Course Objectives
1. To expose students to many different biological research topics
2. To stimulate discussion on these topics
3. To promote awareness of current issues in the field of biology
4. To help students use new biological information
5. To ensure students are preparing appropriate presentations for a scientific meeting

Students will achieve these objectives through online discussions and a PowerPoint presentation that further explores one of the topics.

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Course Assignments and Virtual Classroom
http://bb.unk.edu

This is an online seminar course based on viewing and discussing student and faculty presentations. All announcements, assignments, and information will be available online. The discussions will take place online by posting comments or questions on blackboard. The UNK email accounts are the only way that each student can be reached through blackboard. All students must use their UNK email so that the instructors can reach them.

The semester project will be the student creation of a PowerPoint presentation on a topic of their choice. Details regarding the PowerPoint requirements can be found at the end of this document under Appendix I. The PowerPoint is due by midnight, Central Standard Time, Monday April 1st, 2013. Post your completed presentation under the Power Point thread in your small group’s discussion board so that your peers may view and comment on your presentation. Reading your presentations has become one of the highlights of this class as the presentations are well put together and informative.
Expectations

Grades are based, in part, on participation and quality of discussion and the PowerPoint assignment. Students must participate online for all discussion topics. If two or more sessions are missed without excuse from the instructor, the student will receive an F for the course. The quality of the discussion is exhibited by the contribution of original ideas, respect for differing opinions, and evidence of knowledge on the subject matter.

One online contribution (discussion post) is expected every week to receive full credit. So, for this semester you will have 11 weeks of discussion board posts (the first week you will be responsible for posting and discussing the definition of a peer-reviewed article, then 8 weeks of seminars, and finally 2 posts on one of the PPTs within your small group). The guidelines for weekly discussion board posts and the grading rubric are located under Appendix II.

When researching and constructing small group discussion board posts and PowerPoint presentations, students need to synthesize and communicate information using the primary (peer reviewed) literature to demonstrate understanding of the subject matter. Literature used must be properly referenced as not to commit plagiarism (see below for consequences). Do not use direct quotes. Because different specialties within the field of biology commonly use different rules for citation, I have standardized the citation methods used in this course (and my other courses) by requiring students to adhere to the standards of the American Fisheries Society, which can be found in the NAJFM guide for authors (located as a PDF under Course Information).

NOTE: I know that it can be a pain to keep following different formats for different classes, but every discipline in biology has a different format and the truth of it is, in the real world you deal with differences in formatting every time you submit a manuscript to a different journal. I spend a solid day of work before submitting just reading that journals guide to authors and making sure the formatting of my manuscript matches the journal format because journal editors do not like improper format!

Grading (see individual grading sheets located in Appendix I and II for specific details)

1. 5 points are possible for your definition and discussion of peer-reviewed sources.
2. 80 points are possible during weeks 2-9 (10 points a week) for a weekly discussion post
3. 80 points for the PowerPoint presentation
4. 20 points are possible when you view and comment on 1 PP presentation within your small groups using the same criteria as used for seminar presentations (weeks 13 and 14)
5. Total available points = 185

Grading scale will follow the standard A, B, C, D and F scale with no rounding.
### Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week #</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1-14</td>
<td>Define and discuss the meaning of peer-reviewed sources on your small groups Discussion Board (5 pts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1-21</td>
<td>Dr. W. Hoback (10 pts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1-28</td>
<td>Dr. K. Pope (10 pts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>P. May (10 pts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2-11</td>
<td>E. Prenosil (10 pts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2-18</td>
<td>K. Licking (10 pts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2-25</td>
<td>J. Grauf (10 pts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>T. Bridger (10 pts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3-11</td>
<td>A. Conley (10 pts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3-18</td>
<td>Work on your PPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3-25</td>
<td>Work on your PPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>4-1</td>
<td>Power Point Presentations due by midnight CST (80 pts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>View and comment on 1 PP presentation within your small groups using the same criteria as used for seminar presentations (10 pts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>4-15</td>
<td>View and comment on 1 PP presentation within your small groups using the same criteria as used for seminar presentations (10 pts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>4-22</td>
<td>Fill out teacher evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>4-22</td>
<td>Week of graduation!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plagiarism

I expect you to use references for assignments given in this course and we expect you to properly cite your sources. Students caught plagiarizing will receive a failing grade for the assignment and may face additional punishments up to expulsion as outlined by University policy. We invite you to visit the online resource http://www.plagiarism.org/ to make sure you understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. Plagiarism is checked automatically with the “Safe Assignment” function of Blackboard.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact me for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska at Kearney to provide flexible and individualized reasonable accommodation to students with documented disabilities. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with UNK Disabilities Services Coordinator, David Brandt, in the Academic Success Office, 163 Memorial Student Affairs Building, 308-865-8214 or by email brandtdl@unk.edu.

If you have an accommodation plan please discuss this with me as soon as possible so we can make arrangements necessary for your learning. No accommodations can be provided until a Reasonable Accommodation Plan is in place. Please remember that an accommodation plan is not retroactive and cannot be used for assignments prior to the date of my approval.
Appendix I

PowerPoint presentation

Submission: The PowerPoint is due by midnight, Central Standard Time, Monday April 1st. Submit your PowerPoint as an attachment within a new thread (topic – last name) in your small group’s weekly discussion board so that your peers may view and comment on your presentation. Your presentation must be of either .ppt or .pptx format so that others may open it. Make sure to check that you can open the document after you have posted it on Black Board. Files submitted in any other way or to any other location are not acceptable and will not be considered to have been submitted until they are posted to the proper area. Late policy will apply based on the date the file is properly submitted. MAKE SURE THAT YOUR FILE HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY UPLOADED. CHECK THIS BY OPENING THE FILE AFTER IT HAS BEEN SUBMITTED.

Selection of topics (2 options):
First option - You can choose any topic within the biological sciences. If you are unsure if your topic is suitable for the class please email me and ask. Be careful about human behavioral type topics that might fall more within the realm of psychology; biology only please. Your presentation should synthesize peer-reviewed literature on your topic in a novel and original way. The most effective presentations describe 2 or 3 peer-reviewed studies in detail (2-4 slides per study) which includes explanation of results using tables and figures from the article and discussion of how this information relates to your PPT topic. View examples that I have included on the course page to understand what I mean by this. Also use a minimum of 5 peer-reviewed articles as supportive information throughout the PPT. Classroom style lectures that are overviews of a topic are not suitable for this project. All submissions should include summaries of relevant peer reviewed literature that include data (graphs, figures, and tables) from the papers cited properly. You are also expected to explain the graphs and figures in detail. Tell what the units are on the different axes of graphs and interpret them.

A high level of scientific detail is expected in your presentations. For papers in your literature review explain background and relevance of the topic, hypotheses to be tested (if any), methods, rationale for the methods, experimental design, statistics, interpretation of results, conclusions based on the results. Criticism of any of the above aspects of the papers is also expected. Comparisons of results of different papers should also be done. Point out deficiencies in our knowledge of your topic. Make sure to include a short introduction that states the relevance of the topic to a broad audience. Why should anyone care about the topic? What implications does it have?

Second option - If you are enrolled in or have completed research credits E/5 and/or F/6 for your distance project, you are highly encouraged to present on your Distance MS research project. The presentation will therefore be a summary/final report of your distance project and should include the following sections: introduction, methods (including data analysis), results, discussion and literature cited. I would encourage you
to choose this option when possible. Make sure you have completed your data analysis and therefore have results before choosing this option.

Degree seeking students will be taking Current Issues for three semesters and you cannot submit the same PowerPoint topic more than once. In the “notes” text on your title slide, list what semester of CI this is for you and the previous PPT topics you have presented on.

**Specifics on format for the assignment:**

The PowerPoint should be approximately 15-20 slides long. This is just a guideline but large deviations from the guideline (too small OR too BIG) will be penalized. Information in the seminar will be conveyed via the slides AND text in the Notes area of the PowerPoint slide (see figure below). You should use the “notes” area of each Power Point slide to write what you would say during the slide. Please view examples on the course web page if this is unclear. I especially enjoy it when students make a connection between the notes content and the slide itself (e.g., as seen in the above figure…).

Both graphics and information sources must be referenced in text, on the slide, and with a terminal Literature Cited section. I prefer the Literature Cited section to be broken into sources used for graphics and a separate section for informational sources. A URL is fine for citing graphics but not information sources. Make sure to use proper American Fisheries Society guidelines for citing all references (a PDF of NAJFM guide to authors located under Course Information). An example of a properly cited source for a peer-reviewed journal article is provided below. Notice there is no bold or italicized font used. A minimum of 5 peer-reviewed sources should be used.


In-text references should be in the form of (Schoenebeck 2013; Schoenebeck and Bosanko 2013) or (Schoenebeck et al. 2013) for more than 2 authors so that people can see the name of the authors during the presentation (these should occur both in the notes section and on the slides).

References should mostly come from the BIOLOGY primary, peer-reviewed literature (see Appendix III). Textbooks can also be used. Do not use pedagogical journals, magazines, or newspapers. Do not use Wikipedia, Answers.com or other such sources as references. MS students should be able to locate, comprehend, and communicate to others information obtained from peer-reviewed articles.
Do not record your voice for the information you would be speaking. Write out what you would be saying in the notes area for each slide and include in-text references here. See examples if unclear.

Do not cut and paste text material from any source and put it in either the slides or the Notes. All information must be in your own words (i.e., do not use direct quotes). All PowerPoints (notes and slide content) will be checked using Safe Assign originality verification software which can easily determine if the material is from another source. If substantial portions of your seminar are not original you will receive a grade of zero for this assignment.

Here is a link to a website that will help you understand what plagiarism is:
http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/
The “Test” in this website is particularly informative.
All graphs, tables, figures, and images that you did not create must be referenced in the slide and in the Graphics Literature Cited.

Other Recommendations:
Slides should contain minimal amounts of text. Mainly just bulleted outlines or figures, graphs and tables. Do not write out most of your material in the slides. Do not include large amounts of text on the slides. Avoid the use of video links.
Font and color scheme of slides should be consistent throughout the presentation.
Genus and species names should be written in italics like this: *Agkistrodon piscivorus*
Remember – this is a graduate level course in biology and so use that as your audience. Late submissions will be docked 10 points per day.

**Grading Criteria:**
This assignment will be worth 80 points. The grade will be determined by:
- the amount of scientific detail in the presentation
- inclusion and interpretation of information and data from peer reviewed sources
- detailed review of peer-reviewed papers including details on methods, rationale, results, interpretations of results, conclusions and relevance of conclusions.
- proper referencing technique of material in the slide AND in the notes area of the slides.
- See grading rubric for details (located below).

An exception to the above criteria regards plagiarism. If more than 20% of your presentation (material in the slides or in the notes area) is cut and pasted from another source or if large amounts of material are not referenced properly I reserve the right to give a grade of zero.

**If any of the above information is unclear to you make sure to email or call me to discuss it well before the assignment is due.**

A modified rubric for reviewing seminars will be used to assess your presentation (located below). Therefore, content, slide setup, graphics, flow of the presentation, reference format etc...will all be evaluated. Feedback will be provided by scanning and emailing the grading rubric to you.
Power Point Presentation Evaluation Sheet

Presentation title:
Presenter:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Points Possible Awarded</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation of topic:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title:</strong> Clearly describes the topic presented.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction:</strong> Presents relevant background literature and explains the importance of the topic.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content:</strong> The topic is covered thoroughly. Enough information given to understand topic without excluding any important information or including any unnecessary information.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tables/Figures:</strong> Communication aids were clear and adequately explained. No superfluous graphics were used.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Citations</strong> Sources of information were properly cited so that the audience can determine the credibility and authority of the information presented.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary/Closure:</strong> The closing statements summarize the material presented.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presenter:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization:</strong> Information presented in a logical and interesting sequence that audience can follow.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics:</strong> Presentation did not have spelling errors, font was easy to read, layout and background were aesthetically pleasing, and graphics/sound/animations enhanced presentation.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delivery:</strong> Presenter was heard and understood, maintained eye contact with audience, and seemed relaxed. The presenter looked and sounded professional.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject knowledge:</strong> Student demonstrates full knowledge by answering all questions with explanations and elaboration.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix II

Guidelines for Discussion Posts
Current Issues in Biology

The purpose of the discussion board post is to provide the PowerPoint presenter with constructive criticism on the scientific merit of their presentation and praise/suggestions on their presentation style. Be polite and respectful but also do not hesitate to point out problems with the science and performance of the talk. Reviewers are asked to include a peer reviewed reference to assist the presenter in their search for relevant literature and to encourage reviewers to explore the primary literature of the biological sciences. The following sections must all be included in your weekly post.

1. Discuss the science of the seminar under review. Discussion of the methodology, statistics, interpretation of the results, experimental design, sample size, conclusions and implications of the conclusions of the presentation. This should be about 50% of your post.
2. Discuss a peer reviewed reference from a biological journal (not a pedagogy journal) that is relevant to the topic of the seminar under review (see Appendix III). Provide a brief summary of the paper and clearly state how the reference pertains to the information in the seminar. Does the information in your reference support or refute the conclusions of the seminar? This should be the other 50% of your post.
3. Use in-text references in your post to indicate what portions of the post contain information from the reference vs. what is your opinion (ex. Schoenebeck et al. 2013).
4. Provide a complete reference to the article you have summarized at the end of the post. A web address is not sufficient as a complete reference although I encourage you to include the web address of the article if possible.
5. Using the Power Point Presentation Evaluation Sheet as a guideline (located above at the end of Appendix I) to comment on the presentation using constructive criticism on content and presentation style providing suggestions for improvements.
6. Each complete post is worth a total of 10 points.

Grading -
1. No peer reviewed reference: -4.
2. No constructive criticism on presentation style and suggestions for improvements: -4
3. You post the same reference as a group member who posted previously: -3
4. No discussion of the science of the paper: up to -10 points.
5. Improper referencing: -3.
6. Failure to properly write the genus and species of an organism: -2.
   Example is here: *Crotalus horridus*
7. Late posts will have 1 point deducted every day they are late.
8. No in text references -2.

Discussion Posts are due at 11:59 pm CST on Monday. Feedback on discussion board posts will be provided upon request, just email Jodi and I as we will be happy to provide you with feedback.

Download Firefox and use this instead of IE as recommended by UNK's IT department. If unable to download or use Firefox, then the students should Copy and Paste from Word into NotePad (the default text editor on all Windows machines). Then copy and paste from NotePad into Blackboard. This cleans up the formatting issues and will paste a clean format into Blackboard, which will not have any issues with the Visual Text Editor used in Blackboard 9.1.

**Weeks 13 and 14**

During weeks 13 and 14 you will review a PowerPoint of your choosing from your small group. You should follow the same criteria as used for seminars during the semester. When possible, choose PPTs that have not been reviewed yet. This will provide every student with feedback from their peers (in addition to my graded rubric).

Note: Even though we are only grading your primary discussion post, feel free to post more than once on a topic. Multiple posts may allow a discussion to further develop; just remember to keep it friendly!

If you are new to CI, this is a cheat sheet on how to navigate your BB page to your group discussion board.
1. Start on the main class page and select the “Groups” tab on the left side of the screen
2. Select “Current Issues Groups”
3. Select your particular group “A, B, C…”
4. Then, at the bottom of the page, under group tools, select “Group Discussion Board”

Discussion Board Example. Something along these lines where both the style and science of the presentation are discussed is what we are looking for. Note: I have made format changes to this example.

Mr. Drahota seemed calm, collected, and was a relaxed presenter. He began the presentation with a detailed outline and clear introductory information. He clearly explained rainwater basin physiography, geography, soils, and climate. I also liked the backgrounds of these first slides! I thought this was very interesting yet still easy to read and did not take away from the overall presentation. Mr. Drahota was very
explanatory when explaining numbers and percentages. On the NAWMP Population Targets he stated that it may be difficult for some to read (aka Distance students for sure), but he did a very good job explaining this as well as others so that we had the overall understanding of not only what was going on, but how it tied into the presentation. The Rainwater Basin Wetland Complex Historic Wetlands slide was appreciated because he blew it up large enough that we could see it and also explained it very well. I feel that Mr. Drahota still needs to cite the images that he took himself as (Drahota, year). The other images had citations, although they were difficult to read. I blame this on poor video quality and size of the presentation window.

The formatting of the presentation was done very well. The chosen colors were acceptable and easy to read. With the exception of the tables (8:35, 10:55, 14:30, 15:20), images were easy to read and see. I always take into consideration that we are viewing these on computers for the most part and presentations done in a room where these images are projected on a screen would clearly be visible. I did appreciate the clear explanations to the tables since most were very difficult for us to read. Mr. Drahota spent ample amounts of time explaining the tables/images, which were greatly appreciated. Although the body condition photo of the bird was a bit disturbing : ) I again appreciated the change in slide background. Mr. Drahota also luckily went into detail about calculating duck energy days since that was also a bit difficult to read. The final table was also difficult to read and I felt there was a bit too much text, which made it a bit difficult to understand. I found myself pausing to ensure I completely understood, which is lucky since we are able to pause and restart the presentations.

Overall I was impressed with Mr. Drahota and found the presentation to not only flow smoothly, but it was also completed quickly. Although the presentation was short there was an intense amount of very great information presented! I sincerely was impressed with this presentation and enjoyed Mr. Drahota as a speaker.

The article I found focused on one specific species the Pectoral Sandpipers *Calidris melanotos* and the inter-wetland movements of 115 that were radio-tagged. They were examined at three migration stopovers in the Great Plains of North America during April and May from 1992 to 1995 (Farmer and Parent 1997). The species were observed and monitored on very localized movements. Over 40% of the birds made no inter-wetland movements, and over 90% of individuals moved less than 10 km from their original release site (Farmer and Parent 1997). Researchers found that characteristics of wetlands where birds were released did not affect bird movement. They also found that the structure of the surrounding landscape explained up to 46% of variation in individual bird movements (Farmer and Parent 1997). Researchers found as distance between wetlands decreased, proportion of the landscape composed of wetlands increased. The patterns of movement explained a connected landscape that allowed shorebirds to exploit more feeding sites (Farmer and Parent 1997). Researchers were then able to estimate a degree of landscape connectivity at which a wetland complex functions as a single large wetland as measured by sandpiper feeding patterns and data supports that small, closely spaced wetlands can be important migration stopovers and may have significant conservation value.

Appendix III

UNK Library Information
Current Issues in Biology

I received the following message from the library staff and wanted to make sure that this information was passed along to distance students. The UNK library is a great place to find your weekly peer-reviewed articles and their interlibrary loan dept. is second to none. See info below,

The faculty and staff at the Calvin T. Ryan Library are committed to providing support for Distance Education faculty and students. The library main page (Library Services for Distance Education Students http://library.unk.edu) contains links to library resources and services that are available to the UNK community. The following library links will be useful to Distance Education students:
http://www.unk.edu/academics/library.aspx?id=2865
QuestionPoint 24/7 Reference Assistance http://unk.illiad.oclc.org/illiad/logon.html

Please feel free to include links to any of the library web pages in your Blackboard courses. Also please feel free to give my name and contact information to distance education students as I will be happy to assist them with library research. If you need assistance in preparing assignments that require library support you may contact your liaison librarian. Please consult the list of liaison librarians at: I look forward to assisting you and your distance students during the semester!

Sheryl Heidenreich
Reference Librarian & ILL/DD Coordinator
Calvin T. Ryan Library (KRS)
University of Nebraska at Kearney
2508 11th Avenue
Kearney, NE 68849-2240
308.865.8721
heidenreichs@unk.edu
Interlibrary Loan
http://www.unk.edu/academics/library.aspx?id=36928