**Syllabus for Biology 891 Course Fall 2020**

Credits: 2

Meeting time: Friday 12:20-2:00 pm on Zoom (link: <https://unc.zoom.us/j/99065088602> or meeting ID: 990 6508 8602), with Lunch Bunch from 1:00-2:00

Faculty Mentor: Christopher S. Willett, Biology, 2252 GSB, willett4@email.unc.edu

**Course Goals and Key Learning Objectives:**

* Facilitate the acquisition of intellectual depth and highlight interconnections between the fields of ecology, evolution, and organismal biology (EEOB)
* Develop critical thinking skills, in relation to the interpretation and critique of the primary scientific literature
* Gain an increased understanding of the scientific process by listening to seminars from graduate students and other researchers at the weekly biology lunch bunch seminar
* To increase interactions and facilitate collegiality and collaboration between graduate student cohorts
* To develop presentation skills and ability to present research ideas

**Target audience:** 1st and 2nd year Biology EEOB graduate students and other graduate students interested in this subject area.

**Course Prerequisites:** none

**Course Requirements:** This course is aligned with the weekly Lunch Bunch seminar that is held via Zoom on Fridays at 1pm in the fall semester and students are required to attend this seminar as part of course participation. This seminar is given most weeks by a Biology Department graduate student, postdoc, or faculty member (or visiting scientist) on a subject related to research in ecology, evolution, or organismal biology. Students are encouraged to contribute to the discussions during and after these seminars.

A key goal for all EEOB scientists is to expand their knowledge beyond their specific study area, and to be informed about general areas of significance across ecology, evolution, behavior, and organismal biology. The hope is that interactions with different primary literatures (as well as among students) will highlight the connections and similarities between different fields. We will work toward this goal in multiple ways: through attendance of the weekly seminar, by reading and discussing the primary scientific literature, and by having students present several short talks on their own research and receiving peer feedback.

**Paper discussion:** Most weeks will be journal club-style discussions of a paper broadly related to the research field of the Lunch Bunch seminar. Each week, one or two students will select and co-lead discussion of a paper (the format for discussion to be determined by the group). We would encourage not using PowerPoint (or related media) to help facilitate discussion but with the unique format this semester the best solutions may take some trial and error.

*Important considerations during discussions in Class:*

* Be aware of how much you are contributing to in-class discussions. Try not to silence yourself out of concern for what others will think about what you say. If you have an idea, don’t wait for someone else to say it; say it yourself. On the other hand, if you have a tendency to contribute often, give others the opportunity to speak.
* Listen respectfully. Don’t interrupt, engage in private conversations, or turn to technology while others are speaking. Use attentive, courteous body language.
* Be careful about how you use humor or irony in class. Keep in mind that we don’t all find the same things funny
* It is important in reviewing others work to not focus exclusively on the negative—look for the positive too and point out what you find of value and interest

**Paper selection:** For each week's paper, keywords related to the Lunch Bunch seminar will be provided. Papers should be selected in relation to these. Papers should represent important/innovative/highly cited contributions to the field being discussed, and should be a level that will be accessible to all students in the class (even if outside of their areas of expertise)**.** Note that for some weeks papers non-scientific papers or other discussion formats may fit topics better this semester. Students should discuss their potential paper choices/discussion ideas with the instructor before finalizing. Please post the paper on Sakai no later than Tuesday night of the week it will be discussed so everyone has time to read it.

**Weekly preparation:** Students not leading discussion are still expected to read the paper each week prior to class and are also responsible for posting 2-3 relevant written questions or discussion points related to the paper (to be posted in the forum section of Sakai). These can potentially be used by the presenters for the discussion of the paper that day.

**Presentation talks (#1):** Mid-semester, we will use two classes for the students to present talks about a topic related to their research projects. The class will decide on one format and all students will present on this topic. Example topics include: elevator speech (how you would explain your research if someone asks on an elevator), or presentation of preliminary work or future research idea. These talks will allow students to hear about their peers' projects, provide practice in presenting work to a non-specialist group of peers, and allow the students to get peer feedback.

**Schedule:**

**Date: Lunch Bunch Speaker: Keywords -will be included in scheduling sheet**

Aug 14 Meet and Greet or other opener

Aug 21 Luke Havens, Lohmann lab

Aug 28 Pat Gensel

Sept 4 Elizabeth Moore, Kingsolver lab

Sept 11 Alexander Tate, Matute lab

Sept 18 Ken Lohmann

Sept 25 Cindy Harley, Metropolitan St., Host Brian Taylor

Oct 2 Andrius Dagilis, Matute lab.

Oct 9 Felipe Barreto (Oregon St.), Host Aimee Deconinck

Oct 16 Meggan Alston, Willett lab

Oct 23 Brad Dickerson

Oct 30 Derick Poindexter, Weakley lab

Nov 6 Stefania Gutierrez, Fundación Calima, Cali, Colombia, Host Laura Mendez

Nov 13 Jeeyun Lee, Willett lab

**Grading and class policies:** An acceptable grade (pass) in the course can be achieved by attending class and the Lunch Bunch seminar each week, leading at least one topic during the semester, reading the papers each week, participating in discussion, and giving their research presentation. Attendance will be taken each week and students cannot miss more than two classes (unexcused absences). Please notify the professor if you will have an excused absence for a class prior to absence if possible. High pass grades will be awarded only for exceptional circumstances when students go beyond the basic requirements for the course, participate fully in the discussions in class and at Lunch Bunch, and have an outstanding final project.

**Note on possible changes to syllabus:** This syllabus is subject to change including changes in the schedule or specific class requirements. Any changes will be presented clearly by the professor and discussed among the class members if the changes are of significant importance.

**Diversity statement:** The Department of Biology values the perspectives of individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students. We broadly define diversity to include race, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, and physical and learning ability. We strive to make this classroom and this department an inclusive space for all students.

Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve this course or our discourse using the anonymous Google form at any point in the semester (<https://forms.gle/RpWmPiyPos7LSr3p7> ). I appreciate suggestions.