

# **BIOL 4104-001 Seminar-Ecology**

## **Biology Program, Department of Natural Sciences**

### **Instructor information**

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**Office hours:** Scheduled by appointment if you need to meet online.

**Class meeting format:** F2F Thursday 2:00-2:50pm in Class Hall 303

### **Course description**

This course gives the student an opportunity to enhance their understanding and interest in scientific literature related to Ecology, and science communication. During this seminar, students will have the opportunity to evaluate a scientific article by creating a summary and a critique and will also peer review each other's work. Students will moderate a scientific article discussion and give an oral presentation based on an ecological scientific literature review.

### **Student learning objectives:**

1. Improve the understanding and evaluation of scientific literature by summarizing and critiquing a peer reviewed article on a topic in Ecology.
2. Learn to review an essay or oral presentation of a peer following a rubric.
3. Improve reading and oral communication skills by moderating a discussion based on a scientific article on a topic in Ecology.
4. Provide a friendly environment to share their ideas and increase their interest in scientific literature and research.

### **Course policies**

**Attendance:** You are required to attend every class.

**Participation:** You are expected to have reviewed the articles for the week, so you come to class ready with questions. You are also expected to actively participate during article discussions, peer reviewing articles and oral presentations.

**Communication:** All communication and inquiries to the instructor should be e-mailed to [jvaldezb@tamusa.edu](mailto:jvaldezb@tamusa.edu). This e-mail is intended for communication only. No late assignments will be accepted via e-mail unless the instructor has granted an accommodation. All assignments are submitted via blackboard.

**Late assignments:** for each day passed the due date, 10% will be deducted over the total possible points.

### **Course Evaluation:**

**Article Summary and Critique:** You will select one of the scientific articles provided by your instructor. You will be expected to annotate and underline the text with relevant content for each section of the scientific article. Following the guidelines provided, you will write a 1.5-page summary and a 1.5-page critique.

**Artificial intelligence assisted essay:** You will use an artificial intelligence tool to develop an essay based on the article summary you wrote. Artificial intelligence tools need a series of statements and facts related to the article and then the technology will elaborate an essay based on your requests. Based on the product generated by the AI intelligence you will write a reflection comparing your summary with the AI generated essay.

**Peer review:** You will exchange your summary and critique with another classmate. Following a rubric provided by the instructor you will assess the summary and provide feedback. You will not grade it but will have the chance to comment so that the author of the summary can work and improve the manuscript.

**Moderating a Scientific article discussion:** Each student will moderate an 8 min discussion on a scientific article related to an Ecology topic of his or her choice. Each Student will post the article on Blackboard a week before moderating the article and will use a designated discussion board folder for students to read and participate. Moderators should write a one-page summary of their article and post it on the blackboard discussion board the day they moderate their article. Except for the moderators, students are not required to write an essay on the article paper just to read and participate in the discussion by answering questions and completing a peer evaluation at end of each discussion. These will last 10 minutes per student and each session will include 4 students. When moderator finishes, a peer review form will be completed in 2 minutes. Students will answer 4 questions and rate the moderator's performance on a scale from 1-5, where 1 is I strongly agree and 5 is I strongly disagree.

**Literature review Power Point presentation:** Each student will select a topic of their choice and will write a literature review using no less than 5 references from peer reviewed sources. Each student will present the literature review in a Power Point format. For each session, three students will present, and each presentation should be no more than 10 minutes. Once the presentation resumes you will have 5 minutes to answer questions or ask questions to engage your audience. When the presentation and questions session is finished, a peer review form will be completed in 2 minutes. Students will answer 4 questions and rate the presenter's performance on a scale from 1-5, where 1 is I strongly agree and 5 is I strongly disagree.

### Seminar-Ecology Schedule

Date	Activity	Moderators/Presenters
1/18/2024	Dissecting scientific articles	
1/25/2024	How to write a summary and critique	
2/01/2024	How to peer review an article and oral presentation	
2/08/2024	How to moderate and conduct an oral presentation	
2/15/2024	How to do a literature review	
2/22/2024	Moderate article discussion	Maram Abdeljaber Thoni Blackstock Gabriella Castillo
2/29/2024	Moderate article discussion	Maria Contreras Jordan Cruz Ashley Dayrit Matthew Fanno
3/07/2024	Moderate article discussion	Daniella Johnson Kimberly Krause Jackeline Martinez Mercedes Mcdonald
3/14/2024	Spring Break	
3/21/2024	Moderate article discussion	Janette Regalado Valjean Romero Angela Roth Megans Sosa
3/28/2024	Lit. review oral presentation	Maram Abdeljaber Thoni Blackstock Gabriella Castillo
4/04/2024	Lit. review oral presentation	Maria Contreras Jordan Cruz Ashley Dayrit
4/11/2024	Lit. review oral presentation	Matthew Fanno Daniella Johnson Kimberly Krause
4/18/2024	Lit. review oral presentation	Jackeline Martinez Mercedes Mcdonald Janette Regalado
4/25/2024	Lit. review oral presentation	Valjean Romero Angela Roth Megans Sosa

## GRADING

Instruction	Assessment	points
Article analysis	Summary & critique	10
AI assisted essay	Essay reflection	10
Peer Revision	Revised essay	10
Article discussion	moderation	10
	Summary	10
Lit review oral presentation	Presentation	30
	Power point	20
	Total	100

**ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE ASK DURING CLASS OR OFFICE HOURS I WOULD BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO HELP YOU**

**GOOD COMMUNICATION BETWEEN STUDENT AND INSTRUCTOR IS ESSENTIAL TO YOUR EDUCATION**

## IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Academic Accommodations for Persons 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, please contact Disability Support Services in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210, or at (210) 784-1335 or visit <https://www.tamusa.edu/index.html> or email us at [dss@tamusa.edu](mailto: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](mailto: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/or 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 Modular C, Room 166 (Rear entrance).

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.

**Crisis support is available 24/7 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 (after-hours select option '2').** For more information and self-help resources, please visit [www.tamusa.edu/studentcounseling](http://www.tamusa.edu/studentcounseling)

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/campus-information/safety/university-police-department/documents/emergency-operations-plan.pdf> and <https://www.tamusa.edu/about-us/campus-information/safety/university-police-department/documents/emergency-action-plan.pdf>

Download the SafeZone App 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. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended the first week of class. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend the first week of class will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

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://bit.ly/WLDCCenter>.

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 contact the Dean of Students (DOS@tamusa.edu) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to provide any resources they may possess.

Military Affairs: Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to communicate, in advance if possible, and special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployment, drill requirements, disability accommodations). You are also encouraged to visit the Patriots' Casa in-person 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 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, equality of 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 or sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator ([titleix@tamusa.edu](mailto: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 reasonable accommodations to pregnant students that would be provided to a student with a temporary medical condition and 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](mailto: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, 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, University Catalog and to comply with them, as well as 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 an environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notification.

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. Behaviors that infringe 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](#).

### **Use of Generative AI Permitted Under Some Circumstances or With Explicit Permission**

There are situations and contexts within this course where you may be asked to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools to explore how they can be used. Outside of those circumstances, you should not use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any student work (assignments, activities, discussion responses, etc.) that is part of your evaluation in this course. Any student work submitted using AI tools should clearly indicate with attribution what work is the student's work and what part is generated by the AI. In such cases, no more than 25% of the student work should be generated by AI. If any part of this is confusing or uncertain, students should reach out to their instructor for clarification before submitting work for grading. Use of AI-generated content without the instructor's permission and/or proper attribution in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.



**NOTE:** Guidance for how to cite AI-generators, like ChatGPT, can be found here  
<https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>

Important Dates:

January 16	First day of class
March 11-17	Spring Break – No classes
March 29	Study Day – No classes
April 13	Last day to drop with an automatic “W”
April 20	Last day to drop a course or withdraw from the University
April 29	Last day of classes
April 30	Study Day – No classes
May 1-7	Final exams

*The complete academic calendar is available online:*

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