PHYSIOLOGICAL AND MOLECULAR PLANT BIOLOGY SEMINAR
IB 513/CPSC 598 • CRN 35424 • Fall 2006

TIME AND PLACE
Wednesdays 12:00 – 12:50 pm, W-109 Turner Hall

COORDINATOR
Tom Jacobs, Department of Plant Biology
Office: 333 ERML
333-1518
t-jacobs@life.uiuc.edu

OBJECTIVES
• Gain knowledge in specific areas of plant physiological and molecular biology.
• Gain experience in critical listening to and distillation of scientific presentations
• Gain experience in judging what constitutes an effective scientific presentation.
• Gain experience in chairing a seminar.
• Connect authors of papers you’ve read with personalities
• Meet potential post-doctoral advisers, learn about their laboratories, and learn about opportunities at other institutions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GrADING PROCEDURES (revised)
• Both IB513 and CPSC598 will be letter-graded (A-F) on a straight 100 point scale.
• You are required to attend all Wednesday noon seminars during the semester unless an acceptable conflict arises (consult with the coordinator)
• You must complete and submit a summary form for 8 of the seminars presented (see Seminar summaries below) (80 pts, 10 pts each);
• You must co-chair one seminar (see Chairing a seminar below)
• You must submit a final paper expanding upon one of the semester’s seminar topics (see Final paper below) (20 pts).

LISTENING GUIDELINES
When attending a seminar or reading a scientific paper, you should attempt to draw from it:
• A clear and simple statement of the question(s) the speaker is addressing and the hypothesis(es) s/he is testing in his/her work.
• The key methods used and an evaluation of their appropriateness to answering the question(s) or testing the hypothesis(es).
• A judgment as to the validity of the conclusions the author or presenter draws from the data presented.
SEMINAR SUMMARIES

These are short online questionnaires on which you will answer questions regarding each seminar. They are due at midnight on the Friday immediately following the seminar. Keep (digital) copies of your reports as they will be needed to prepare your final paper (below).

CHAIRING A SEMINAR

Each participant will chair or co-chair one seminar. You will introduce the speaker, keep time, lead questions, and help with hosting our visitors.

Introduce the speaker. Before the seminar, interview the speaker about her/his background and prepare a brief (~1 min) introduction. Describe the speaker’s education, (PhD year, lab and institution only), previous positions, current position, and any special distinctions (chair of a national committee, journal editor, member of academy, big awards). For UIUC students, just their home lab and adviser is sufficient. Then introduce the title and turn it over to the speaker.

Keep time. Tell the speaker beforehand that you will stand up 5 min before time is up; if they run past 12:40, gently tell them so. The seminar should be complete by then. Questions should close at 12:50. Finally, announce next week’s seminar and then most importantly ask the audience to join you in thanking the day’s speaker again.

Lead questions. Start by saying “I’m sure Dr. **** will take some questions”. You will have to have studied enough of the speaker’s work beforehand to have at least a couple of questions ready in case no one else does. If there are none, say “While others are gathering their thoughts or courage, I would like to ask ...”. But audience questions take precedence over yours. Again please note we must be finished by 12:50.

Hosting. As chair, you will also help with the grad student pizza lunch following the seminar. You will also be required to help the visitor’s faculty host as needed, in guiding our visitor around campus following the seminar or other chores requested by the faculty host.

FINAL PAPER

Your final paper (4-6 pp, double spaced) is divided into three parts and is due in Tom Jacobs’s mailbox in 191 ERML at 5 pm on Friday December 8.

1) (1-2 pp) Identify the two most effective presentations of the semester as well as the two least effective. Give your criteria for these choices and explain why you chose these speakers. Be specific and include such elements as slide design and number, talk organization and logic, clarity of objectives and conclusions, ability to keep to time and communicate to a diverse audience.

2) (~2 pp) Summarize your choice as the “Best Seminar of Fall, 2006” as follows:
   a) What is the overall biological question of primary interest to the speaker?
   b) What were the specific questions addressed and results reported in the talk?
   c) Describe and critically assess her/his conclusions with respect to those results.
   d) Which experimental approach played a key role in the results presented?

3) (1-2 pp) Describe other experimental approaches that could have been implemented, or could now be applied, to extend the work beyond that which was presented. If at all possible, make new hypotheses and propose new experiments to test them.