Senior Seminar Fall 2012
1 credit hour
Tuesday, 1110-1230, CRN XXXX - BIOL 494-01 (Lipscomb)
Tuesday, 1610-1730, CRN XXXX - BIOL 494-02 (Robinson)
Thursday, 1110-1230, CRN XXXX - BIOL 494-03 (Robinson)
Thursday, 0940-1100, CRN XXXX - BIOL 494-04 (Lipscomb)

Facilitators:
Dr. Courtney J. Robinson; 222 EJH; Office hrs: TBD; 202-806-6953; courtney.robinson@howard.edu
Dr. M. Lipscomb; G30 EJH; Office hrs: 0900-1100 W or by appt; 202.806.8903; michael.lipscomb@howard.edu

Course Overview
The course provides Biology majors an opportunity to organize, develop, and present comprehensive seminars on areas of current biological research before an audience of their peers. During the seminar, each student will be required to 1) submit a review paper on a specific, contemporary biological topic, 2) submit an abstract based on that paper, 3) give 2 oral presentations based on that paper, and 4) write short summaries for peer presentations. Each student is expected to conduct a proper literature search to obtain pertinent background and supportive information for his/her presentation. The search should embrace current, peer-reviewed journal material (2000-2012). Scientific references from internet sources are limited to on-line, peer-reviewed journal publications. No textbook, dictionary, wiki, blog, or -pedia material may be used.

COURSE OBJECTIVES—

1. To increase conceptual knowledge about research, including protocol, methods, and written and oral presentation of research results.
2. To contribute to the advancement of critical thinking, reading, writing, research, and oral and written communication in the biological sciences.
3. To create an environment that fosters the exchange of ideas.
4. To prepare students to be able to apply, participate in, and successfully undertake research.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES- Students completing the course should be able to:

1. Distinguish among sections of material used in scientific written and oral presentations, e.g. introduction, hypotheses, methods, results, and conclusions.
2. Construct an abstract that summarizes a current area of research.
3. Construct a short written paper that explores a current area of research.
4. Construct a oral presentation that explores a current area of research.
5. Summarize and evaluate presentations made by others

LATE MATERIAL- ALL late material will be penalized 10% per day or portion thereof.

ASSIGNMENTS – Each student is required to select a topic from the listings at the end of the syllabus. Each student must submit the following material through the course Blackboard website:

1. a 100-150 word abstract DUE – 6pm; 11 Sep or 13 Sep
2. a 5-page (max length) paper DUE – 6pm; 11 Sep or 13 Sep
3. a copy (ppt file) of the presentation DUE – 10am; presentation day
4. a pdf of the first page of the paper you will present (should include the journal information and the abstract) DUE - 10am; 1 wk before presentation

Late penalties will be assessed as 10% (one letter grade) per day or portion thereof. Material will not be accepted after more than three (3) days late or portions thereof.

PAPER (100 points) –

• All papers must: be typed (1.5 - 2 spaced, 12pt font, maximum 5pgs), include appropriate citations (see course overview), and be submitted on or before the due date.
• The paper should be written as a mini-review on the selected topic. It should include a discussion of current papers that address the topic and future directions for the research area (include your own ideas, as well as those from other researchers).
• Your paper will be assessed by SafeAssign for plagiarism on Blackboard. If your submitted paper matches more than 50% to already published material, your paper will be deemed as a plagiarized copy and penalized at 10% per decile over 50.
• Grades will be based on style, grammar, content, format, and analysis.
• Footnotes are not to be used. References are to be cited in the text, e.g. Not only is mating behavior a key social event in any species, but it may have important effects on patterns of parental behavior (Trivers, 1972). Darwin (1871) noted two patterns... If it is not critical for the author's name to appear in the text itself, as with Trivers, place both the name and date of publication within parentheses. If, on the other hand, use of the author's name in the text is important, as with Darwin, place the date of publication in parentheses immediately following the author's name.
• The bibliography should include all cited authors and should be formatted using CSE style (not APA, etc.). For information and examples of how to cite and format references properly go to: http://library.osu.edu/how-to-find/research-strategies/how-do-i-cite-references/cse-citation-guide

ABSTRACT (30 points) – You must write your own abstract. Focus on providing a short, (100-150 word), clearly written summary of you review, including future directions. Points will be deducted for plagiarism as above. Your abstract will be assessed by SafeAssign for plagiarism on Blackboard. If your submitted abstract matches more than 50% to already published material, it will be penalized at 10% per decile over 50.

PRESENTATIONS (200 points, 100 points each) –
• Order of presentations:
  o The order of presentations will be determined by lottery (students will randomly select two numbers/dates indicating places in presentation schedule – smaller numbers / earlier dates will present earlier).
  o Students that arrive after the lottery has been completed (i.e. once all students present at the beginning of the lottery have selected) will fill-in open presentation slots starting at the beginning of the schedule.
• Each individual is responsible for developing, submitting and presenting two 20 min presentations using PowerPoint (ppt format) covering two of the papers covered in the review paper (one paper per presentation).
• The maximum number of slides for each presentation is 25, including the introductory, cover slide. Please do not include a slide listing references.
• The presentations will be evaluated on coverage, analysis, delivery, and quality of the material. Presentations should include:
  o An introduction of the topic studied in the paper and any other information necessary to understand the presentation
  o Statement of the researchers’ hypothesis or hypotheses
  o Brief overview of methodological approach, i.e. what did they do to test their hypotheses?
  o Statement of results (i.e. show the most important figures and state the conclusions drawn from the experiments covered in the paper)
  o Discussion of interesting points raised in the paper (i.e. present the paper’s discussion section)
  o Engagement of classmates in a 3-5 min discussion following the ppt presentation (i.e. ask classmates questions, answer their questions)
• Pronunciation will be evaluated and corrected.
• A copy of the ppt file must be submitted prior to the beginning of the class in which the presentation is scheduled. No changes may be made prior to presentation in class. In other words, no last minute tweaking!

PEER REVIEW & ATTENDENCE (70 points) – If you attend each session, complete all peer reviews reasonably, turn-in 3 typed and thoughtful questions regarding each week’s papers, and participate in the Q&A, you will receive full credit. Late arrival to classes, missing classes, missing questions, poor reviews, or lack of participation will result in deductions. All students are expected to attend classes regularly and promptly. If you are absent from classes, you are still responsible for the work missed. Students who miss more than three (3) classes without prior or acceptable (medical or dean’s) excuses will receive a grade of I/F. Students who miss their presentations without an acceptable (medical or dean’s) excuse will receive a grade of I/F.
GRADES – Grades will be based on the sum of earned points divided by the total number of possible points:  A: 90-100%; B: 80-89%; C: 70-79%; D: 60-69%; F: <60%.

CONDUCT - All students are expected to conduct themselves in class in an appropriate manner. All cell phones, mp3 players, computers, iPads, tablets, etc. must be off and out-of-sight during class. A penalty of 5 pts will be assessed when a student is seen using any of these devices (including but not limited to texting) or when a phone rings during class. Please be sure to turn them off and stow them away.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY – As part of Howard’s community of scholars, you are expected to hold the pursuit of learning and the search for truth in the highest regard while displaying unquestionable integrity and honesty. There is no place for academic dishonesty, regardless of any seeming advantage or gain that may accrue from such dishonesty. Students will be disciplined for any intentional act(s) of dishonesty in the fulfillment of academic course or program requirements and for intentionally representing as one’s own, any ideas, writings, and works of another without acknowledging that author. [for further details, please consult the Howard University homepage]. To better assure the realization of this goal any student enrolled for study at the University may be disciplined for the academic infractions defined below.

ACADEMIC CHEATING — Any intentional act(s) of dishonesty in the fulfillment of academic course or program requirements, including, but not limited to: 1) plagiarism, e.g. the use and passing off the ideas, writings, etc. of another as one’s own without attribution and 2) utilization of the assistance of any additional individual(s), organization, document, or other aid not specifically and expressly authorized by the instructor or department involved. (With the exception of authorized group assignments or group take home assignments, all course or program assignments shall be completed by an individual student only—without any consultation or collaboration with any other individual, organization, or aid.)

American Disabilities Act (ADA) — Howard University is committed to providing an educational environment that is accessible to all students. In accordance with this policy, students who need accommodations because of a disability should contact Dr. Barbara Williams, Dean for Special Student Services (202-238-2420), as soon as possible after admission to the University or at the beginning of each semester. If you need a special accommodation required by the American Disabilities Act, please document and discuss your disability with the instructor during the first week of classes.