

Behavioral Ecology (Bio 269): Course Information

Fall 2017

Instructor:

| | | |
|-----------------|---------|---|
| Dr. Ron Coleman | Office: | 119 Humboldt |
| | | 916-278-3474 (w) |
| | | 916-705-2606 (cell) until 10 pm |
| | | rcoleman@csus.edu |
| | or | rcoleman@cichlidresearch.com |
| | | website: http://cichlidresearch.com |
| | or | http://www.csus.edu/indiv/c/colemanr/index.html |

Course Location & Times:

Lec: #86382 Tues, Thurs 4:30 to 5:45 pm Hmb 124

Office hours:

Ron Coleman Wed 2:00 - 5:00pm Room Hmb 119

Catalog description:

BIO 269. Behavioral Ecology. Advanced study of animal behavior focusing on the life history consequences of social organization, spacing systems, sexual behavior, reproductive ecology, feeding ecology, competitive interactions and predator-prey interactions. Prerequisite: BIO 160 or instructor permission. Graded: Graded Student. Units: 3.0

What this course is about:

This course is an introduction to graduate level behavioral ecology, the fast-moving, ever-changing science that tries to understand why organisms do what they do.

The course will be a quick-paced introduction to the field attempting to show the student the theoretical underpinnings of behavioural ecology (e.g., optimization theory, game theory) along with the topics that are currently being addressed (e.g., optimal foraging, parental investment, mating systems).

Learning Objectives:

Conceptual

- Appreciate the diversity of behavioral ecology
- Develop an understanding of the fundamental roles of natural and sexual selection in shaping animal behavior
- Develop an understanding of the cost/benefit, optimality and game theoretic approaches to the study of behavior
- Experience and appreciate the “cutting edge” of behavioral ecology

Practical

- Experience reading and analyzing the primary scientific literature
- Research and compose a well thought-out term paper on a topic related to behavioral ecology, making use of the primary literature
- Create and present an effective PowerPoint presentation lecture

Attendance and Deadlines:

Behavioral ecology is a way of thinking and it is best learned by lecture and discussion. You cannot participate in a discussion if you are not present. Therefore, I expect you to attend every class. If you miss a class, that becomes your problem, not a problem for me or the rest of the class, i.e., we will not wait for you.

Deadlines are strictly adhered to. It is not fair to students that complete work on time for other students to have extra time to do the same work. Plan ahead and schedule your time. Most importantly, don't leave things to the last minute; you don't need that kind of stress!

Email policy:

As a Sac State student, you are responsible for regularly checking your Saclink email account (i.e., at least daily). Failing to do an assignment because you did not check your Saclink email account is your problem. Furthermore, when corresponding with me about this course, you **MUST** use your Saclink email account, not a gmail, yahoo or any other email account. This is an official University policy (IRT-0102, January 1, 2010).

Textbook:

Westneat, David F. and Charles W. Fox (2010) Evolutionary Behavioural Ecology. Oxford. ISBN 978-0-19-5331929. **REQUIRED.**

Exams:

There will be a midterm and a final for the course. Exams will be essay-type questions.

Grading:

The number of points/questions on a particular exam is irrelevant to the exam's worth -- it is merely a tool for grading. What matters are the following percentages.

Your lecture grade will be calculated according to the following scheme:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| Midterm | 30 |
| Final Exam | 30 |
| Term Paper | 20 |
| Other assignments and Participation | 20 |
| | ---- |
| | 100% |

Your letter grade will be calculated according to the following table:

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| A = 93 to 100% | C+ = 77 to 79% |
| A- = 90 to 92% | C = 73 to 76% |
| B+ = 87 to 89% | C- = 70 to 72% |
| B = 84 to 86% | D+ = 67 to 69% |
| B- = 80 to 83% | D = 60 to 66% |
| | F = 0 to 59% |

Honor Code:

Please don't cheat. Besides the fact that we will be forced to take strong measures if we catch you -- including recommending your dismissal from the class and from the university -- I will be profoundly disappointed in you.

Don't even think about doing any of the following:

- a. giving or receiving information from another student during an examination
- b. using unauthorized sources for answers during an exam such as writing answers on hats, clothing or limbs
- c. illegally obtaining the questions before an exam
- d. altering the answers on an already-graded exam
- e. any and all forms of plagiarism
- f. destruction and/or confiscation of school and/or personal property

Feedback:

I appreciate your feedback on this course. It is most useful to tell me things while the course is in progress, rather than waiting until the end of the course. If there is something that needs changing, **LET ME KNOW** and I will see what I can do about it. This course is a collaboration between you and me. I really enjoy teaching this class and I want you to have a great time as well.

| Week | Mon | Wed |
|------|---|---|
| 1 | Aug 27: Intro to course | Aug 29: |
| 2 | Sept 3: Labor Day -- no class | Sept 5: |
| 3 | Sept 10: | Sept 12: |
| 4 | Sept 17: | Sept 19: ***Term paper proposal due, 6:30pm |
| 5 | Sept 24: | Sep 26: |
| 6 | Oct 1: | Oct 3: |
| 7 | Oct 8: | Oct 10: |
| 8 | Oct 15: Lecture Midterm | Oct 17: |
| 9 | Oct 22: | Oct 24: |
| 10 | Oct 29: | Oct 31: |
| 11 | Nov 5: ***Term paper due, 6:30 pm | Nov 7: |
| 12 | Nov 12: | Nov 14: |
| 13 | Nov 19: Lab: | Nov 21: |
| 14 | Nov 26: Lab: | Nov 28: |
| 15 | Dec 5: | Dec 5: |
| 16 | Dec 10: 5:15-7:15pm FINAL EXAM | |

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