

Attendance policy (COVID-19 edition)

This is a face-to-face course. It is NOT designed to be online or hybrid and, honestly, as is, it does not translate well into those formats.

For students who are forced into quarantine due to COVID-19 (and have followed the appropriate

Course overview and philosophy

This course is an introduction to ecological and evolutionary theory. Although ecology and evolution are presented as separate disciplines, their interaction is emphasized and proficient knowledge of how ecology and evolution interact is a major learning goal and requirement for passing this course.

While the course presents an integrated view of ecology and evolution, in the first half of the class, the focus is on evolution. Macroevolutionary concepts are discussed in detail, but my presentation of the course is admittedly biased towards population genetics and microevolutionary theory. The emphasis on microevolutionary mechanisms partly reflects the fact that this is my area of expertise and I feel most comfortable teaching this material. But more importantly, I believe that a solid background in microevolutionary mechanisms helps to reinforce the connection between heredity (i.e. genetics) and microevolution, as well as the connection between microevolution and macroevolution.

While basic comprehension of biological evolution requires a solid foundation in microevolution, the theory underlying this subject is largely based on probability theory applied to population genetic data. The quantitative nature of the subject makes it challenging for some students and teachers, so it is often underemphasized in most evolution textbooks (usually given a chapter or two, at most). In the present course, by choosing to emphasize microevolutionary theory, I have taken the op

Grading

I use a rank-based (or "stack rank") grading system; this means that you will be evaluated based on how well you perform (in terms of your point total) relative to other students in the class. I have taught this course many times, so I also have a good data on relative class performance, which I consider when evaluating point totals.

When possible, I like to use natural breaks in the point distribution to determine letter grades. For example, if there is a substantial point differential separating the top five students in the class from the remaining students, these top students would typically receive an "A". Conversely, natural breaks at the bottom of the distribution determine those students that do not pass (i.e., D/F).

Policy on audio recordings

I prefer that my lectures and labs not be recorded without my consent, but if you feel as if you need to record my lecture, please place your recording device in the front of the classroom, so that I am aware that I am being recorded.

Students with disabilities

Students requiring classroom or testing accommodations because of documented disabilities should discuss their needs with the instructor at the beginning of the semester. Students not registered must contact the Access Office, Farber Hall, Phone; 245-2498. Website: <http://www.valdosta.edu/access/> For some students, the presence of a medical condition places them at high risk for COVID-19. These students can use the online form to submit documentation of the condition to the Access Office to ensure confidentiality.

<https://www.valdosta.edu/student/disability/forms/request-for-covid19-course-modification.php>

The Access Office will then contact the advisor and department to indicate the receipt of documentation that supports the request for course substitutions or appropriate alternative assignments and virtual access to lectures.

Fall 2020 (addendum): VSU COVID-19 policies:

VSU cares about student success both on and offline, and a variety of resources are available to help students both academically and personally during the Fall 2020 semester. One of the best resources is VSU's Coronavirus FAQ page located at <https://www.valdosta.edu/health-advisory/faq.php>. Information is available there about a variety of topics in VSU's return-to-campus plan.

A website devoted to the health and wellness of VSU students can be seen at <https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/finance-admin/campus-wellness/student-resources.php>.

You can find information, including how you can access the Brightspace Pulse app that will allow you to view BlazeVIEW on your smartphone at <https://www.d2l.com/products/pulse/>. In BlazeVIEW, all VSU students have a course with guides for how to use tools in BlazeVIEW; search for "VSU BlazeVIEW Student Tutorial 2020."

Face coverings:

In response to the best available science and current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Georgia Department of Public Health, every student must wear a face covering that covers their nose and mouth at all times while in any campus building, including in this classroom. This requirement is intended to protect the health and safety of all VSU students, the instructor, and the entire university community. Anyone attending class without a face covering will be asked to put one on or leave. Students should also be sure they maintain a distance of at least six feet away from their fellow students and instructor and are seated in a seat that is designated to ensure that distance. Students who refuse to wear face coverings appropriately or adhere to other stated requirements may face disciplinary action for Code of Conduct violations.

During field trips (which are outdoors) students are required to wear face covering when close proximity to other students. You may remove your face covering in the field given you are more than six feet away from another student or instructor (but you must be ready to put it back on when in the presence of others).