FORS 2055 – VERTEBRATE NATURAL HISTORY

Course objectives: This course will examine the evolutionary history of: amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, and fishes focusing on their basic biology including; anatomy, physiology, ecology, behavior, diversity, taxonomy, zoogeography, reproductive biology, and conservation biology. The laboratory exercises will emphasize anatomy and morphology, field and museum techniques, identification (including living and preserved specimens), and their natural history. There will be opportunities to observe animals in the field and in zoological facilities.

Course format: The course consists of both lecture and laboratory sections. The laboratory will include identification of formalin fixed and live specimens and may include field trips.

Course Goals
The course is divided into a lecture and a laboratory section. The lecture portion of the course will focus on understanding the diversity and relationships amongst vertebrate taxa. Lecture will also emphasize understanding the major aspects of vertebrate biology such as diversity of reproductive strategies, foraging modes, and life histories. The laboratory section of the course will take a hands-on and focus on: 1) identification, 2) taxonomy, and 3) natural history of the approximately 250 vertebrates occurring in the eastern United States.

Program Learning Outcomes
FORS 2355 is part of the required coursework for students concentrating on Forest Wildlife Management. This course is designed to address the following Program Learning Outcomes (PLO’s), as given in the Bachelor of Science in Forestry (BSF) degree program:
1. Demonstrate understanding and competency of forest ecology and biology;
2. Demonstrate understanding and competency in the measurement of forest resources;
3. Demonstrate understanding and competency in managing forest resources;
4. Demonstrate understanding and competency of forest resource policy, economics, and administration.
5. Demonstrate understanding and competency in oral and written communication skills.

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Student Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of this course, successful students will be able to:
1. Demonstrate an understanding of ca. 250 vertebrate species in the eastern United States. Specifically, students will be able to identify those species and be knowledgeable about taxonomic relationships, habitat requirements, basic natural history, and key management concerns (PLO’s 1, 3, 4).
2. Demonstrate an understanding of current conservation and management concerns and strategies for key groups of vertebrates (PLO’s 1, 2, 3, 4).
3. Demonstrate competency in written and oral communication skills (PLO 5).

Specific learner outcomes will be defined during the following lecture and laboratory examinations; lecture exam 1 + final exam (Diversity; Classification, Evolution, Relationships, Origin, Jawless Fishes, and Living in Water), lecture exam 2 + final exam (Cartilaginous Fishes, Bony Fishes, Living on Land, Tetrapod origins, evolution, diversity, Amphibians), lecture exam 3 + final exam (Endothermy, Birds: characteristics, flight, ecology, behavior, Mammals: characteristics, diversity, Body size, behavior, ecology), Conservation and impact of humans), lab exam 1 (fishes and amphibians), lab exam 2 (reptiles and birds), lab exam 3 (birds and mammals).

**Instructor:** Cord Eversole, Ph.D. **Telephone:** (936) 468-1332

**Email:** cord.eversole@sfasu.edu

**Class Room:** Lecture - Forestry Bldg., Room 225. Laboratory – Miller Science Bldg., Room 216.

**Class and Lab Hours:** Lecture – 11:00 – 11:50 MW, Forestry Bldg. Room 225. Laboratory 13:00 – 15:50 & 16:00 – 18:50 W, Miller Science Bldg. Room 218.

**Office Hours:** Tues 8:30 to 11:00 or by appointment. However, I have an open-door policy. If I am in my office, feel free to come by.

**Required Texts:** Pough, Janis and Heiser, Vertebrate Life. Prentice Hall. 8th-11th ed. Students that read the text usually do better on EXAMS

1) Bird guide e.g., Birds of North America, National Geographic Society
3) Mammal guide e.g., The Mammals of Texas, Revised Edition, David J. Schmidly, University of Texas Press. (online for free)
4) A Key to Amphibians and Reptiles of the Continental United States and Canada
**Lecture Exams:** The three exams and final will cover notes from class and pertinent information from the textbook. Some notes may come from sources other than the text. The examinations will consist mainly of short answers, definitions, characterizations, multiple-choice and true or false questions.

**Laboratory Grade:** The laboratory grade is based on the 3 lab exams/practicals.

**Missed Exams:** THERE ARE NO MAKEUPS!!! If you realize you will miss an exam for an appropriate reason, you must contact me **BEFORE** the exam with documentation.

**Grading:**

- Exam 1 ...................... 100 points
- Exam 2 ...................... 100 points
- Exam 3 ...................... 100 points
- Lab Exam 1................. 100 points
- Lab Exam 2 ................. 100 points
- Final Exam (optional)..... 150 points

Grades will be awarded according to the regulations of the undergraduate catalog (The grading scale will be the standard 90% = A, 80% = B, 70% = C, 60% = D, and 59% and below = F). **It is also important to note that attendance alone does not guarantee a passing grade.**

**EXTRA CREDIT:** This is an upper-level college course. You are expected to devote a representative amount of time and effort to classwork studies and lab. **I strongly suggest if you have the time to devote to an extra credit project then you should devote this extra time and effort to your class and lab.**

**General Policies:** I will try to stay on track with dates, topics, chapters and activities. Unfortunately, during the semester things happen (ex. subject material and topic requires more lecture time) and an activity, exam etc. may need to be rescheduled; therefore, it is possible we may need to make adjustments as the semester progresses. **I encourage questions,** so please ask away. If you have a problem understanding the material being covered in class, **PLEASE come see me.** I am here to help you, but **do not wait until the last minute.** Remember, I can’t help you if you don’t keep me informed.

**Other:** There is no policy of required attendance. However, students usually find it difficult to earn an acceptable grade if they do not attend class regularly. It is important that you take notes of the lecture material. It is also essential that you study regularly. Reading the material in the textbook beforehand will help you better understand the lecture material. Also, after each lecture rereading the material in the textbook and rereading and/or rewriting your notes will also be of tremendous help. Talking or other disruptive behavior during lectures will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes giving, receiving, or using unauthorized aid on any academic work. This includes a
person who has taken a test discussing what was on a test with a person who has not taken the test. **Any student guilty of cheating or plagiarism will receive a grade of F for that exam.** Please view your undergraduate catalog for information, definitions, and codes on nonacademic misconduct, academic misconduct, academic dishonesty, and sexual misconduct.

Visit: https://www.sfasu.edu/policies

**Special course requirements and additional information:** An integral part of this course includes the identification of specimens (live and formalin fixed) and participation in field observations and collections. Please be aware that some specimens (especially live ones) are capable of delivering painful bites and causing injury. In addition, participation in field activities may require you to take necessary precautions (proper boots and protective clothing) when traveling through rough terrain, in wet conditions, or during inclement weather conditions. **ALWAYS remember safety and caution is first!!!!!!!!**

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)
Please copy and paste the following information regarding Withheld Grades into your syllabus. Add additional information as needed to meet your departmental or course needs.
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 coursework 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 to compute the grade point average. For additional information, go to https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf.

Students with Disabilities
Please copy the following statement and paste it into your course syllabus.
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 promptly may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

Please copy everything below and paste it into your course syllabus.

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
936.468.7249
dos@sfasu.edu
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)
- joh Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741
Tentative Lecture Schedule
*It is important to come to class to stay up to date on changes to the schedule.

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<td>Origin of fins and jaws /Functioning in aquatic environment</td>
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<td><strong>EXAM 1</strong> Tetrapoda – the fin-to-limb transition</td>
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<td><strong>EXAM 2</strong>/Lepidosaurus – snakes/Crocodilians</td>
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<td>Bird migration/Avian ecology</td>
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***Final exam @10:30am, 8 May 2024***
*** Last day to drop with W 10 Apr 2023***
Tentative Laboratory Schedule
*It is important to come to class to stay up to date on changes to the schedule.

There may be 2 or 3 field trips; TBA, more info to come

**NOTE: Labs may be rearranged to accommodate scheduling**

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