

Biology 495 A and B
Biology Seminar Series
Course Syllabus

Fall, 2003

MEETING PLACE: PB 13-2

MEETING TIME: Thursdays, 12:30-1:45

INSTRUCTOR/CO-ORDINATOR: Dr. William Mautz

Life Sciences, room 6 (LS 6)

974-7357 (or leave message 974-7383)

Office Hours: T, Th 10:30 - 12:00; F 11:00 - 12:00

or by appointment

The Biology 495AB seminar series course is a set of presentations on a wide variety of topics in biology, so it should be a very interesting and different sort of course. **NOTE** that all biology majors are required to take two semesters, part A and part B, of this course for graduation. In BIOL 495A students will listen attentively and write a brief review of the speaker, while in BIOL 495B students will give a seminar presentation in addition to writing the reviews of the other speaker's talks. Both courses are graded on a credit/no credit (CR/NC) basis.

Making a public presentation may seem like you are in for a traumatic experience, but it is not really so bad as many think. It is an extremely beneficial experience. You learn to get good at it, like learning to drive a car, by just doing it and getting the practice. The skills gained in researching a topic, organizing the information, and presenting a short talk on it you will find extremely valuable whether you are interviewing for a job or required to tell government leaders what you think about their plans for your neighborhood. We will discuss how to prepare a presentation and the presentations you watch and review in class will be good study for useful things to do.

The presentations for students will normally be 20 min long with an additional 5 min for questions from the floor. You may request a full 50 min period if you want that amount of time. You may select any topic in biology for your topic, but please run it by me for advice on it first. If you are really unable to decide on your own topic, see me and I will provide you a list of possible subjects.

Grading policy for the course will be as follows:

Biol 495A: Students will be expected to attend regularly and evaluate each speaker on forms provided by the instructor. Completed evaluation forms must be turned in to the instructor at the end of class. Only one un-excused absence will be permitted during the semester and more than one will result in an NC grade. If you miss more than one seminar, please contact me, and a make up seminar might be able to be arranged in a different department with a written summary of the talk submitted to avoid an NC grade.

Biol 495B: In addition to evaluating and submitting reviews of each speaker, you will be giving your own seminar presentation to the class. Your talk will be graded by the attending faculty members. Students receiving grades of A, B, or C will be given a CR grade for the course. If the faculty grade average is D or F, students will receive a NC grade. As for BIOL 495A, students will be allowed only one unexcused absence during the semester, and more than one will result in a NC grade.

Biology 495B

Grading Criteria for Student Seminar Presentations

Presentation Length: 20 minutes long with 5 additional minutes for questions.

Topic: Any topic in **biological science** may be selected for your presentation. Before beginning extensive library work to develop your presentation, clear your topic with the course instructor. If you wish, you may select a topic from a list of possible biological subjects (see instructor).

Grading: Your grade will be based on several things.

1. How well you researched your topic will determine about 70% of your grade. The amount and level of information presented in your seminar will indicate how well you did your background research preparation, as will your ability to handle questions on the topic from the floor.

2. How well you have practiced your talk will determine about 30% of your grade. Rehearsing your presentation, alone in a room and/or in front of your friends, is immensely important to making a good seminar presentation. With multiple practice sessions, you can cover the 20 min talk smoothly without a lot of silences in which you struggle to think what to say next or shuffle your papers to read your notes. The more you practice, the better it gets.

Summary Suggestions for a Good Presentation:

(we will discuss detailed recommendations in class):

1. Start library research early (at least 8 weeks before your talk).
2. Make sure visual aids are legible: simple message, big, and bold.
3. Co-ordinate availability of equipment with instructor in advance.
4. Speak to the audience, not to the floor, overhead equipment, or the chalkboard, and make eye contact.
5. Use an outline or notes to guide you, but do not read from a written script.
6. Re-check everything (slides and transparencies marked and ordered), room, and equipment setup; be sure to be on time for your talk.
7. Anticipate questions and do not pass them off. "I don't know" is the correct answer when you do not know the answer.
8. Modulate your voice, speak clearly and not too fast. Speak loudly, especially in PB 13-2, which has a high ceiling.
9. Relax. The better prepared in advance you are, the less uptight and stressed you will be, and the more the audience can focus on your message rather than your emotion.
10. Practice, practice, practice. This cannot be emphasized enough. When you are thoroughly familiar with your talk, you will feel comfortable presenting it on stage. Do full rehearsals with a pretend audience using your visual aids to co-ordinate what you are saying with your slides and transparencies.