Course Syllabus  
Biology Department  
Midwestern State University

Discussions in Biology - BIOL 5001

M 5:30 – 6:20 PM - BO 212/215

Instructor:

Dr. Mike Shipley  BO 218C  
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Email: michael.shipley@mwsu.edu  
Office hours: MWF 9:00 - 10:00AM; TR 9:30 - 11:00AM;  
MW 11:00 – 11:30 PM; 4:00 – 5:30 PM; or by appointment

Course Objectives:

1. To provide a forum for discussion and evaluation of peer-reviewed research  
publications and review articles on topics in biology.  
2. To give students an opportunity to express themselves orally by preparing and  
performing a seminar presentation as would be expected at professional  
meetings. This will prepare the student in proper scientific communication with  
an audience of their peers in formal and informal settings.  
3. To allow an exploration on current topics in biology.

Student Assignments:

A. Lead a group discussion of a paper assigned to you. Each student will facilitate a  
round-table discussion of a scientific paper provided by the instructor. All students will be  
given a copy of the paper to read in advance.  

B. Give an oral presentation on the background, results, and conclusions of a paper of  
your choosing. The presentation should be 18-20 minutes in length and should utilize  
overhead transparencies, slides, or PowerPoint. It should be based on an approved journal  
article from any area of biology, and the journal article should be within the last three years  
(no earlier than 2009). The presentation should address:  
   A. Background on the topic of the research article  
   B. Hypothesis/Problem addressed in the research article  
   C. Summary of procedures used  
   D. Results of the research  
   E. Conclusions drawn from the research  
   F. Critique of the work  
      1. Was the hypothesis/problem studied and answered?  
      2. Were methods appropriate for the study?  
      3. Were appropriate conclusions drawn?  
      4. What other work would you suggest be performed?
Ten minutes will be given to answer questions concerning your topic from those in attendance at the conclusion of your presentation. A general class discussion of the research will be appropriate during this time. Provide a reprint of the journal article to everyone in the course THE WEEK BEFORE YOUR PRESENTATION DAY. Each student will read each article prior to the presentation and should ask at least one question to the presenter about the article or topic after the presentation has been made.

C. Construct a presentation announcement page to be posted in Bolin Science Hall. The announcement should encourage people to attend and hear what you have to say about the topic. Be creative! Make sure to include:

Presentation Title, Your Name, Presentation Time and Date, Building Name and Room Number.

The announcement page should be approved by the instructor and turned in ONE WEEK PRIOR TO YOUR PRESENTATION so that copies can be made and posted several days before your presentation.

NO RECYCLED PRESENTATIONS! Your presentation should be one that you have prepared specifically for this class.

D. Evaluate your fellow classmates’ presentations. Below is an example of the evaluation form students will use. Strive to maintain consistent evaluation scores among all presenters in the class.

Evaluator’s Name _______________________

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Speaker’s Name _________________________   Topic __________________________

Grading

Presentation of Content ________ (40 pts.)
Presentation Style ________ (25 pts.)
Handling of Questions ________ (15 pts.)
Critique of Paper ________ (10 pts.)
Time Limit ________ (10 pts.)

Total Grade ________

Comments:

Grade Determination:

Discussion leader (grade by instructor) - 35%
Seminar presentation (half of grade by instructor and half by fellow students) - 35%
Seminar announcement (quality) - 10%
Attendance/Questions asked - 20%

Seven points of the attendance grade will be deducted for each absence. Seven points will be deducted if no question is asked of the student presenter.