



## **BISC460: Seminar in Marine and Environmental Biology**

**Section: 13460D**

**4 units**

**Wednesday 3:30-5:20ish pm**

**Location: [Irani Hall \(RRI\) 101](#) & [Hancock Foundation Building \(AHF\) 153 \(aka TWR\)](#)**

### **Teaching Team**

**Matt Dean, Ph.D.**

**Office:** RRI 304 A

**Office Hours:** TBA

**Contact Info:** [matthew.dean@usc.edu](mailto:matthew.dean@usc.edu)

**Cameron Egan, Ph.D. (he/him)**

**Office:** AHF 141

**Office Hours:** Tuesday/Friday 2:00-3:00

**Contact Info:** [camegan@usc.edu](mailto: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).

**Entry Tickets:** This is a highly dynamic and discussion heavy course! As such it is important that you come to class prepared (completing assigned readings), attend all 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.

To help encourage you to come to class prepared, you will receive points for submitting an entry ticket for each paper assigned throughout the semester. More information can be found on Brightspace.

**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.

**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
Jan 15	RRI101	Intro to course		Syllabus	
Jan 22	AHF153	Amanda Zellmer (Occidental)		Seminar Speaker paper available on Brightspace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zellmer Entry Ticket</li> </ul>
Jan 29	RRI101	Zellmer Discussion & <b>Choosing Research Topics</b>	TBA	Pautasso (2013) Ten Simple Rules for Writing a Literature Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research Topic Due <b>Jan 31</b></li> </ul>
Feb 5	AHF153	Simon Groen (UCI)		Seminar Speaker paper available on Brightspace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Groen Entry Ticket</li> </ul>
Feb 12	RRI101	Groen Discussion & <b>Structuring a Review Paper</b>	TBA	Dhillon (2022) How to write a good scientific review article  Effective Writing from English Communication for Scientists	
Feb 19	AHF 153	Ellie Armstrong (UCI)		Seminar Speaker paper available on Brightspace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline and Objectives Due <b>Feb 21</b></li> <li>Armstrong Entry Ticket</li> </ul>
Feb 26	RRI101	Armstrong Discussion & <b>How to structure a scientific talk</b>	TBA	How to Give a Fantastic Scientific Talk: 8 Presentation Tips	
March 5	RRI101	Cameron Egan (USC)		Seminar Speaker paper available on Brightspace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Egan Entry Ticket</li> </ul>
Mar 12	RRI101	Egan Discussion & <b>Designing Effective Slides</b>	TBA	<a href="#">Three tips for beautiful PowerPoint presentations</a>	
Mar 19		<b>No class – Spring Break</b>			
Mar 26	RRI101	Stephanie Aguillon (UCLA)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rough Draft Due <b>March 26</b></li> <li>Aguillon Entry Ticket</li> </ul>
Apr 2	RRI101	Aguillon Discussion & <b>Peer Review</b>	TBA	Sear (2020) What makes a good or bad peer review? Tips for excelling at reviewing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer Review Due <b>April 9</b></li> </ul>
Apr 9	RRI101	Moises Exposito Alonso (Berkeley)		Seminar Speaker paper available on Brightspace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exposito Alonso Entry Ticket</li> </ul>
Apr 16	RRI101	<b>Student research presentations</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Presentations</li> </ul>
Apr 23	RRI101	Sydney Glassman (UCR)		Seminar Speaker paper available on Brightspace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Glassman Entry Ticket</li> </ul>
Apr 30	MCB Lobby	Margaret McFall-Ngai (Carnegie)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final Papers Due <b>May 2</b></li> <li>McFall-Ngai Entry Ticket</li> </ul>
May 12	RRI101	<b>Student Presentations</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Presentations</li> </ul>

**Table 1.** Grading Breakdown

Assessment	Points	% of Grade
Seminar Evaluations	15	15%
Review Paper	40	40%
Research presentation	35	35%
Entry Tickets	10	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Course Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Letter grade	Corresponding numerical point range
A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

### 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 that circumstances beyond your control prevented you from attending. ***Students with more than three unexcused absences will receive an “Unsatisfactory” grade for the course.***

**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](http://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto: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](mailto: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.