BSC 534 VERTEBRATE ZOOLOGY (Early Version) SPRING 2026

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Lani Lyman-Henley **Office:** STC 237 (McFarland Science Building)
email: Lani.Lyman-Henley@ETAMU.edu **Course Website:** at MyLeo Online (D2L)
Office Hours: MWF 9-10; appointments as needed
Message via email, text, Discord, & D2L anytime (usual response within 24 hrs.) More contact information will be posted at D2L

REQUIRED TEXT:
Vertebrate Life, 11th Ed. Pough, Bemis, McGuire, & Janis. 2022. **ISBN:** 978-0197558621 and they do have an ebook: **Pough: Vertebrate Life 11e – e-book – ISBN: 9780197564899**

The text may be available in paperback or ebook form. I'm ok with students purchasing ebooks or renting to reduce expense. Do note that it is strongly recommended that you use the current edition of the text as listed.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Three semester hours. A study of advanced contemporary knowledge in vertebrate zoology. Prerequisite: An undergraduate degree in Biology, Wildlife, or related discipline or permission from instructor.

COURSE FORMAT: This is a "web-based" course- that is, you don't actually attend a lecture class. Instead, you do your work via our **D2L** 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 navigating the site early so you know that you can access everything. If you have difficulty with the material, talk to me *as soon as you can* for advice on how best to improve. Be sure to turn in work using appropriate file formats (doc, pdf, rtf, etc.- and NOT zip files!); if I can't open or read your work it cannot be graded and will be given a 0 score. I can't stress enough how important it is to keep up with the material…with this much reading and writing, it can be really difficult to catch up if you fall behind!

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:
- Students will be familiar with what the study of vertebrate zoology entails.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of the evolution of vertebrate diversity.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge about the current organization of vertebrate classification.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge about the importance of vertebrates in ecology and to humans globally.
- Students will be able to find and interpret scientific literature pertaining to the subject matter, and communicate in various written presentation formats

ATTENDANCE: Being an online course, attendance is measured by demonstrated time at the website. This is measured in two main ways- time spent actually logged into the site (yes, I can see that information), and participation in activities demonstrating you are engaged and participating. Minimum allowable attendance should reflect at least weekly logins- more appropriate and beneficial interaction will be rewarded in your grade (see below).

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- and don't forget the website is still active at night, on holidays and weekends! The material for this class will be organized around content blocks. Please see the Topic folders in the Discussion Forums 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 any assignments given as you study the material. Much 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.

Exams will include essay-type questions, and may include material reading assignments from the books, hand-outs or websites, or additional posted materials. You are expected to read all assigned text, preferably before the topic's exam date to facilitate discussion (refer to D2L for specific reading assignments). Exams may *emphasize* the most recent block of material, but will be comprehensive. Depending on class demographics I may break up "exams" into smaller units, incorporating online D2L multiple choice and other "auto-grading" mechanisms to test over topic specifics, with a single "take-home" style exam covering integrated concepts from the entire course posted at the end of the term (similar to my previous exams, for any of you who've taken my courses before).

Another aspect of the course that I'll introduce after about a week will be the written projects, exercises, and/or papers. You will be required to complete a minimum number of these items. 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 or field exercises may be offered if enough students could meet on campus for them).

Grades will be computed based on a "10-point scale" such that a total of 90% or higher of possible points will result in a grade of A, between 80% and 89.9% a B, and so on. If your total is lower than 60% of the class points you will fail the class (yes, that's an F). The points are planned to be as follows:

Exams & Quizzes	300
Written assignments	200
Short Exercises	100
Participation, etc.	100
Total course points	***700***

With a 700 point total, minimum scores for each letter grade would be 630 (A), 560 (B), 490 (C), and 420 (D). Any changes will be announced in class- this is a maximum workload, some items may be reduced, but the total will not exceed this outline.

Late or Make-Up Work: All graded work will be submitted online, and since there are therefore no actual 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. Obtain a calendar or planner for the semester, and USE IT. Extreme circumstances will always be taken into consideration- TALK TO ME before you assume anything.

STARTING NOTES: 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. Be sure to explore the class site at D2L… Use the first week to get your "e-feet"- learn to navigate the site, and jump right in with the first discussions of the early chapters as directed. If you find any of the underlying biological concepts unfamiliar, please let me know promptly so I can help you get up to speed.

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."

A BIT ON ORGANIZATION: The first couple of weeks we'll start right in with the first section of the text while folks get used to the structure of the course. Be sure to read the materials posted at D2L under the first block of material, so you learn how to find assignments, post your work, and other such skills. I've tried to organize the chapters in sensible groupings per week- be sure to keep up with the associated materials at eCollege. Some chapters may take less time to complete, while others will likely take more- I've tried to allot a suitable amount of time. 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!

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS*

PART 1: Weeks 1-5 (Jan. 12-Feb. 15) ***Monday, Jan. 19 MLK Holiday***
Ch. 1 – 8 Vertebrate Diversity- Origins, Life in Water, Fishes
Exam 1

PART 2: Weeks 6 – 11 (Feb. 16-Mar. 31) ***Spring Break Mar. 11-16***
Ch. 9 – 17 Tetrapod Origins, Ectotherms
Exam 2

PART 3: Weeks 12-16 (Apr. 6–May 3)
Ch. 18 – 24 Dinosaurs and Endotherms
Exam 3

*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 may 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.

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/

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

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.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Students will need reliable computer and internet access for this course. Students must be able to effectively use myLeo email, myLeo Online D2L, and Microsoft Office.

Learning Management System (LMS) – D2L

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are the technical requirements:

- View the Learning Management System Requirements Webpage.
- Learn more on the LMS Browser Support Webpage.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found on the Brightspace Support Webpage.

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:
https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements
LMS Browser Support:
https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm
Zoom Video Conferencing Tool
https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@etamu.edu.

Note: **Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.**

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:
https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail online in the Student Guidebook.

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette Webpage for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum.

ETAMU Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy, please view the Attendance Webpage and the Class Attendance Policy

Academic Integrity

Students at East Texas A&M University are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:
Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.03
Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form
Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.10
Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form

Use of Artificial Intelligence

East Texas A&M University acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is a criminal activity. You must cite all sources of information. Copying 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. If you are caught cheating you will receive a score of zero for the class – not just the assignment.

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

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

East Texas A&M University
Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
Email: studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu
Website: Office of Student Disability Services

Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national

origin, disability, age, genetic information, or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and ETAMU Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus document and/or consult your event organizer.

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M University campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

FINAL NOTE:

I make efforts to conserve resources (and cost) in providing materials for class. All materials provided in class are to be found at the D2L website. I will not provide hard-copy handouts of anything that you can access there- you may print what you need, when you need it; or just download a copy to have handy. Clearly computer access is assumed of all students. If you do not have one of your own (or your online access is limited), there are computer labs available all around campus- Waters Library most notably, and more locally Science building room 210. There are even kiosks for checking out a laptop. You may need to provide your own paper for printing, or pay a charge. Also, places like Staples and OfficeDepot will print materials for a reasonable fee if you bring your flash-drive. Last bit of advice: **Get a Calendar. Learn how to use it.** ☺