



BISC460: Seminar in Marine and Environmental Biology

Section: 13460D

4 units

Wednesday 3:30-5:20ish pm

Location: [Irani Hall](#) (RRI) 101

Instructor: Cameron Egan, Ph.D.

Office: AHF 141

Office Hours: Wednesdays 12 pm – 1 pm and Thursdays 11 am – 12 pm

- Office hours are dedicated time for you! My door will be open, and drop-ins are encouraged.
- During these hours I sit and excitedly wait for you to come to chat about biology (or anything you want really)!
- I have availability outside of my scheduled office hours. Please contact me via email to set up an appointment.

Contact Info: camegan@usc.edu

Course Description

This course coincides with the Center for Ecological and Evolutionary Dynamics ([CEED](#)) seminar series that brings world-class researchers to USC to present and discuss their latest research in fields related to ecology and evolutionary biology. Acting as a capstone course for your undergraduate degree, you will be presented and critically examining contemporary research and will practice effective communication skills, both in writing and verbally, that are critical for a career in ecology and evolutionary biology (or really any career). Specifically, you will: 1) attend, actively participate (ask questions), and evaluate scientific presentations; 2) develop a research paper on a topic in ecology and/or evolutionary biology, and 3) present your findings to your classmates.

Website: <https://brightspace.usc.edu/d2l/home>

Brightspace will be your home base for this course! Please check frequently for announcements and course materials, announcements, and grades.

Required Texts

This course will focus on reading and critically evaluating the primary literature. Papers will be posted to Brightspace and can also be accessed from USC library.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will:

- Be knowledgeable about diverse research being conducted in ecological and evolutionary fields.
- Communicate effectively and strategically in both written and oral formats by:
 - Identifying and practicing the necessary steps in preparing written and verbal communication.
 - Developing efficacy at each stage of the writing process.
 - Identifying techniques for engaging audiences and delivering key messages using writing, verbal, and visual communication.
 - Developing strategies when preparing written and oral professional communication.
- Have experience with constructive critique of both their own and peers work to improve communication skills, including:
 - Preparation and delivery constructive input to peers.
 - Increased critical thinking and attention to detail of research presented by invited speakers throughout the term, enabling the production of higher-quality communication.
 - Enhancing abilities to understand diverse viewpoints and collaborate effectively.
- Gain experience with peers in an inclusive setting through:
 - Collaboration in the preparation and delivery of professional communication.
 - Overcome common anxieties associated with written and verbal communication.

Evaluation Criteria and Grading

Review Paper:	You will be writing a review article about some topic of ecology/evolution that interests you. Reviews are intended to promote discussion of a topical area rather than offer an exhaustive survey of the literature. The paper is to be written in the format of a review paper in the Journal Ecology. More details about the term paper are available on the course Brightspace page.
Research Presentation:	You will be presenting your research topic to the class at the end of term in a 10-minute presentation. Throughout the term we will be evaluating and discussing effective scientific communication, this will be your opportunity to flex your own scientific communication skills!
Seminar Evaluations:	Each week following a CEEDs Research Seminar we will spend the first part of class evaluating the seminar including the research presented and presentation effectiveness. Students will take turns leading the seminar evaluations. Participation from all the class is essential and required (see next item).
Class Engagement:	This is a highly dynamic course! As such it is important that you come to class prepared (completing assigned readings), attend <u>all</u> research seminars, and be engaged. This includes actively contributing to class discussions, supporting your peers with writing assignments, completing course readings, and being an engaged audience member during final presentation. Students should act in a mature manner in the classroom, showing consideration for their peers and seminar speakers.

Grading: Your final grade in the course will be determined using the breakdown shown in Table 1 below. Grades will be updated continuously throughout the term as assessments are completed.

Table 1. Grading Breakdown

Assessment	Points	% of Grade
Seminar Evaluations	15	15%
Review Paper	40	40%
Research presentation	35	35%
Class engagement	10	10%
TOTAL	100	100%

Tentative Lecture Schedule

Following is a tentative schedule of topics for the term which may subject to modification dependent on time and learning needs.

Date	Location	Class Topic	Discussion Leaders	Readings/Preparation	Deliverables
28-Aug	RRI121	Intro to course		Syllabus	
04-Sep	RRI101	Morgan Tingley (UCLA) – Charting the spatiotemporal landscape of species' responses to climate change		Seminar Speaker paper available on Brightspace	
11-Sep	RRI101	Choosing Research Topics		Pautasso (2013) Ten Simple Rules for Writing a Literature Review	Research Topic Due Sept 25
18-Sep	AHF153	Priscilla San Juan (NHMLA) – Microbial and Parasitic Symbioses		Seminar Speaker paper available on Brightspace	
25-Sep	RRI101	Seminar Evaluation & Structuring a Review Paper	Aiko and Aubrey	Dhillon (2022) How to write a good scientific review article Effective Writing from English Communication for Scientists	Outline and Objectives Due Oct 9
02-Oct	AHF 153	Chuliang Song (UCLA) – Understanding ecological dynamics with incomplete information		Seminar Speaker paper available on Brightspace	
09-Oct	RRI101	Writing Groups – Free week to spend time completing rough drafts of research papers to be used for peer review on Oct 23			Complete rough draft due by Oct 23
16-Oct	RRI101	Ruth Wood (USC) – Topic to be announced		Seminar Speaker paper available on Brightspace	
23-Oct	RRI101	Seminar Evaluations & Peer Review	Shruti, Anna, & Aaron	Sear (2020) What makes a good or bad peer review? Tips for excelling at reviewing	Peer-Review Due Oct 30
30-Oct	RRI101	Noelle Held (USC) – Topic to be announced		Seminar Speaker paper available on Brightspace	
06-Nov	RRI101	Seminar Evaluation & Effective Scientific Presentations	Kelsey and Leslie	How to Give a Fantastic Scientific Talk: 8 Presentation Tips	

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13-Nov	RRI101	Kristi Lewton (USC) – Evolution of primate bipedal forms of locomotion: from leaping lemurs to striding humans		Seminar Speaker paper available on Brightspace	
20-Nov	RRI101	Seminar Evaluation & Presentation Slide Design	Eros and Alexia	Three tips for beautiful PowerPoint presentations	
27-Nov		No class - Thanksgiving Holiday			
04-Dec	AHF 153 (Torrey Webb Room)	Peter Ralph (University of Oregon) – Topic to be announced		Seminar Speaker paper available on Brightspace	Final Papers Due Dec 6
16 Dec	RRI101	Final Presentations (2-4 pm)			Final Presentations

Course Specific Policies

Attendance Policy – Students are expected to attend all in-person Class Sessions (including Seminar Speaker Presentations). If you fail to attend one of the Class Sessions you must provide documented evidence (e.g., from doctor, police, etc.) that circumstances beyond your control prevented you from attending. **Students with more than three unexcused absences will receive an “Unsatisfactory” grade for the course.** Class attendance will be recorded within the first 10 minutes of class. Students that arrive after the first 10 minutes of class will be considered absent.

Communication – I am here to support you in your learning and want you to be in contact with me as much as possible. The best way to reach me is by talking to me before/after class. The second-best way to reach me is during office hours. The third best way to reach me is email. I do my best to respond to emails within 24hr (during the week) and on Monday if your email is sent over the weekend. If it has been more than 24hrs please send me a gentle reminder.

Impairments Affecting Your Performance – Students occasionally encounter difficulties that affect their academic performance, such as illness, accidents, bereavement, depression, anxiety, learning disabilities, and other problems. If you encounter such difficulties, please bring them to the attention of one of the instructors. We can refer you to resources and may be able to offer accommodation. All such discussions will be confidential. Please seek help as soon as you feel your performance is being affected.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by

services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Course Evaluations

Course Evaluations will be conducted towards the end of the semester and will appear in the 'Course Evaluations' tab on the Blackboard. It is an important review of your experience in the class with the intent being for you to provide feedback on my teaching practice. Please take the time to complete these evaluations as I use these to help improve/strengthen my teaching. I welcome all constructive feedback!

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has

completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

[Learning Support & Resources](#) - You are part of a learning community made up of faculty, staff, and fellow students. Follow the link to find resources to help support your academic growth and success!

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.