

Course syllabus

Spring 6430/6330Y

**BIOLOGY 6430/6330-Y**  
**Graduate Biology Seminar**  
**Spring 2014**

**Classroom: Med Science Room 202**

**Course number: 23659**

**PLEASE CHECK YOUR MC EMAIL AND MOODLE FREQUENTLY**

**Lecture Schedule:** 6:00 – 9:00 pm Thursdays

**Instructor:** John Piletz, Ph.D.      email: [jpiletz@mc.edu](mailto:jpiletz@mc.edu)      ph: 601-925-7818

Office: MCC 111-B

**Catalog Course Description:** Restricted to Graduate Students with Biology majors: a weekly departmental seminar on current biological topics.

**Rationale for Course:** The capacity to convey scientific information is essential to research. The ability of scientists to effectively communicate ideas, concepts, recorded data, and new discoveries is also essential to the advancement of scientific knowledge. These skills are vital for students entering professional and pre-professional programs in the life sciences. The completion of a course in seminar fulfills the mission of the college through the concentrated study in a specialized field.

**Academic Integrity:** Mississippi College students are expected to be scrupulously honest. Dishonesty, such as cheating or plagiarism, or furnishing false information, including forgery, alteration or misuse of College documents, records or identification, will be regarded as a serious offence - subject to severe penalty, including, but not limited to, loss of credit and possible dismissal. For further information on plagiarism and cheating, see the *Mississippi College Bulletin*.

**Course Requirements:**

- 1) **Attendance** is expected of all students at all classes and all of the seminars.
- 2) **Selection** of an *approved* seminar topic at least by February 6th, followed by timely submission of the first draft **PowerPoint** (see below).
- 3) **Course Format:** This course centers on student presentations. Topics may be chosen across the biological/medical sciences but must be approved by the instructor. Once the topic is selected, the student will have to perform online searches to identify up-to-date paper in a scientific journal (usually a peer-reviewed article) as well as dig out some of the primary studies cited. ***By digging into the details of several papers on a single topic (not just a single review article), this course achieves the higher caliber expected of a graduate Biology seminar course.*** It is assumed that you know what scientific articles are by now. From these papers, you will create a concise number of slides (not less than 20) and turn them in for preview (inclusive of bibliography) to the Instructor. Students will then be expected to solicit and respond to their Instructor's preview comments so that they'll be able to make solid oral presentations of the caliber expected at professional scientific/medical meetings. Their presentations will be 25 minutes in length followed by 5 minute questioning period hosted by the Instructor (and we will expect questions from the classmates).

Prior to their presentation – and as additional requirements - each student must also do two things: (1) WRITE ABSTRACT and deliver it at least 3 days in advance for posting on Moodle, and (2) DO THE FLYERS (email to Instructor, & post an *approved* flyer at least 3 days in advance). The flyer must be posted on the MC biosciences bulletin boards, announcing their seminar time, place and topic. Besides making a presentation, each student will be expected to attend everyone's presentations and write a couple sentence critique to be turned in by the following Tuesday, before the next class. The Instructor reserves the right to modify the format of the course at any time to allow for the enhancement of the learning environment.

- 4) **Attendance:** Your attendance is worth 20% of your grade. You must be on time and attend all the seminars given by your peers to get the full 20%.
- 5) **Critiques:** After each class of presentations, you'll be required to write a couple brief sentence critiques per, to be turned in (preferably email) by the following Tuesday, before the next class.
- 6) **Your Presentation:** Your presentation grade includes the following components:

All topics must be emailed to me by **February 6th** at 5 pm (just topic title).

All presentations should be in PowerPoint and the file should be emailed to me by **February 20th at 5 pm**. Each presentation should allow for 25 minutes followed by 5 minutes of questions. See the “criteria” page below for details.

**\*\*Please check your MC email and Moodle for any announcements and last minute changes. \*\***

**Seminar etiquette:** Please make sure your cell phone is off or “silent” during the presentations. You may not bring laptops, iPads, etc. if you are not presenting. If you leave class to answer your cell phone, it may be counted as an absence. If you are late, it may be counted as an absence. Also, there will be a dress code when you make your presentation, so be aware (see below).

**Attendance:** Your attendance in lectures is expected. Instructor will follow the University attendance policy as described in the school catalog, which can be found in The MC Undergraduate Catalog, p.56 – 57. (<http://www.mc.edu/resources/publications/catalogs.php>). *Please note that your grade can be reduced as a result of excessive absences. If you miss >25% of the classes (12 classes), you will be given an F automatically. Your grade may be lowered if you have excessive absences.*

**Academic integrity:** You are members of an institution that is dedicated to scholarship and spiritual growth. This institution is part of the larger academic community, the foundation of which is based on personal honesty. The success of this community depends on the commitment of both students and faculty to this principle and therefore cheating and plagiarism cannot and will not be tolerated. More importantly, Mississippi College is dedicated to empowering its students to develop the skills necessary for “making responsible, moral choices,” and thus, the University will accept nothing less than scrupulous honesty from its students. We will follow the University policy on Academic Honesty (Policy 2.19), which can be found in the student handbook, The Tomahawk, pp. 41 – 43.  
[http://www.mc.edu/student-life/files/3513/5213/8084/Student\\_Handbook\\_2012.pdf](http://www.mc.edu/student-life/files/3513/5213/8084/Student_Handbook_2012.pdf)

Cell phones are not allowed out in the classroom after class begins. They are to be kept in your book bag, purse or pocket. They are not allowed on the desk or in your lap. Before class begins, turn cell phone ringers OFF.

### **Evaluation Methods:**

Evaluation of an individual seminar presentation will be graded against a standardized rubric developed by the Biology Department (see form below).

Individual Abstract ( <b>300-400 words</b> )	15%
Individual Seminar presentation (everything from grooming, topic on-time, slides on-time, corrections made from preview, and grade will take into account your peer’s comments)	56%
Individual Seminar Announcement Flyer on-time (pre-approved, posted three places, emailed to Instructor)	4%
Written weekly critiques of your peer’s presentations	15%
<u>Attendance (with good attitude and asking questions)</u>	<u>10%</u>
Total	100%

### **Grading Scale:**

- A 90-100
- B 80-89
- C 70-79
- D 60-69
- F 59 and below

**Presentation Progression:**

- Early-on: Identify topic, get pre-approval by tossing idea around with the instructor, do library searches, and select/read your articles!
- All presentations will be submitted via email according to the following specifications
  - **Pre-approval of topic by Feb 6<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm:** Provide Instructor with written title only *after* Instructor agrees to your topic. Five (5) % will be deducted **for each 24 hour period** that it continues to be **late**.
  - **Turn in PowerPoint on Feb 20<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm:** An **additional 5%** will be deducted **for each 24 hour period** that it continues to be **late**.
  - **File format on Feb 20<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm.** Give it a file name as follow: BIO6430\_Biology Seminar\_LastName FirstName\_Topic of Presentation\_ Spring2014.  
If the file is not submitted in Microsoft PowerPoint or with exactly the above naming format, there will be an automatic deduction of 10% of the possible points (minus 10% from the presentation category).
  - **Confer with Instructor and make modifications to PowerPoint slides before your talk:** The ball is in your court to find your Instructor, get feedback, and make adjustments. Don't expect the Instructor to schedule time and give you this. You must seek it out. There will be an automatic **deduction of 10%** of the final possible points from the presentation category if this is not clearly done and reworked by the time your presentation is made.
  - **Postings:** Three days in advance with an *approved* flyer (this means on Mondays prior to the Thursdays you are presenting). Email a copy to the Instructor at the same time.
  - **Presentation itself:** The Instructor will generally follow the rubric form (see below).

**Objectives:** To provide the student with experience of:

1. Formatting a scientific/medical seminar
2. Writing critiques.
3. Presenting a scientific/medical seminar
4. Working as an individual to conduct research for the purpose of presenting a scientific seminar.
5. Working as an individual to present a scientific seminar

**Special accommodations at Student Counseling Services:**

In order for a student to receive disability accommodations under Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, he or she must schedule an individual meeting with the Director of Student Counseling Services **immediately upon recognition of their disability** (if their disability is known they must come in before the semester begins or make an appointment **immediately** upon receipt of their syllabi for the new semester). The student must bring with them written documentation from a medical physician and/or licensed clinician that verifies their disability. If the student has received prior accommodations, they must bring written documentation of those accommodations (example Individualized Education Plan from the school system). Documentation must be current (**within 3 years**). The student must meet with SCS **face-to face** and also attend two (2) additional follow up meetings (one mid semester before or after midterm examinations and the last one at the end of the semester). Please note that the student may also schedule additional meetings as needed for support through SCS as they work with their professor throughout the semester. Note: Students must come in **each semester** to complete their Individualized Accommodation Plan (example: MC student completes fall semester IAP plan and even if student is a continuing student for the spring semester they must come in again to complete their spring semester IAP plan).

Student Counseling Services is located in Alumni Hall Room #4 or they may be contacted via email at : [mbryant@mc.edu](mailto:mbryant@mc.edu) or [rward@mc.edu](mailto:rward@mc.edu) or by phone at [601-925-7791](tel:601-925-7791).

**Important college dates:**

January 20, Monday ..... Martin Luther King Holiday, No Day or Night Classes.  
January 23, Thursday ....Last Day To Drop a Full Semester Class with 100% Tuition Only Refund.  
March 10-16, Monday through Sunday ..... Spring Break  
March 21, Friday ..... LAST DAY TO DROP A FULL SEMESTER CLASS (No Tuition Refund)  
April 21, Monday (No day classes; night classes will meet) ..... Easter Holiday - Offices Closed  
May 1, Thursday..... Study Day  
May 2- May 7, Friday, Saturday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday ..... Final exams

**THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ALTER THIS SYLLABUS.**

**Guidelines on next page!**

**BIO 6430-Y: Graduate Seminar Presentation Scoring Guideline****Instructor: John Piletz, Ph.D.****The Instructor will consider this guideline when it comes to grading.**

Criteria	Description			
Dress	Slovenly groomed/dressed – T-shirt or tank top, jeans with holes or patches or shorts, shoes (open toes, no socks)	Casually dressed – golf type shirt, chinos, athletic shoes (white or other color with or without stripes, socks)	Business casual - ♂ (open collar dress shirt, Dockers-type slacks, dark shoes, dark socks); ♀ (slacks, blouse, dark shoes, etc.)	
Presentation –	Poorly organized (too much material on slides, hard to see), presentation was read (word-for-word)	Well organized (adequate material on slides, not hard to see), presentation sometimes was read (word-for-word)	Excellent organization (key points on slides, easy to see); presentation, was not read	
Visuals	Few, clarity poor, not effectively used in presentation	Several, clarity poor or so-so, sometimes effectively used in presentation	Adequate number, clarity, effectively used throughout presentation	
Title, Outline & Bibliography Slides	Missing any of these	Readable	One slide for Title, One slide for Outline, One slide for Bibliography	
<b>Overall impression</b>				