



SEMINAR in ZOOLOGY
BIOL 4103 Sec. 001
SYLLABUS
Fall 2024

Instructor: Dr. Liz Borda **Office:** STEM, 311P
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Class Location, Date and Time: STEM 166, Mondays, 2:00 – 2:50 pm
Virtual Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:00 – 11:00 am, or by appointment (Link on Blackboard)

Course Description and Prerequisites:

Scientific fields advance through scientific exchange and discussion, which gives rise to the generation of new ideas, new hypotheses, new questions and new methods to address them. In this course, we will focus on both oral and written communication skills, with commonly used tools to communicate science. Compilation of current literature pertaining to topics in zoology will be critically evaluated. Students will enhance their ability to conduct literature searches, review, understand, discuss and critique articles from the primary literature. Students in this course will engage in Lesson geared towards improving scientific writing and discussion that is led by students. Students are expected to come prepared to each class by reading the assigned article(s) to be able to participate in discussions. Active participation is required for all lessons and discussions and will serve as major component of your grade. As this is a writing intensive course, ***to pass this course, you must pass both written and oral components.***

Prerequisite: BIOL 3402 and ENGL 2311 or ENGL 1302.

Learning Objectives:

- 1) Practice oral and written scientific communication.
- 2) Critically evaluate and review a research proposal.
- 3) Discuss and present topics in zoology.

Required Textbook and Course Material:

There are no required textbooks. Course materials and guidelines will be posted on the learning management system Blackboard for course administration and assessment.

Attendance Policy:

Synchronous attendance is mandatory, and points will be assessed every class period. Discuss unavoidable absences with Dr. Borda prior to missing class.

COURSE POLICIES

Course Expectations:

Personal and academic integrity, to be open to new ideas, and to share in a community where individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures help one another grow intellectually, socially, and personally is expected at all times throughout the course. The faculty and staff of TAMUSA are here to help; however, students must take responsibility for their own learning. Students should strive for a high level of academic performance and to be responsible, respectful, contributing citizens within the university and in outside communities. Above all, students should develop a love of learning that will last a lifetime, along with a life-long interest in maintaining emotional and physical wellness.

Active Participation:

Students are expected to actively participate during class. It is recognized that students learn in a diversity of ways, thus diverse teaching strategies will be implemented as part of the course (e.g., active discussion, reading, writing, individual reflection, etc.). There are multiple ways to demonstrate active learning engagement in this course and the intention is for students to strive beyond their preferred ways of learning and comfort zones, as dissonance can promote new learning. Students are highly encouraged to contribute thoughtful comments and questions, as well as to listen carefully to your peers' contributions and respectfully respond to others' comments. The success of mutual learning depends upon preparation and active participation in all aspects of the course.

Grading:

If you believe an error was made in grading, please do not hesitate to bring it to my attention as soon as possible. If you find yourself struggling with this course, please talk to Dr. Borda as soon as possible and **do not wait until the end of the semester**. You are always welcome to make an appointment to discuss your concerns. To be successful in this course you are expected to complete all assignments on time and be an active participant.

Grade Distribution (1000 points) = % grade. A = 90%+, B = 80%+, C =70%+, D =60%+, F < 60%

Lessons:

There will be 5 Lessons designed to provide guidance for course assignments that will be required for assess course performance. Some Lessons have out-of-class assignments associated with them (see below). However, Lessons must be attended (or reviewed) to be eligible to submit the associated work assignment to reflect your learning of the Lesson topic. These Lessons cannot be made up.

Resume/CV and Personal Statement:

We will work together to write a resume and personal statement that you can use after you graduate and fill out a practice application for a job or graduate school.

Discussions:

You will be responsible for leading one discussion based on one journal article you have selected. You will submit your first-choice article and two backup articles as pdfs, so that a ready alternate is available in cases of inappropriate first choices. The article will be posted on the Discussion Board a week prior to the discussion date to allow classmates one week to read and prepare. The Discussion Lead will lead the discussion for 1/3 of the class period (~15 min). The order of discussions will be randomly assigned using a random number generator. To encourage in-class Discussion, 50-point bonus will be awarded to the Discussion Lead.

Discussions (Discussion Board):

To accommodate instructor travel, remaining Discussions will take place on the Discussion Board. The Discussion Lead will prepare a 5-minute video presentation recorded on Zoom to summarize the article and provide points to lead the discussion on the Discussion Board. Students are required to post questions and participated in all Discussions to earn participation points. Discussion participation should be completed no later than November 25.

Preparation for the Discussion:

You will submit brief summaries of each of the articles with questions and comments prior to discussion. This summary will both prepare you for the discussion and provide evidence of your preparation. If there are terms or other concepts you do not understand in the paper, be sure to look them up and include them in the summary, but questions make the best preparation for discussion and will increase your performance score.

Your summary should include two questions or thoughtful comments you had about each article. A file containing your summary must be submitted prior to the discussion. You will be responsible for submitting 10 summaries and 10 sets of questions to earn full credit.

Assessment of Contribution to the Discussion:

In recognition of learning by listening to the discussion, and providing an audience, you will earn 10 points for each in class participation (there will be 3 in class discussions over 4 class periods) resulting in a total of 100 points. Another 75 points will be earned by thoughtfully participating 3 times during the discussions. This participation can include asking a good question or making a supportive or critical comment about the paper being discussed or mentioning outside material that adds to the discussion. A checklist will be kept for each in-class period to keep track of your participation effort.

Journal Article Critiques:

You will write three papers that critically analyze scientific journal articles. Guidance will be provided in the planned Lessons (see schedule).

Assignments	Points
CV/Resume & Personal Statement	100
Article Summaries (3 x 25 points)	75
Pre-Discussion Summaries (10 x 10 points)	100
Pre-Discussion Questions (10 x 10 points)	100
Discussion Attendance (10 x 10 points)	100
In Class Discussion Participation (3 x 25 points)	75
Discussion Board Participation (10 x 10 points)	100
Research Article Critique (2 x 75 points)	150
Discussion Lead (1 x 250 points)	200
(Bonus) – In Person Discussion Lead	(50)
Total	1000

SCHEDULE
(Subject to minor changes)

Weeks	Topic
1 – Aug. 26	Introductions, Syllabus and Course Overview
2 – Sept. 02	LABOR DAY – NO CLASS
3 – Sept. 09	Borda in Italy (RECORDED) LESSON 1: A&M-SA and Beyond
4 – Sept. 16	Borda in Italy (RECORDED) LESSON 2: CV/Resume and Personal Statement/Cover Letter LESSON 3: Literature Search and Using Library Resources
5 – Sept. 23	Due: CV/Resume and Personal Statements
6 – Sept. 30	LESSON 4: Reading and Critically Reviewing Research Articles
7 – Oct. 07	LESSON 5: Writing a Research Article Critique Due: Research Article Summaries (x3)
8 – Oct. 14	Leading and Discussing Research Articles Due: Research Articles 1 - 3
9 – Oct. 21	Discussions 1 – 3 Due: Research Articles 4 - 6
10 – Oct. 28	Discussions 4 – 6 Due: Research Articles 7 - 9
11 – Nov. 04	Discussions 7 – 9 Due: Research Articles 10 - 15
12 – Nov. 14	Borda in Mexico (DISCUSSION BOARD) Discussion – Presenters 10 – 15 Due: Article Critique #1 (Discussions 1 – 9) Due: Research Articles 16 - 22
13 – Nov. 18	Borda in Mexico (DISCUSSION BOARD) Discussion – Presenters 16 – 22
13 – Nov. 25	THANKSGIVING WEEK - NO CLASS Due: Discussion Board participation complete
14 – Dec. 02	Due: Article Critique #2 (Discussions 10 – 22)

IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is located in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us <https://www.tamusa.edu/Disability-Support-Services/index.html> or email us at dss@tamusa.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability-related needs with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

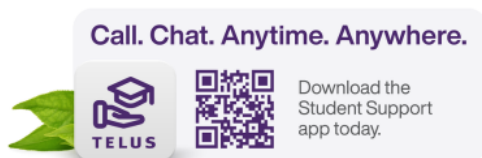
Academic Learning Center: The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the *Tools* section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu, calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202.

Counseling/Mental Health Resources: As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information on SCC services visit tamusa.edu/studentcounseling

Crisis support is available 24/7 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 (after-hours select option '2').

Additionally, the TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to including support for in the moment distress, an anonymous peer to peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.



Emergency Preparedness: JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>.

More information about Emergency Operations Plan and the Emergency Action Plan can be found here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/about-us/emergency-management/>.

Download the SafeZone App (<https://safezoneapp.com/>) for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non-Emergency (210) 784-1900.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance: According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend by the census date will have their financial aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester, a Care report will be submitted, and you will possibly be dropped from the class. Your financial aid may have to be recalculated and a portion of your federal aid may have to be returned to the DoE.

Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center: The Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center supports graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as eportfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. Students can schedule appointments through JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on "Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center" to make your appointment. The Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at <https://www.tamusa.edu/academics/>.

Meeting Basic Needs: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to submit a CARE referral (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities/file-a-report.html>) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources.

Military Affairs: Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots' Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military.va@tamusa.edu or (210)784-1397.

Religious Observances: Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or course work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

The Six-Drop Rule: Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

Statement of Harassment and Discrimination: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality and the uniqueness of the individual within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees should be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the appropriate offices within their respective units.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex- or gender-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio's Title IX Coordinator can support those impacted by such conduct in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the Title IX Coordinator. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator (titleix@tamusa.edu, 210-784-2061, CAB 439K). If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.

Pregnant/Parenting Students: Texas A&M-San Antonio does not require a pregnant or parenting student, solely because of that status or issues related to that status, to (1) take a leave of absence or withdraw from their degree or certificate program; (2) limit the student's studies; (3) participate in an alternative program; (4) change the student's major, degree, or certificate program; or (5) refrain from joining or cease participating in any course, activity, or program at the University. The university will provide such reasonable accommodations to pregnant students as would be provided to a student with a temporary medical condition that are related to the health and safety of the student and the student's unborn child. These could include maintaining a safe distance from substances, areas, and activities known to be hazardous to pregnant individuals and their unborn child; excused absences because of illness or medical appointments; modified due dates for assignments; rescheduled tests/exams; taking a leave of absence; and being provided access to instructional materials and video recordings of lectures for excused absences, if these would be provided to any other student with an excused absence. Pregnant/parenting students are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator with any questions or concerns related to their status (titleix@tamusa.edu; 210-784-2061; CAB 439K).

Texas A&M-San Antonio has also designated the Title IX Coordinator as the liaison officer for current or incoming students who are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18 years of age. The Title IX Coordinator can provide students with information regarding support services and other resources.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities: The following statement of students' rights and responsibilities is intended to reflect the philosophical base upon which University Student Rules are built. This philosophy acknowledges the existence of both rights and responsibilities, which is inherent to an individual not only as a student at Texas A&M University-San Antonio but also as a citizen of this country.

Students' Rights

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no University rule or administrative rule that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the University, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and pregnancy/parenting or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

Students' Responsibilities

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty, and administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, [Student Code of Conduct](#), on our website, and University Catalog, and to comply with them, as well as with federal, state, and local laws.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notifications.

We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation, or disability. Conduct that infringes on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find

themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the Student Code of Conduct (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/documents/Student-Handbook-2022-23.pdf>) or visit the resources available in the OSRR website (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/academic-integrity.html>).

Option 3 – Broader Use of Generative AI Permitted Within Guidelines

Use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT, is permitted in this course for students who wish to use them. To adhere to our scholarly values, students must cite any AI-generated material that informed their work (this includes in-text citations and/or use of quotations, and in your reference list). Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.

Important Dates

August 26	First day of class
September 2	Labor Day Holiday
November 11	Last day to drop with an automatic "W"
November 19	Last day to drop a course or withdraw from the University
November 27	Study Day – No classes
November 28-30	Thanksgiving Holiday – No classes
December 5	Last day of classes
December 6	Study Day – No classes
December 7-13	Final exams

The complete academic calendar is available online:

<https://www.tamusa.edu/academics/academic-calendar/index.html>.