Instructor: Dr. Carmen G. Montaña Schalk
Email: montanascg@sfasu.edu (preferred form of contact)
Phone: 936-468-2322
Office: 123 Biology

Office Hours: M - W: 8:00 am – 11:00 am or by appointment

Class Meeting Time/Place
Lecture: Mondays 5:00 – 6:15 pm Room: 225, Miller Science Building

COURSE DESCRIPTION
BIOL 4199 is an undergraduate seminar designed to familiarize you with the profession of science, specifically the literature and work of scientists in the field of evolutionary ecology and conservation. This class seeks to help you develop skills in analyzing and critiquing scientific papers, and in presenting data to your colleagues. Formal lecturing will be minimal. With completion of this course, the student will become familiar with the process and importance of reviewing and critically evaluating scientific literature by examining in detail a series of selected works in relevant research papers about Impacts of contaminants/pollutants/land uses in world ecosystems. Anthropogenic impacts in aquatic ecosystems. Responses biological systems to anthropogenic impacts and climate change.

TEXT AND MATERIALS
There is not a textbook required. Selected scientific papers for discussion will be recommended by the professor.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
ATTENDANCE is mandatory in lectures, and you will benefit greatly by attending. Most of this course consists of your individual effort, researching literature, formulating questions, practicing and delivering your seminar in the form of professional presentations.

STUDENT RESOURCES: All students can have the ability do well in this course. A number of resources will help you do so.
1) Attendance to office hours to discuss research papers with the professor
2) Search for presentation materials early, so you can prepare your presentation ahead of time.
3) Get feedback from the professor before discussing your PP presentation
4) Take peer-review evaluation seriously, so you can improve your final presentation
5) Be an active student during class

NOTE: Part of your course grade will result from class participation via presentations and reading discussions. I strongly encourage the students to come to class prepared and participate via discussion.
CLASS STRUCTURE AND GRADING

1. Professional Presentations (40%):
During the semester, each student will prepare and deliver a 15 minute PowerPoint presentation based on a scientific paper selected by the student/professor. Student will lead the discussion following that presentation. The entire class will read all the materials (one paper) as preparation for a short discussion following each presentation and be expected to participate fully in the discussions.

Presentation grades will be partially determined through peer review process using a scoring rubric, whereby each class participant will fill out a short presentation evaluation form. The results of the student evaluations will be averaged and will account for 50% of the final presentation grades, with the other 50% coming from the instructor’s evaluation. Score sheets will be collected by the professor and then returned to the presenters the following week.

The presentation grade will be evaluated on the following factors: 1) the ability to analyze the scientific information being presented, 2) overall understanding of the subject being presented, 3) material organization and use of visual aids, 4) language skills, 5) presence [eye contact with public, body language], 6) communication and use of time allotted, among other.

Your presentations (PP presentation and paper discussion) will account for 40% of your course grade.

2. Class Participation and Attendance (15%):
Participation includes attendance, participation in discussions, and background reading. You will be expected to attend seminar every week and actively participate in discussions.

Students are expected to participate in weekly discussions on the assigned research papers. To facilitate discussion, each student is required to bring in two typed questions that they will submit each class. The grade will be determined based on the frequency of their participation as well as thoughtfulness/utility of their contributions to class discussion.

Every week one (or two) designed student will briefly summarize the book chapter, and the entire class is expected to read and come to class having read the weekly book chapter as preparation for a short discussion.

Participation in class meetings consists of:
1) being actively involved in class discussions
2) offering constructive comments on your classmates’ presentations and;
3) asking thoughtful questions and adding constructive comments, observations, and elements of interest to the open discussion about each paper being presented.

Only students with written documentation of an illness, family emergency, religious event or required participation in a college organized event will not be penalized for missing class. I will keep a written record of your attendance and participation in the form of questions or comments made during discussion. Weekly evaluation of student engagement will be recorded on a scale of 0 through 10 using the following guideline:
0-2 rarely, if ever, contributes;
3-4 occasional participation, but generally non-substantive, adding little new information;
5-6 occasional participation, but generally well thought out, useful contributions;
7-8 regular participation, sometimes useful, sometimes not;
9-10 regular participation, always useful.

3. Final class presentation (35%):
Students (2-student team) will be required to work and prepare a 15-minute PP presentations focused on a topic related to the impact of humans in the environment. This presentation will be held at the end of the semester. The presentation should focus on reviewing original research studies. I **strongly** encourage students (2-team student) to come see me for guidance before they begin their research/presentation.

The presentation grade will be evaluated on the following factors: 1) the ability to obtain and analyze scientific information being presented; 2) the quality of an abstract that summarizes the project being presented (500 words); 3) the quality of the PP being presented; 4) the quality of the student’s individual presentation of their project presentation; 5) student evaluation by their peers.

The professor will provide additional information about the final presentation format at the beginning of the semester. A schedule of presentations with student names will be completed on the first day of class.

4. Literature review (10%): Student-teams (2-students) are expected to meet with the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss their presentation topic. Students are expected to **review at least 5 scientific papers** in their topic of interest. References will be reviewed by the professor before students start working on their presentation.

Final Exam:
A final exam will **NOT** be administered in this class.

**Final Grade Determination:**
Professional Presentation: 40%
Participation/discussion: 15%
Final presentation: 35%
Literature Review: 10%
CLASS SCHEDULE Fall 2023

**Grade scale:**
- > 90% = A
- 89.9% - 80% = B
- 79.9% - 70% = C
- 69.9% - 60% = D
- 59.9% and below = F

There will be no curve and no individual extra credit.

**Papers for presentation and discussion**

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Papers</th>
<th>Student name</th>
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| Aug 28 | Syllabus discussion  
Class expectations                                                                  |              |
| Sep 4  | Professional aspects (dress code, public speaking, posture, other tips!!)  
How to make professional presentations (visual aids, important points, text, etc.) |              |
| Sep 11 | **Paper 1:** Kern and Langerhans 2018. Urbanization drives contemporary evolution in stream fishes. |              |
| Sep 18 | **Paper 2:** Montana et al. 2021. The cost of gold mercury contamination in fishes in a neotropical river food web. |              |
| Sep 25 | **Paper 3:** Chaves et al. 2020. Global consumption and international trade in deforestation could influence Malaria risk. |              |
| Oct 2  | **Paper 4:** Rulli et al. 2016. The nexus between forest fragmentation in Africa and Ebola virus.  
**Paper 5:** Morand and Lajaunie. 2021. Outbreaks of vector-borne and zoonotic diseases are associated with changes in forest cover |              |
| Oct 9  | **Invited speakers** - Benefits of undergraduate research                |              |
**Paper 7:** Lawson and Jackson 2020. Salty summertime streams—road salt contaminated watershed and estimates in species. |              |
| Oct 23 | **Paper 8:** Peters_2016_Urbanization is a major influence on microplastic ingestion by sunfish in the Brazos River Basin Central Texas USA |              |
| Oct 30 | **Invited speaker:** Job opportunities in state agencies (Sabine River Researcher) |              |
| Nov 13 | **Paper 10:** Loss et al. 2012. The impact of free-ranging domestic cats on wildlife in USA |              |
| Nov 20 | **Thanksgiving break**                                                 |              |
| Nov 27 | **Invited speaker:** Job opportunities in state agencies (TPWD Researcher) |              |
| Dec 4  | **Class evaluation/final presentations**                               |              |
**CLASS RULES**

1. **Communicating to your professor:** Email will be the primary means of communication for the course. So please, check your email often.

   **Any correspondence to your professor should follow the following format:**
   - **Subject line:** BIOL-4199
   - **to whom** (Dr. or professor Montana),
   - **Statement** (xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)
   - Thank you
   - Student’s name.

   The professor has the right of not answering emails to those students that fail to follow this format.

   **Note:** Do not contact me via D2L as I do not utilize that method for class communication.

   For any correspondence with Dr. Montana, please use her official university email: montanascg@sfasu.edu

2. **Attendance policy:** Attendance is mandatory and you will benefit greatly by attending. Unexcused absences from lecture will affect your final grade as you will not be allowed to make up grads based on participation/discussion in class, class presentations, peer-review evaluations.

3. **Grades cannot be discussed via e-mail at any time** due to federal law. I will speak to you in person instead during my office hours. DO NOT involve a third-party who is not affiliated in an official capacity with SFASU (e.g., friend, roommate) in any matters pertaining to your enrollment in this course. Your instructor is legally prohibited from discussing most course/grade-related issues with third parties according to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99).

4. **Completing assignments:** It is your responsibility to complete assignments in a timely manner. I will not accept any late submissions on discussion questions regarding missed assignments.

5. **Entering class late:** Entering a lecture late can qualify as disruptive behavior when the student disturbs me during my lecture or disturbs the students around them while becoming situated. See below for more details.

6. **Missed assignments:** The only exception for missing the final in-class exam is if the absence is planned and approved by the instructor at least 15 days prior to the date of absence or upon receipt of a documented medical excuse or an excuse provided by the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. In this case an alternative date for the exam will be given.

7. **Disruptive behavior policy:** A student may be asked to leave the classroom for any behavior I find disruptive. A first offence will not be penalized; however, further offences may be penalized with a disciplinary action (see **Academic Integrity (4.1):** (see [https://www.sfasu.edu/docs/policies/10.4.pdf](https://www.sfasu.edu/docs/policies/10.4.pdf))
8. **Plagiarism policy:** A first offence will be penalized with a zero that cannot be dropped. A second offence will be penalized with a disciplinary action (see Academic Integrity *(4.1)*: (see [https://www.sfasu.edu/docs/policies/10.4.pdf](https://www.sfasu.edu/docs/policies/10.4.pdf)).

9. **Extra credit:** There will be NO PERSONAL extra credit or bonus point opportunities under any circumstance or for any reason. I reserve the right to assign class bonus points at any time.

**CLASS POLICIES**

**Conduct Policy:** *Usage of tobacco products is not permitted in this class.*

**Academic Integrity *(4.1)*:** (see [https://www.sfasu.edu/docs/policies/10.4.pdf](https://www.sfasu.edu/docs/policies/10.4.pdf))

The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.

Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy *(5.5)*:** Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only
if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average. For additional information, go to https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf.

**Students with Disabilities:** To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

**Acceptable Student Behavior:** Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

**Responsible Use of Technology:** It is expected that all students will only use cell phones, PDAs, laptop computers, MP3 players and other technology outside of class time or when appropriate in class. Answering a cell phone, texting, listening to music or using a laptop computer for matters unrelated to the course may be grounds for dismissal from class or other penalties.

**Student Wellness and Well-Being** SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

**On-campus Resources:**

**The Dean of Students Office** (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby)

[www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents](http://www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents)

936.468.7249
dos@sfasu.edu

**SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic** Human Services, Room 202
The Health and Wellness Hub “The Hub”
Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St.

To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body and spirit. Services include:

- Health Services
- Counseling Services
- Student Outreach and Support
- Food Pantry
- Wellness Coaching
- Alcohol and Other Drug Education

Crisis Resources:

- Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
- National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741
I, ______________________, SFA ID# __________________________ have read and agree with the information presented in this document “Syllabus for BIOL4199 Seminar in Biology, Fall 2023”

Student’s Signature: ______________________

Date: ______________________