheating and plagiarism are defined in the University Catalog and should be reviewed by each student.

**Student Conduct:** In fairness to everyone enrolled in this course, it is critical that the best possible learning atmosphere be maintained in the classroom. Routinely entering class late or departing early, repeatedly talking in class without being recognized, and speaking in class without being recognized is **not acceptable**. **Cell phones and audible beepers must be turned off during class period.** Failure to comply will result in the student being asked to leave and an unexcused absence. In the event where a student legitimately needs to carry a beeper or cellular telephone to lecture, prior notice and approval of the instructor is required.

**Aim of this course:** This course is designed to improve your skill at i) communicating orally, ii) interpreting the primary biological literature, and iii) recognizing elements comprising an effective presentation. Students will also have the opportunity to critique seminar presentations. Each student will present two research seminars on papers regarding selected topics in biology that ask appropriate biological question, bear a hypothesis/purpose, and are supported by figures, tables, and data. The papers chosen must not be a review articles or technique/methodology papers and must be published in scholarly journals. The instructor must approve all topics and selected papers in advance. Each student will also participate in discussing and critiquing scientific presentations.