Instructor
Dr. Jeff Kopachena  STC, Rm 258 (Phone 903 886-5395)
e-mail: Jeff.Kopachena@tamuc.edu
Office hours:  MW 10:00 - 11:00  T 1:00 - 2:00

COURSE SYLLABUS

Textbook:
Course does not have a textbook.

Course Objectives:
This course takes a systematic approach to understanding vertebrate evolution, diversity, and biology. We follow the development of each vertebrate taxon through the fossil record from the late Cambrian to the present. Major trends in ecological adaptations are described along with underlying structural and physiological modifications. The purposes of this course are:

1) To understand the origin and evolution of Vertebrate phyla

2) To learn about vertebrate diversity and ecology
Student Learning Objectives measured using entrance/exit test:

1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the evolution of vertebrate diversity.

2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of vertebrate zoogeography and habitat relationships

3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of vertebrate use of space and foraging behavior.

4. Students will demonstrate knowledge of vertebrate mating systems and parental care

Grading and Course Content

Tests

There will be 5 tests throughout the semester, each worth 10 percent of your final grade. The subject matter for each test is as follows:
Test #1
1. Introduction
2. Fishes
3. Amphibians

Test #2
4. Reptiles
5. Birds
6. Mammals part 1
7. Mammals part 2

Test #3
1. Zoogeography
2. Habitat and Foraging

Test #4
1. Feeding Modes
2. Use of Space

Test #5
1. Sex, courtship, reproduction
2. Parental Care

Powerpoint slides from the lectures are available in the “Doc Sharing” tab in eCollege

Final Exam

Thirty percent of your final grade will be based on the final exam. The final exam is comprehensive and will be administered during finals week during the scheduled time.

Essay Assignment
Your final paper will be worth 25% of your total grade and should be between 15 and 20 typewritten pages (Times New Roman, double-spaced, 12 point type, 1" margins). You must cite all sources of information including sources used for figures and tables. There should be at least 1 reference per typewritten page (i.e. if you write a 20 page essay you should have about 20 different sources of information). Cite all references using scientific journal format. Consult a journal or consult me to see how this is done.

Make the fullest possible use of the library facilities, including inter-library loans. Many student find that Google Scholar is a good source of peer reviewed articles. It can be accessed here. Use only current references from primary sources. Do not use material taken from popular books and magazines that do not contain peer reviewed articles, or that are not edited by a professional in the field.

Use ample figures and tables (figures and tables do not count in determining the length of the paper). Past experience has shown that students who include figures and tables are most likely to get the highest grades.

**Be sure to cite the sources of all tables and figures.** Furthermore, your essay grade will be based largely on how thoroughly you have covered your topic. Therefore, be very concise and avoid verbosity and redundancy. Pay attention to your spelling and grammar. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to talk to me.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**

People often lose marks for failing to properly cite their sources of information. You must cite all sources of information including sources used
Essay Topics:

Your assignment will be to choose a vertebrate species (not domesticated) and write a detailed account of that species’ biology. The species account should be divided into titled sections, including, but not limited to:

- Description
- Geographic Distribution
- Taxonomic relationships
- Fossil History
- Habitat
- Food Habits
- Vocalizations
- Reproductive Biology
- Behavior
  - Maintenance Behaviors
  - Sexual Behavior
  - Parental Behavior
- Demography and Population Biology
- Human Impacts and Economic Impact

Attendance:

Any student with 5 or more unexcused absences will be automatically dropped from the class. No prior notification will be given.
Course Grading Scheme

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test 1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>February 1</td>
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<td>Test 2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>February 22</td>
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<td>Test 3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>March 22</td>
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<td>Test 4</td>
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<td>April 12</td>
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<td>Test 5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>May 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>April 26</td>
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</tbody>
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Total 100

Obligatory Statements:

Plagiarism is a criminal activity. You must cite all sources of information. Copying of material, whether parts of sentences, whole sentences, paragraphs, or entire articles, will result in a score of zero for your assignment and can result in further disciplinary action.

Students with Disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation for their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services,
Texas A&M University – Commerce,
Halladay Student Services Building,
Room 303 A/D,
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
All student enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct.

Students who are disruptive to class activities will be dropped from the class and may face further disciplinary action.