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Course Website: at eCollege (http://online.tamuc.org)	Home Phone: 972-722-1568
Office Hours: MTRF 10:45-13; email or use Virtual Office (at eCollege) anytime	

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Animal Behavior: An Evolutionary Approach, 10th Ed., Alcock.

Exploring Animal Behavior: Readings from American Scientist, 6th Ed., Ed. Sherman & Alcock.

The textbooks can be purchased as a bundle directly from Sinauer (ISBN 978-1-60535-218-3), or through the TAMUC Bookstore. I'm ok with students purchasing ebooks or renting. Do note that the organization and included papers does change with editions, so it is *strongly* recommended that you use the current editions of the texts as listed.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

BSC 597. Special Topics. This section of 597 is a 3-semester hour graduate level version of BSC 310, described as follows:

BSC 310. Animal Behavior. An introduction to the principles of animal behavior with an emphasis on methods of observations and the proximate and ultimate causes of behavior. Aspects of physiology and development of behavior, instinct and learning, and modern cognitive ethology will be addressed.

COURSE FORMAT: This is a “web-based” course- that is, you don’t actually attend a lecture class. Instead, you do all your work via our **eCollege** site- enter through your MyLeo page. Check the website frequently (I’d recommend daily!) for announcements, instructions, and discussion; the closest thing to a lecture or office hours you’ll get from me will be in the eCollege discussion boards or via email. Try everything out early so you know that you can access it all. If you have difficulty with the material, talk to me *as soon as you can* for advice on how best to improve.

A BIT ON ORGANIZATION: Oddly enough, we are going basically in the order the main text is organized in, so you can start at the beginning. Please **DO** read the Preface of the text before starting the chapters, and read each opening essay to the Parts of the text. Authors usually include these items for a reason! Feel free to read ahead, but do check back for specifics to review and discuss if you get ahead of the assignment postings so you don’t skip over stuff. Please **DO NOT** fall behind on reading- there is a lot of material to cover and it will pile up fast if you let it slide. The textbook will be the “meat” of your course reading, but not the whole meal!

Do remember that this is a GRADUATE level course, and therefore you will be expected to show appropriate levels of effort. You will be responsible for textbook readings, plus assorted outside readings as assigned (again, visit eCollege frequently for guidance), you will be expected to take part in discussions in a mature and in-depth manner, to write in a clear and professional voice, and you should not need excessive amounts of instructor “hand-holding.”

MATERIAL AND GRADING: This course is partially self-paced: there are periods in which you need to complete given portions of the work, but you can schedule your specific work times as pleases you. The material for this class will be organized around content blocks. Please see the Topic folders in the Discussion Forum for guidance through specific materials. Each section will have a Commentary devoted to guiding you through the material to study- read that first, then work the assignments given as you study the material. You are expected to read all assigned text, and will also be expected to locate additional topics and academic articles to use in class. The final exam will include a comprehensive portion. Part of your work will be in the form of posting commentaries of your own to the Discussion boards, and responding to the postings of other students. The bulk of the work will be such discussion of your readings of the assigned materials, with a few Exercises, papers and “take-home” style tests (all of which will be detailed in separate handouts/postings). The nature of some of these exercises/assignments will be structured based on the student group in the class (for example, some in-person “lab exercises” may be offered if enough students could meet on campus for them). Final grades will be based on a 10% scale compared to the total points available in the class. Assume for now that about 1/3 of the points will be based each on discussion, exams, and papers/exercises. Working together on some presentations is encouraged, studying together can be highly beneficial, but exams and turned-in assignments must be done *individually*. Cheating, plagiarism, and disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.

Late or Make-Up Work: Since there are no actual class meetings or sit-down exam periods, there really isn’t any use for “make-up” work. All work will have a deadline posted; assignments MAY be accepted late, but will be penalized heavily on an increasing scale (the later it is, the more points it loses). Please contact me immediately if you are “absent” long enough to miss any due dates, but in general I strongly recommend planning ahead to avoid such problems. Extreme circumstances will always be taken into consideration- TALK TO ME before you assume anything.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS*

PART 1: CH. 1-5. Introduction to Study of Animal Behavior, evolution of social behavior & communication, feeding and defense.

Weeks 1-5 (Aug. 25-Sept. 28)

Exam 1

PART 2: CH. 6-9. Location, reproduction, & parenting.

Weeks 6 – 10 (Sept. 29-Nov. 2)

Exam 2

PART 3: CH. 10-13. Causation, development & mechanisms.

Weeks 11-15 (Nov. 3 – Dec. 7).

Exam 3 (Finals Period)

*This schedule is a general outline for your reference and is subject to change. Note that only the main textbook chapters have been listed; additional readings WILL be required (check website for specifics). Any changes will be announced in class (at the course website); you will be responsible for keeping up with them. *Note* that precise times of topics and reading assignments will be updated regularly at the eCollege page- you are responsible for keeping up with them

RESOURCES:

Hopefully you no longer need the types of services provided by the **Academic Success Center** services, which include tutoring and workshops (including such topics as “Managing Test Anxiety”), but here’s the link:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/CampusLife/CampusServices/AcademicSuccessCenter/default.aspx> .

Those of you who are GAT’s may want to point your own students this way!

And of course the Academic Calendar, which does include information regarding University holidays, deadlines to add, drop, withdraw, and other such activities. This page also includes the link to each semester’s Final Exam schedule (which may also be useful for your other courses): <http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/academicCalendars/>

OTHER NOTES (INCLUDING OFFICIAL UNIVERSITY STATEMENTS/AKA: THE FINE PRINT)

It is the responsibility of the student to inform me of any problems you may have affecting your performance in class, be it due to professionally diagnosed disability, personal or work-related problems, or anything else that comes up, so that appropriate adjustments can be made.

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 of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services, Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library, Room 132, Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835, Fax (903) 468-8148**

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu (or visit

<http://www.tamuc.edu/CampusLife/CampusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/default.aspx>

Regarding student conduct

“All students 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.” Please be advised that students who are disruptive to class activities will be dropped from the class and may face further disciplinary action.

Plagiarism

“*Plagiarism* is a criminal activity. You must cite all sources of information. Unreferenced copying of material, whether parts of sentences, whole sentences, paragraphs or entire articles, will result in a score of zero for your essay and can result in further disciplinary action.” Note that this is true throughout the University and we do have plagiarism-detecting software in place. Of special note in an online environment- “cut and paste” from websites without appropriate citation IS plagiarism, yet putting everything in quotation marks is not an acceptable alternative. You must learn to construct your own sentences with information you find (and changing a couple of words in a sentence or reordering sentences in a paragraph are not enough). If you have any questions about what is considered plagiarism or wish advice on avoiding it, please contact your instructor.

As many of you are (or plan to be) teachers and academics, you may find the following recent discussion about plagiarism interesting and/or helpful: <http://wpacouncil.org/node/9>