

**Animal Behavior – Biology 338**  
**SPRING 2025**  
**Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00-3:15 ISC 325**

Instructor: Dr. Kristi Hannam (she/her/hers)

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**Office Hours (in ISC 259): Tu/Th 3:30-4:30 and Weds 9:30-10:30**

**Other times available by appointment** – email Dr. Hannam for an appointment suggesting some of your available times (Fridays are often good)

**Walk with Me Appointments:** sign up on [Google Calendar](#) to walk and talk **M/W/F 11:30-12:00**

**Required Text:** Nordell & Valone. 2024. Animal Behavior Concepts, Methods and Applications

\*\*\*Plus additional readings from the primary literature\*\*\*

## **Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, students will:

1. Identify Tinbergen's 4 questions animal behavior, understand research methods used to answer questions in these four categories, and integrate these diverse perspectives to better understand animal behavior,
2. Apply behavioral ecological theory to the interpretation of novel empirical examples;
3. Explain the function of behavior in terms of potential evolutionary advantages;
4. Review a current question in animal behavior in a poster presentation by selecting appropriate sources, comparing and contrasting them, and evaluating the state of our understanding in that area of animal behavior.

## **Notes about structuring your learning in this course**

In this face-to-face course you should expect to be doing approximately 3 hours of work a week for every credit hour. For this course, that means 9 hours of work per week. In a face-to-face course 3 of the 9 hours per week are spent in the classroom listening to lecture, in discussion and small group work. The other 6 hours are spent on your own doing homework and out-of-class project work, reading the assigned readings and studying. I strongly recommend logging into the course Brightspace page daily to see updates and comments from your instructor and classmates.

To successfully access and use the resources needed for this course, and to submit the required assignments, you will need the following technology:

**Hardware:** a laptop computer (one that fulfills the Geneseo Laptop requirement) and a high-speed internet connection, sound card, speakers or headphones, and a microphone (if there is one built into your laptop, that should be fine)

**Software:** An internet browser compatible with Brightspace, Adobe Reader, and Google Docs and Google Slides (you may also find Microsoft Word useful).

**Course Design:** This course is divided into 3 modules, and you will find the course modules labeled on Brightspace. Each module focuses on 3-4 topics in animal behavior, and for each topic there will be readings, in-class lectures with posted powerpoint slides, in-class problem set activities and assignments.

## Grading

The following exams and assignments will make up your overall grade for the class.

15% Reading & Problem Quizzes, In-class engagement & participation

50% Exams

20% Final Poster Presentation

15% Journal Article Discussions /Documentary Review

Total 100%

Final grades are earned according to the following point distribution:

>93% = A                      77-79% = C+

90-93% = A-                    73-77% = C

87-89% = B+                 70-72% = C-

83-86% = B                    60-69% = D

80-82% = B-                 <60% = E

Under most circumstances, there will be no adjustment from the above point distribution to your grades.

**\*\*\*IMPORTANT\*\*\*** Brightspace's calculation of your overall grade may not be completely accurate. Final calculation of your grade is done by Dr.Hannam off-line according to the grade breakdown above.

## QUESTION/PROBLEM SET & READING QUIZZES/PARTICIPATION (15% of your grade)

Reading Quizzes: As indicated in the syllabus and announced in Brightspace, there will be a reading quiz on the textbook chapters assigned approximately weekly. Quizzes will have 3-8 multiple choice questions for each chapter assigned, plus 1-2 questions (short answer or multiple choice) on the problems from class the previous week (see next paragraph). The quiz will be open textbook and open note. Each quiz will be open from 12:01am until 11:59pm on Monday, you will have one opportunity to take each quiz, and you will have ~10 minutes (depending on the number of questions) to complete the quiz once you have opened it.

Question/Problem/Case Study Sets: Over the course of the semester, usually on Thursdays before class, Dr. Hannam will post a problem/question/case study set related to the readings and lectures for the week. You may print out the problem set and bring it to class, or work from the online version. During all or part of our class meeting at on that day there will be time for student groups to work together on the problems and to ask questions. The purpose of these assignments is to give students practice solving the types of problems common in animal behavior, interpreting data from experiments in light of theories and hypotheses discussed in class, designing experiments, and solidifying understanding of important concepts. These questions/problems are very similar to questions posed on the Exams. One or two of the questions from the problem set will be included on the weekly reading quiz that is due on the following Monday.

Participation: 10points/week – You are expected to be in class every day. Your score is based on contribution to class discussions & my assessment of your engagement in the class activities and case studies. A rubric is posted on Brightspace, and participation scores are maintained in an Excel file on Dr. Hannam's computer.

## **EXAMS (50% of your grade)**

There will be three exams over the course of the semester. Exams will cover material from the textbook and the online lectures, as well as questions about any journal articles, case studies/problem sets or guest speakers from class. Exams are *not* cumulative per se, though there is a great deal of connection among topics in the course so certain themes (eg. cost-benefit analyses, honest signaling, etc) may apply to questions on more than one exam. Every exam will include one of four semester-long cross-cutting questions that are posted on Brightspace.

Any and all **make up exams not re-scheduled within 5 days of the original exam date** may be oral exams, at Dr. Hannam's discretion. For the oral exam, 4-5 questions from the exam will be randomly chosen and the student will provide an oral answer to each question during a face-to-face appointment with Dr. Hannam. An oral exam typically takes ~ 12-15minutes to complete.

## **POSTER PROJECT (20% of your grade):**

Each student or pair of students will create a poster addressing a question of their choice in the field of animal behavior. This will require reading and analyzing approximately 4-7 journal articles and **reviewing the state of knowledge about a particular research question**. This assignment will require a significant amount of work and is the equivalent of a review paper, so **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE** to begin working on this project. Notice that this project is worth more than any single exam toward your final grade, thus it is worth your while to do very well on this assignment. Specific guidelines will be discussed in class and posted on Brightspace. There are two interim assignments associated with this project due before the final product, so be sure to note those on your calendar. Posters will be uploaded and visible to everyone in the course, and required peer evaluation of the posters will occur during the final exam period.

## **JOURNAL DISCUSSIONS/ DOCUMENTARY REVIEW (15% of your grade):**

Journal Discussions: We will have at least three in-class or virtual journal discussions over the course of the semester, one during each module. The dates and articles that will be discussed are listed briefly in the syllabus and on the Brightspace page.

**\*\*Students should expect to see questions about these articles on the exams.\*\***

Documentary Review: Each student will choose a nature/animal documentary of at least 45min in length, and write a review. The guidelines for the review, the rubric for grading it, and a list of suggested films and where they can be found is available on the assignment page in Brightspace.

## **Late work and Make-up work**

In the Brightspace Dropboxes for most assignments you will find that the due date/time may be different than the closing date/time. That means it is possible to submit late work (after the due date/time) up until the closing date/time. Late work is typically penalized -10% for each day (24hours) late, and the penalty may be assessed proportionally by time. It is usually possible to submit work after the closing date/time on Brightspace, but you should contact Dr. Hannam via email about this.

If you believe you have a valid excuse (illness or other extenuating circumstance) for late work, or need make-up work, you must contact Dr. Hannam as soon as possible, and **before the end date of the module in which the work is due**. Dr. Hannam will work with each student individually to determine the best solution to the missed deadline.

## Tentative Schedule

The following schedule is NOT set in stone, I may change the order of topics. Any changes will be noted on Brightspace. More detailed reading notes will be found on Brightspace when a whole chapter is not required reading. It is EXTREMELY unlikely Exam dates will change.

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS, ETC
<b>MODULE 1</b>		
JAN 21	Introduction to Animal Behavior, 4 Tinbergen Questions & Proximate/Ulimate	Chapter 1
JAN 23	Methods for Studying Animal Behavior	Chapter 2
JAN 28	Evolution and the Study of Animal Behavior	Chapter 3
JAN 30	Evolution and the Study of Animal Behavior	
FEB 4	Sensory Systems and Behavior	Chapter 4
FEB 6	Sensory Systems and Behavior	
FEB 11	Sensory Systems and Behavior	
FEB 13	Catch Up – Project Work	
FEB 18	<b>Exam 1</b>	
FEB 6-13	JOURNAL DISCUSSION 1 (Tentative)	
<b>MODULE 2</b>		
FEB 20	Communication	Chapter 5
FEB 25	Diversity Summit – No Classes	
FEB 27	Communication	
MAR 7-31	JOURNAL DISCUSSION 2	
MAR 4	Communication	
MAR 6		
MAR 11	Territorial Behavior	Chapter 11
MAR 13	<b>Final Poster Topic Due</b>	
MAR 13	Territorial Behavior & Foraging Behavior	Chapter 8
MAR 17-21	Spring Break No Classes	
MAR 25	Foraging Behavior	
MAR 27	Foraging & Antipredator Behavior	
APR 1	Antipredator Behavior	Chapter 9
APR 3	<b>EXAM 2</b>	
<b>MODULE 3</b>		
APR 8	Reproductive Behavior	Chapter 12
APR 10	Reproductive Behavior	
APR 15	Mating Systems	Chapter 13
APR 17	Mating Systems	
APR 22	Parental Care	
APR 24	Parental Care	Chapter 14
APR 24	<b>Poster Annotated Bibliography due</b>	

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS, ETC
APR 25	Documentary Review Due	
APR 29	Parental Care	
MAY 1	CATCH UP	
MAY 6	EXAM 3	
MAY 8	STUDY DAY- NO CLASSES	
MAY 14	FINAL POSTER DUE – 8AM	
MAY 14	FINAL EXAM PERIOD – Review of Peer Posters – 3:30-6:00pm	

## Communication with the Instructor

The best way to communicate with Dr. Hannam is face-to-face or via Geneseo email ([hannam@geneseo.edu](mailto:hannam@geneseo.edu)). Dr. Hannam will make every effort to respond to messages sent to her during the workday by 5pm the same day. However, be aware that Dr. Hannam checks messages in batches 2-3 times/day, so may not respond immediately even during the workday. Emails sent after 5pm may not be answered until the following workday depending on Dr. Hannam's schedule outside of work. And Dr. Hannam typically takes one day/week off from work (usually Saturdays), and checks email on weekends only sporadically.

## Accommodations

SUNY Geneseo will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented physical, emotional, or cognitive disabilities. Accommodations will also be made for medical conditions related to pregnancy or parenting. Students should contact the Dean in the Office of Accessibility Services (585-245-5112) and their faculty to discuss needed accommodations as early as possible in the semester.

## Academic Dishonesty

SUNY-Geneseo's policies on academic dishonesty are summarized in the Code of Student Conduct found in the Geneseo Undergraduate Bulletin pg. 402. Use of online tools such as LLMs (eg. ChatGPT and others) without appropriate citation of those tools is considered academic dishonesty in this course. Plagiarism and other forms of academic cheating are prohibited and may result in a zero on an assignment or exam. Any incidents will be reported to the departmental office, and may be referred to the campus Judicial Council. Repeated incidents will result in failure of the course. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty please contact the instructor.

## Plagiarism

Technology is changing rapidly offering some ways for students to complete assignments more easily, but which may pose some ethical issues. Online tools, including ChatGPT and others, have outpaced the skills of students and professors to manage them appropriately. I am convinced that ChatGPT and other tools will change the way we teach and learn in the very near future. Students should be aware that not only is using ChatGPT for assignments for this class an honor code gray area, but the artificial intelligence (AI) used by ChatGPT may make significant mistakes, for example providing information that is clearly incorrect to those with subject matter expertise. It is possible that AI will eventually get to the point where those mistakes rarely happen, but that hasn't happened yet.

Both because of the mistakes that can be made by the AI, and because the College has not come out with a clear policy on the use (or not) of ChatGPT and other AI programs, I strongly discourage you from using ChatGPT for course assignments. If you do choose to use ChatGPT or any other AI system for language and writing

generation, *you must cite the program for each assignment you use it for*. Failure to do so constitutes a violation of the SUNY-Geneseo Code of Student Conduct, as using an AI's words without citation will be defined as plagiarism.

Plagiarism is very serious. If you plagiarize, you will be prosecuted. No excuses. No second chances -- even if you had planned to graduate. Plagiarism doesn't just happen accidentally. You are responsible for determining how to properly cite the work and ideas of other people. If you are unsure or have questions, refer to Milne library's links for citations (under "Research Help"). If you still need assistance, ask your instructor or a librarian.

Students sometimes think that citations are necessary only when using material that is a direct quote. This is not true. A citation is necessary any time you include any information or idea that is not yours (i.e., directly or indirectly derived from someone else's thinking or writing). Any non-original idea that you fail to cite is plagiarized. Plagiarism is intellectual stealing and the consequences of plagiarism are substantial. In order not to be accused of plagiarism, all a student needs to do is properly cite sources.

For the purpose of this policy, plagiarism shall be considered to be deliberate representation of someone else's words or ideas as one's own or the deliberate arrangement of someone else's material(s) as one's own.

## **Taking Care of Your Mental Health**

The Biology major is demanding, and as your instructor I try to keep in mind that mine is not the only course you are taking, and that most of you also have other demands on your time and attention in addition to your coursework. Juggling your many responsibilities can have an impact on your mental health. With this in mind, I realize that diminished mental health, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with optimal academic performance. The source of symptoms might be strictly related to your course work; if so, please make an appointment to speak with me one-on-one. I realize problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis can also contribute to decreased academic performance.

SUNY Geneseo provides mental health services to support the academic success of students. Counseling Services, a part of the Lauderdale Center for Student Health & Counseling, offers free, confidential psychological services to help you manage personal challenges that may threaten your well-being and success here in college.

In the event I suspect you need additional support, I will express my concerns and the reasons for them, and remind you of resources (e.g., Counseling Services, Career Services, Dean of Students, etc.) that might be helpful to you. It is not my intention to know the details of what might be bothering you, but simply to let you know I am concerned and that help, if needed, is available.

Getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do -- for yourself and for those who care about you.

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**\*\*This .pdf syllabus and it's schedule is accurate as of the first week of classes Jan 20-24, 2025 any updates or changes after that will only be posted on BRIGHTSPACE\*\***

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