BioEE 1780 Introduction to Evolutionary Biology and Diversity Track II (Writing in the Majors)

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| **Instructor:** Gregor Siegmund |  |
| **Email:** gs589 (at) cornell.edu | **Time:** Tuesday/Thursday 1:35–2:15 PM |
| **Office hours:** TBD | **Location:** Plant Science Building 143 |
|  | (on the Ag Quad) |

## Course description.

The Track II, Writing in the Majors, section of BIOEE 1780 is designed to explore the concepts, philosophy, history, and ongoing debates that characterize modern evolutionary biology. In Track II WIM sections, we will have the opportunity to integrate information from the lecture, textbooks, and primary and popular literature. We will engage in specific subjects through readings, classroom discussions, and writing. The ability to think critically about topics and the aptitude to communicate ideas effectively through writing are essential skills for your everyday and professional lives. Both skills require practice. The objective of the Writing in the Majors (WIM) section is to provide a learning environment where you can do that while thinking deeply about evolutionary biology.  
Some of my goals for the semester include helping you to the skills to:

* understand core concepts in evolutionary biology
* read, discuss, and write about primary literature in evolutionary biology
* write to learn, explain, and think about scientific information
* think critically and creatively about published literature
* appreciate questions in and implications of evolutionary biology
* communicate your idea in writing to multiple audiences

## Course feedback.

I have the flexibility to change and tailor the format, content, and pace of this section throughout the semester. If you think that something we try in section works particularly well, and you would like to do more of it, let me know. Likewise, if you find something unsatisfying or have an idea for improvement, I would love to hear from you as well. I am eager to hear your feedback at any point, and encourage you to send me an email or come talk to me!

# Materials.

**Required** (same as Track I, see [Important LinksTextbooks & Clickers](https://canvas.cornell.edu/courses/1312/pages/textbooks-and-iclicker) on Canvas)  
**Evolution: Making Sense of Life, 2nd edition** by Carl Zimmer and Douglas Emlen, 2015 (Roberts & Co.).  
This is a survey of evolutionary biology. Zimmer is a science writer and reporter for the New York Times; Emlen is an evolutionary biologist and Cornell alumnus. Reading assignments from the textbook will complement and supplement the lecture material, but we will mostly focus on primary literature in our section.  
**Principles of Life: Diversity (Chapters 19-23), 2nd edition** by Hillis et al., 2014. (Sinauer and Associates).  
This is your custom Biodiversity text, covering the relationships among lineages in the Tree of Life.  
**iClicker.** You will need to have an iClicker remote registered for BioEE 1780 (see syllabus for how to register).  
***Note on textbooks:*** Electronic versions of the course textbooks are available on Canvas. Physical copies of the textbook are available in Mann Library as Course Reserves. Two copies of each textbook (the Zimmer and Emlen book, as well as the Hillis et al. book) and 1 study guide for the Zimmer textbook are available. Each can be checked out for 2 hours at a time at the Circulation Desk – you just ask the librarian at the desk to get the book for you from behind the counter.  
**WIM Readings and Assignments**  
Track II readings and assignments will be distributed via email or on Canvas.

# Student responsibilities.

## Lecture and textbook assignments.

To succeed in this course, you will need to complete the readings from the textbook, watch the vodcasts, attend lecture, and participate in team-based learning activities during lecture. Our discussions will focus on concepts introduced in the lecture, and it is important that you have a solid understanding of the basics when we delve deeper into the literature. To encourage you to engage with the lectures, pre-class quizzes, in-class participation, and two BIOEE 1780 prelims will make up a percentage of your grade.

## Section readings.

In addition to attending the lectures, Track II students attend biweekly discussion sections. We will often make use of additional readings that come from the primary literature, and these readings will generally be available to you as downloadable PDFs. It is your responsibility to read assignments before class and bring the work assigned for that day to class unless otherwise specified.

## Attendance and participation.

Attendance, preparation, and participation are mandatory and make up a large part of your grade because your ability to complete assignments will depend on your active engagement in class. Please be sure that you can attend this section [Tuesday/Thursday, 1:35–2:25 pm], arrive on time, and that you do not have conflicts. I expect that you will be motivated to attend class because it is necessary to meet the goals for the course, keep up with discussions, and develop skills to complete the assignments.  
As in Track I sections, **if you miss four or more Track II discussion sections, you will fail the course.** Unless you have an emergency, unexcused tardiness and absences will also count against your participation grade. Please let me know in advance if you must miss a section for a specific reason, preferably 24 hours or more ahead of time.  
We will strive to create an atmosphere where all students feel confident discussing their perspectives with the class. If you are already comfortable sharing your thoughts, please try not to dominate the discussion or interrupt other students. If you are not excited about speaking in front of others, we will strive to create a supportive atmosphere for you to practice. I encourage you to discuss the norms and habits that develop in our classroom over the course of the semester, and to please talk to me if you have questions or concerns.

## Lectures and exams.

As Track II students, you are expected to and required to attend BIOEE 1780 lectures. You are also expected to participate in team-based learning, which constitutes a substantial part of your grade for the overall course.  
You will take all of the prelims, but not the final, and your lowest prelim score will be dropped. The purpose of taking these exams is to motivate you to keep up with the lectures and textbook readings; if you miss the fundamental concepts presented there, you will struggle with the in-depth readings and discussions in Track II. I encourage you to attend faculty instructor and TA office hours, as well as TA-led prelim review sessions, to develop your understanding of the material presented in lecture!

## Assignment guidelines.

All assignments are due at the beginning of the assigned section and must be turned in via e-mail [I may still set up a Canvas site] unless otherwise specified. All writing assignments must be typed. Please follow these formatting guidelines:

* 12 point font, Times New Roman, double spaced
* Citations & references (unless specified otherwise) should follow the formatting style of an academic journal, such as *Evolution*. I would encourage you to use citation management software, and will demonstrate how to use it in the class.

## Assignment policies.

**Late assignments**. Late assignments will lose 10% for each 24 hours that they are late [you lose 10% if you turn the assignment between 0-24 hours after it is due, 20% if you turn in the assignment between 24-48 h after it is due, etc.], and will not be accepted after one week from the original due date.  
As in Track I sections, you are allowed to turn in **one late assignment** per semester, with no penalty. In Track II, this applies to short or intermediary writing assignments: lab exercises, writing responses, first drafts, etc. You must **notify me that you will be handing in the assignment late it is due**. You may turn in the assignment up to 24 hours after its original due date and time.  
You are allowed to turn in the final draft of **one longer writing assignment** up to two days late, no questions asked. There are two of these assignments; please plan accordingly.  
You may not ‘mix and match’ these policies: if you do not notify me in advance that your assignment will be late, you will lose points. If you are using your extension, you will still lose 20% if you then turn in the assignment 48 hours after the original due date. Please note that I am not offering extensions for any prep work you have to do for in-class discussion or peer reviews [these should be completed on time for points] because in these cases your peers depend on you being prepared.  
**Originality of all work**. I encourage you to work together in and out of class, but you must still turn in independent assignments unless I explicitly state otherwise on the assignment.  
Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Plagiarism is the use of another person’s ideas, writing, or products while giving the appearance that these are your own. To help avoid plagiarism, either paraphrase or directly quote the words of others [depending on the situation] ***and*** cite your sources properly. Failing to provide appropriate citations can be construed as plagiarism, even when unintentional. If you have questions regarding plagiarism in general or about a specific case, please ask me before you turn in an assignment.  
I will give a zero on any plagiarized assignment and adhere to University procedures for dealing with plagiarism [e.g. report the case to the faculty instructor for the course; associated penalties can range from 0 on the assignment to expulsion]. Please see Cornell University’s [Code of Academic Integrity](http://archive.theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/AcadInteg/code.html#Iguidelines) for details.

# Grading.

Grading for Track II, Writing in the Majors, is different than for Track I. As a student in the Track II sections, you are taking BIOEE1780 for 5 credits. I will frame grading for this course in two alternative ways. This just means that I am going to present the same information to you twice. I encourage you to read the bulleted list first, before moving on to the table with percentages.  
I expect that you will do well in this course if you:

* complete the pre-class assignments (vodcasts, textbook readings) for lecture, as well as attend and participate in lecture
* take notes on lecture material to prepare for section review days, team-based learning, and prelims
* attend section regularly and do not miss more than three sections (a week and a half of classes)
* budget time to read and write regularly
* meet due dates and criteria for all major assignments
* read assigned material before section and complete pre-section assignments
* participate in all discussions, labs and workshops and make a good-faith effort when working with peers
* communicate with me in person and over email about extensions, absences, accomodations, and concerns
* complete and submit all informal, low-stakes writing assignments and workshop exercises
* make meaningful changes to assignments when asked to revise–for e.g. change the organization or thinking
* provide thoughtful peer review and feedback
* edit and revise all final drafts
* copy-edit all final drafts of longer writing assignments
* submit your longer writing assignments
* meet due dates

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30%\* & Preparation & participation &  
— & — & 12% Prepare for readings  
— & — & 10% Prepare for workshops  
— & — & 13% Participate in discussions, labs and workshops  
— & — & 5% TBD  
25%\* & Short assignments &  
— & — & 9% Labs  
— & — & 4% Short writing responses  
— & — & 3% Exam review questions  
— & — & 4% Peer reviews  
— & — & 5% TBD  
45%\* & Long assignments &  
— & — & 20–25% each for 2 longer writing assignments

4% & Pre-class quizzes &

24% & In-class participation &     i-Rats, t-Rats, iClickers, and team exercises

10% & Exams &     3 prelims (each prelim is 5% of your grade)  
& &     Your lowest prelim score is dropped

# Around campus.

[**The Cornell Writing Centers**](https://cornell.mywconline.net/index.php?msgLOG=YES): Sign up for appointments with writing tutors located at Rockefeller Hall, Mann Library, Olin Library, the Tatkon Center at Balch Hall, Uris Library, and Flora Rose House. The writing centers offer multiple types of support; also see [Knight Writing Center](https://knight.as.cornell.edu/wc) for more information.  
[**Knight Institute for Writing: Resources**](https://knight.as.cornell.edu/resources): Writing guides from Cornell University’s Knight Writing Center.  
[**Learning Strategies Center**](http://lsc.cornell.edu/): The LSC offers office hours, tutorials, consultations, workshops, and courses to help students succeed.  
[**Office of Undergraduate Biology**](https://biology.cornell.edu/advising/): A central location for all things biology-related on Cornell University’s campus. OUB offers academic, career, and research advising to current and prospective biological science majors and minors.  
[**Recognizing and Avoiding Plagiarism**](https://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm): A guide from Cornell University’s College of Arts and Sciences on recognizing and avoiding plagiarism that includes definitions and exercises.

# Documentation and References.

Track II sections are historically taught by graduate students in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. To write this syllabus, I drew from materials used by past instructors, especially Nancy Chen (Fall 2012) and Jacob Berv (Fall 2014, Fall 2018), and a conversation with Allison Tracy (Spring 2017). This semester, I will also work with Ethan Bass, who is teaching the other WIM section, on ideas for the course. I’m including this to acknowledge some of the sources I used to design the course and to emphasize that we don’t have to cover the exact same material as any previous WIM section.  
Berv, Jacob. (2014, 2018) Syllabus for *BioEE 1780 Introduction to Evolutionary Biology and Diversity Track II (Writing in the Majors) Section Theme: Macroevolution*. [course description & feedback, materials, student responsibilities]  
Chen, Nancy. (2012) Syllabus for *Evolutionary Biology and Diversity: BIOEE 1780, Writing in the Majors (Track 2)*. [course description & feedback, student responsibilities]  
Danielewicz, J., & Elbow, P. (2009). A unilateral grading contract to improve learning and teaching. College Composition and Communication, 61(2), 244-268. Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/docview/220695714?accountid=10267 [grading]

# Ideas.

drop 1 of the short writing assignments (http://hosting.astro.cornell.edu/academics/courses/astro2201/)  
miss 1 assignment and make it up by reporting back on a seminar - less appealing because penalizes students already late on work Portfolio approach to grading - not as final product Weight grading of draft 25% vs. 75% on final to mimic peer reviewing process and encourage students to view drafts as final products, not sloppy writing to revise later