

Vertebrate Natural History

Biology 203

Course Syllabus

Spring 2010. Lecture/Lab: 9:00 – 11:50, T/Th SWEC -201 (see schedule below)

Instructor: Kathleen LoGiudice

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Tentative office hours: Monday 10:35 – 11:35; Thursday 1:45 – 2:45, or by appointment

Textbooks:

Mammals of North America by Roland W. Kays & Don E. Wilson

Field guide to birds of eastern North America by David Allan Sibley

Peterson Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America, Third Edition by Roger Conant and Joseph T. Collins

There may also be an additional weekend and/or evening field trip - dates to be announced.

Course goals:

- To become familiar with the major groups of vertebrates in north/central New York (excluding fish)
- To learn to identify these species in the field
- To learn the common and scientific names and major taxonomic groups for these species
- To understand the major evolutionary and physiological adaptations of these groups of species
- To prepare you for graduate school or a career in involving animal ecology or wildlife management
- To enhance a lifetime of enjoying wildlife.

Exams:

- There will be 1 practical exam for each major taxonomic group (reptiles/amphibians, birds, mammals) and 1 comprehensive final exam on the lecture material only. Practical exams will include material from the lectures.
- Exams will be given on various days of the week, see the Tentative Schedule for the dates. Since these practical exams require extensive set-up, it is extremely important that you attend the regularly scheduled exam. Unexcused absence from an exam will result in a zero grade.
- The only acceptable reasons for missing a quiz or exam are medical (with documentation) or Dean's excuses. For all other excuses (death in family, emotional crisis, etc.) you must get a written excuse from the Dean of Students.
- When an exam is missed with an acceptable excuse, make-up exams may be given *during final exam week* at the discretion of the professor.

- Any grading mistakes on tests must be discussed before the day of the next test.

Grading: This class is heavy on memorization, which is not everyone's strong suit. Therefore, you may choose to write an optional 8-10 page literature review to reduce the impact of the exams.

Option 1

Reptile/amphibian exam	20%
Bird exam I	20%
Bird exam II	20%
Mammal Exam	20%
Final exam (lecture)	20%

Note: You must decide which Option you will choose by May 6. The default is Option 1, so if you do not inform me, I will assume you are taking Option 1.

Option 2

Reptile/amphibian exam	15%
Bird exam I	15%
Bird exam II	20%
Mammal Exam	15%
Paper (optional)	15%
Final exam (lecture)	20%

Note: The paper is due on May 25. Be aware that there is no guaranty that your paper grade will be any better than your exam grades!

NOTE: The percentages listed above assume regular class attendance and participation. I reserve the right to deduct for poor attendance, participation or attitude.

1. **Academic Honesty:** Any student who participates in cheating or plagiarism will automatically be taken to the Dean of Undergraduate Education. Definitions of cheating and plagiarism provided below are from "Tools for Teaching," by Barbara Gross Davis, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1993.

"Cheating means getting unauthorized help on an assignment, quiz, or examination.

- (1) You must not receive from any other student or give to any other student any information, answers, or help during an exam.
- (2) You must not use unauthorized sources for answers during an exam. You must not take notes or books to the exam when such aids are forbidden, and you must not refer to any book or notes while you are taking the exam unless the instructor indicates it is an "open book" exam.
- (3) You must not obtain exam questions illegally before an exam or tamper with an exam after it has been corrected."

"Plagiarism means submitting work as your own that is someone else's."

For example, copying material from a book or other source without acknowledging that the words or ideas are someone else's and not your own is plagiarism.

If you copy an **author's words exactly**, you must treat the passage as a direct quotation (put it in quotes "") and supply the appropriate citation. If you use someone else's ideas, even if you paraphrase the wording, appropriate credit

should be given. You have committed plagiarism if you purchase a term paper or submit a paper as your own that you did not write.”

2. **Electronic devices:** Please show your respect to me and your classmates by turning your phone off during class

3. **Final Grading Scheme:**

Individual assignment grades will be assigned in percentages and a weighted mean will be calculated at the completion of all assignments.

- 94-100 (A), 90-93.9 (A-): Indicates excellent critical analysis, writing skills (if applicable) and attendance, active and insightful contributions to discussions, exceptional understanding of material. The ability to apply information learned in class and lab to novel situations.
 - 87 – 89.9 (B+), 84 – 86.9 (B), 80 – 83.9 (B-): Indicates good critical analysis skills, good attendance and participation, good understanding of course material.
 - 77 – 79.9 (C+), 74 – 76.9 (C), 70 – 73.9 (C-): Indicates adequate critical analysis skills, average attendance and participation, satisfactory understanding of course material.
 - 60 – 69.9 (D): Inadequate critical analysis skills and inability or unwillingness to really think about the material. Poor participation and/or attendance (missing more than 4 classes or any labs without valid excuse) usually indicate that the student just didn’t try very hard.
 - Below 60 (F): Self explanatory.
4. **Special Needs:** I encourage students with disabilities, including non-visible disabilities, to discuss with me (during office hours, by appointment or after class) appropriate accommodations that might help facilitate your learning. You will need appropriate documentation in the Dean of Students Office. All discussions will remain confidential.

Students are required to learn the following:

- Scientific and common names for 25 amphibian species as well as families (8), orders (2) and class.
- Scientific and common names for 22 reptile species as well as families (5), orders (2) and class.
- Common names only for 125 bird species as well as families (44), orders (16) and class, plus about 30 common bird songs.
- Scientific and common names for 38 mammal species as well as families (17), orders (9) and class.

Students also learn basic natural history information about each of these species and how to recognize them in the field and lab, by tracks or other sign.

Believe it or not, this is not only possible – it is also FUN!

Option 2 on Syllabus:**Optional paper:**

- Choose: one genus (or family, if necessary) that we are learning about this term
- Choose: one system – i.e., locomotion, reproduction, etc.
- Find and read at least 6 peer-reviewed papers about this system in either a species or a genus
- Write a review paper about what is known in this system citing your reference papers.
- You must turn in electronic copies of your reference papers as well as your paper itself.

LAB/CLASS SCHEDULE

Week	Date	9:00 – 10:20	10:20 – 11:50
1	3/30	Intro to Vertebrates	Salamanders/Frogs
1	4/1		Salamanders/Frogs
2	4/6		Turtles/Snakes
2	4/8	Locomotion	Turtles/Snakes
2	4/8	Night-time amphibian field trip 6:00 -10:00 p.m.	
3	4/13	Amphibian/reptile exam	Intro to Birds
3	4/15	Locomotion	Birds
4	4/20	Locomotion	Birds
4	4/22	Amphibian/reptile trip (class time)	
OR (in case of bad weather ON 4/22, switch with 4/27)			
5	4/27	Reproduction	Birds
5	4/29	Reproduction	Birds
6	5/4	Bird I Exam	Birds
6	5/6	Reproduction (Option choice due)	Birds
7	5/11	Strategies for surviving	Birds
7	5/13	Strategies for surviving	Open review birds
8	5/18	Bird II Exam	Mammalian dentition
8	5/20	Bird trip – EARLY START	
OR (in case of bad weather ON 5/20, switch with 5/25)			
9	5/25	Strategies for surviving	Mammals (Option 2 paper due)
9	5/27	Strategies for surviving	Mammals
10	6/1	Strategies for surviving	Mammal exam?
10	6/3	Mammal trip** EARLY START	Open mammal review
Mon	6/7	FINAL EXAM	11:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M.

Mammal Exam timing to be announced

** Mammal traps must be set the night before, so plan on a short evening trip on 6/2