

Lecture: 9 – 9:50 AM, M-W-F, BSC 1025

Lab: Tuesdays 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM, BC 2073

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Office Hours: 10:00 - 11:00 AM, M, W, F or any other time by appointment

TEXT: *Animal Behavior* by M. D. Breed and J. Moore, Academic Press, 2012.

COURSE GOALS: This course deals with animals and what they do (or don't do), how one goes about studying behavior, and the kinds of conceptual problems that arise from such study. Educational outcomes associated with this course include numbers 1, 2 and 5 as specified by the VSU Biology Department and numbers 3, 4, 5 and 7 of the general outcomes specified by the University.

EXAMS: There will be 3 exams in this course. The exams will each cover 1/3 of the lecture and reading material. Exams will be essay, and each will be worth 100 points. In addition, there will be an optional 100 point final exam. If you take the final I will drop the lowest of your four exam scores in calculating your final grade. Thus, you wind up with 400 potential points from the exams, but only 300 points will count. So, if you have a bad day and bomb an exam, remember it's not the end of the world and that score can be dropped.

MAKE-UPS: Because the final is optional and can make up for a previous exam, there will be **NO** make-ups for any of the first three exams. If you miss one, for whatever reason, that will represent your dropped exam and you will have to take the final. This policy has a couple of important implications: (1) you better not miss more than one exam, and (2) there is some incentive in taking the first three exams and thus possibly avoiding the final.

LABS: A tentative lab schedule is outlined below. Attendance in lab each week is mandatory. Initial labs in this course will prepare you to obtain and analyze behavioral data. Later labs will try to test hypotheses about certain aspects of behavior. You will choose two of these labs to write up in the format of a scientific paper (these labs are indicated by an * on the lab schedule). The first lab write-up will be worth 30 points and the second one will be worth 50 points. You will have to indicate on the day of the lab whether or not you will be writing it up. You then have 2 weeks from that day to turn in your report. If something else comes up, you have 1 week (i.e., the next lab period) to change your mind. After that, you are required to turn in the lab report you signed up for and failure to do so will be penalized accordingly (see below). In addition to the lab reports, there will be a handful of additional short lab assignments. In total, these assignments will be worth 50 points, so the total of all points from the laboratory part of the course is 130.

ESSAYS: You will be given 5 essay questions during the semester. Each deals with a general, theoretical issue in animal behavior. Outside readings will be provided that address the issues raised in the essay. Each essay is worth 10 points, so in total the essays are worth 50 points

toward your final grade. Essays are available from the course web site and are due every two weeks, starting today.

PROJECTS/PAPERS: Finally, you have the option of choosing (1) to write a term paper on some theoretical aspect of behavior (e.g., the functional significance of play, the evolution of mate choice, etc--the essay questions may give you some ideas about potential topics). Note that taxonomic descriptions, such as cataloging the behavior of whales or some other species, have no theoretical foundation and will NOT make acceptable paper topics (although they can be incorporated to illustrate aspects of theoretical issues); or (2) performing an independent project in which you choose some animal (no pets, please) and some aspect of its behavior to study (the labs may give you some ideas about what to try). For the independent projects you will need to turn in a written summary of your project (in much the same style as the lab reports mentioned above). These term papers/projects are worth 100 points. **PROJECTS AND TOPICS MUST BE APPROVED BY ME** and you must come in and get that approval by **MIDTERM (Thursday, March 1)**. If you don't have something approved by midterm, I will begin taking off points at the rate of 1 per day (including weekends) from the possible total for your paper. Papers/projects are due at **9 AM, Friday, April 27**.

NOTE: Late submissions of any papers are penalized at the rate of 10% per day. Thus, for each day that an essay is late you lose 1 point, for each day a lab report is late you lose 3 or 5 points, and for each day your term paper is late you lose 10 points.

ATTENDANCE: It is up to you to decide whether or not to come to class. I will not take attendance or penalize absences. However, you are responsible for all material and assignments given in class. Since some of what I will talk about in class is not in the text (but is on the exams), class attendance is usually beneficial. However, lab attendance is mandatory. There has been a tendency in the past for people to believe that, once they have written up their lab reports, they no longer need to attend lab. This seriously damages the ability of other students to do a good lab report because they don't have as much data to work with. Consequently, failure to attend lab and turn in data will result in a loss of 5 points from your own lab grade for each lab missed.

GRADING: All material will be graded by me and returned to you within a day or two. See the course outline for exam dates. Any questions, problems, complaints, etc. regarding the exams must be taken care of in the week after the exams are returned to you. The statute of limitations on appeals runs out at that time.

Final grades will be based on cumulative points (300 from exams, 100 for the independent project/term paper, 50 from the essays and 130 from lab for a total of 580) and will be distributed according to the following percentages (the total number of points represented by these percentages is shown in parentheses):

A: 90 – 100 (522 – 580)

B: 80 – 89 (464 – 521)

C: 70 – 79 (406 – 463)

D: 60 – 69 (348 – 405)

If everyone in the class scores above 90%, then everyone will get an A. If no one scores above 90%, then I may adjust the curve downward appropriately.

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE:

EXAM DATES:	Readings in Text
EXAM 1 – February 13	Chapters 1-5
EXAM 2 – March 26	Chapters 6-10
EXAM 3 – April 30	Chapters 11-15
FINAL EXAM: Thursday, May 3, 8:00 – 10:00 AM (optional)	

TENTATIVE LAB SCHEDULE:

Date	Topic
January	10 NO LAB
	17 Observational Methods 1/Ethogram
	24 Observational Methods 2/Reliability
	31 Behavioral Syndromes*
February	7 Behavioral Syndromes (cont.)/Data Analysis
	14 Communication*
	21 Space Use*
	28 Game Theory*
March	6 Antipredator Behavior*
	13 NO LAB: Spring Break
	20 Social Organization*
	27 Optimal Foraging*
April	3 Mate Choice*
	10 Vigilance*
	17 Behavior of Captive Animals
	24 To Be Announced

* Can be used as lab report write-up. Please be aware that due to vagaries of weather and animal activity, the schedule above is extremely tentative and subject to substantial re-arrangement. You will be given as much advance notice as possible about any changes.