GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

Exams and grading:

Lecture: Midterm I 60 points
        Midterm II 60 points
        Midterm III (Final) 60 points
Lab: Practical I 60 points
     Practical II 60 points
     Practical III 60 points
Field notes, collection (or alternative) 10 points
Journal article review 10 points
Participation 5 points

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385 points total

Grading is done on a curve for each class, with breaks between grades determined by natural breaks in point distributions and overall percentages (varies by year, but a typical assignment from recent years is 90% - A, 85% - A-, 80% - B+, etc.).

Other Expectations:

1. Field trips: There will be one weekend (Friday – Sunday) field trip and one weekday trip (Wednesday) to the Field Museum of Natural History. Field trips are optional, but you are strongly (STRONGLY!) advised to attend.
   a) Richardson Wildlife Sanctuary (Lee Co.): Arrive early Friday afternoon in time to set traps and explore (leave UI in the morning; 2 1/2 hr drive). Leave RWS on Sunday around noon after traps have been collected. You will be responsible for taking field notes (keeping a journal), and preparing a museum specimen with appropriate catalogue entry. University vans. Fri. - Sun. Sept. 16 - 18.
   c) Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago: Leave UI early morning (7:30), arrive in Chicago about 11 am. Guided tour of mammal research collection and preparation areas, walk through mammal displays. Leave Field Museum late afternoon (about 4:00), arrive back in CU about 7 pm. University vans. Wednesday, November 16.

2. Field notes: Each student will prepare a field notebook and specimen catalogue, to be turned in along with the specimens during the week after the RWS field trip. You will be graded on proper format and style as well as content.

3. Museum specimen preparation: Knowing how to prepare a museum specimen is an important skill for a field biologist. You are expected to prepare one specimen
suitable to be added to a museum or other reference collection (to be done on the field trip). This specimen must be turned in with your field notes and catalogue from the field trip. You will be graded primarily on completeness of the data, and correct format on the specimen tag. Good technique and extra specimens earn extra points. If you object to making specimens, are worried about the risk of Hantavirus, or can’t make the RWS field trip, you may do an alternative project instead of the specimen preparation. If you come on the field trip and would rather do a different type of alternative project, possibilities include: 1) Make plaster casts of mammal tracks, and/or prepare a “field guide” to mammal tracks in Illinois. 2) Prepare supplemental teaching material from a road-killed animal, such as a cleaned skull, or preserved reproductive tracts from opossums. 3) Maybe we can think up something else, I welcome your ideas.

I respect those of you who have a sincere objection to collecting specimens, but the proper collection of data and preparation of voucher specimens is an important skill that every mammalogist should know. Please do not choose an alternative just because you think it would be easier. You are still responsible for field notes if you come on the trip.

4. Journal article review: Choose a scientific journal that specializes in mammals (the Journal of Mammalogy would be the top choice), and skim the articles published in the last few years (e.g., 2007-11). Choose an article that interests you, read it, and prepare a 1-2 page (no longer!) summary. At the top of the page, include a citation for the article (authors, year, title, journal name, volume number and page numbers, like it would appear in a Literature Cited section). Your summary should include: 1) What was the main question asked by the author(s)? 2) What kind of approach did they use to answer that question (briefly describe the study)? 3) What conclusion was reached? 4) Why do you think that this study was valuable (or not), and why did it interest you?

5. Participation: Coming to class regularly (both lectures and labs) is critical for this course. Most of the exam material will come from lectures, and there cannot be make-ups for missed labs. Lecture notes will not be posted online; if you miss a lecture, you are responsible for obtaining notes from a classmate. Labs take a long time to set up, and the introductions also will not be repeated (many include videos or ppt presentations). Participating on the field trips is an important way to get some hands on experience, and a good way to get to know your classmates. Students who regularly miss lectures or labs will not get the credit for participation. If you need to miss class, or can’t make the field trips, please email the professor or TA with your reason to avoid being penalized (assuming the reasons are valid ones!).

**Supplies You Will Need For RWS Field Trip:**

1. Field notebook: waterproof or high-cotton paper preferred. Pen that writes in waterproof BLACK ink.
2. Specimen prep kit: Good scissors, forceps, sewing needle and white cotton thread, ruler with millimeter scale, pliers-wire cutter combination, soft bristle tooth brush. A hemostat and scalpel are helpful.

We will provide cotton, wire, specimen tags, etc., for preparation of museum specimens. We will provide traps and bait on field trips. I have some extra specimen prep tools, but not enough for the whole class.

Required textbooks:


Reading in Vaughan et al. will supplement lectures, but most of the exam material will come from my lectures. (I guarantee you an exam question from every lecture!) Some additional papers from journals will be put on reserve, and these will be discussed in class. Reserve reading is fair game for exam questions.

We will provide you with lab instructions and other material. (Free! What a bargain!)

Also highly recommended:


