

Course Syllabus

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BIOL 383: Graduate School and Work Seminar Fall 2021

Wednesdays 4:00-4:50 pm, ISC 136

Instructor:

Dr. Betsy Hutchison

ISC 359, hutchison@geneseo.edu (<mailto:hutchison@geneseo.edu>)

Office Hours:

Wednesdays 3:30-4:00 pm, or by appointment

Course Description:

Many cases biology majors must continue their education by earning a M.S. or PhD. or engaging in other formal training in order to expand their career options. The decision about why and how to pursue further training or education is a complex one. The purpose of this seminar is to help seniors through the process of (1) examining opportunities and issues around choosing biology as a profession, (2) discerning the best path of training and education for their career goals, and (3) applying to graduate school or other post-baccalaureate training opportunities. Applications for most graduate programs are due in January or February, so the seminar will be run in the Fall Semester. By the end of this seminar each student should have engaged in serious self-reflection and research about their career aspirations and examined the paths that successful biologists have taken to their current positions. They will select several programs to apply to, contact the programs and potential advisors, and complete their applications. Students will read about and discuss strategies for success in graduate school. Finally, the class will also explore alternative avenues for postgraduate training – internships, fellowships, and work positions. May not count toward elective credit hours for the biology major. Prerequisite: Senior standing in Biology. 1(1-0)

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course:


- Students will identify career and personal goals (general and specific) that will influence decisions about planning their career after graduation from Geneseo and incorporate these into a personal mission statement.
- Students will examine and compare opportunities for advanced training in biology through internships, training programs, and graduate school opportunities
- Students will identify and communicate directly with potential grad school mentors, or experts in their chosen field, to identify opportunities and discuss strategies for the future.
- Students will read and evaluate through class discussions and journal entries how themes from course readings apply to their own decision-making process and career planning
- Students will write a thorough and thoughtful personal statement that addresses their current experience and skills, and clearly articulates how a particular graduate program or other (internship/job) opportunity will advance their training and move them toward their ultimate career goals.

Course Schedule (the course schedule is subject to change at the instructor's discretion):

Any assigned readings for a class meeting will be posted on Canvas. Please check Canvas and read over any posted readings before coming to class.

Date	Topic
Sept 01	Introduction to the course

What is graduate school? Tools for applications: letters of recommendation

Sept 08	Is graduate school a good fit for you, and when should you apply? Assignment due: Intro to personal statement
Sept 15	How to find a graduate program
Sept 22	How to contact potential advisors (letters of inquiry) Assignment due: GRE and LORs
09/29	How to write a personal statement Assignment due: Grad program research
Oct 6	How to write an “elevator pitch”
 Oct 13	How to contact potential advisors (editing letters of inquiry). Bring your draft to class Assignment due: Inquiry letter draft
Oct 20	Elevator pitch round-robin Assignment due: Elevator pitch Assignment due: Draft of personal statement (or cover letter) due
Oct 27	No class – finish inquiry letters (if applicable, send them to potential advisors). Work on personal statement
Nov 3	Guest speaker – Q&A with current graduate student Assignment due: Sending inquiry letters
Nov 10	How to choose a mentor in graduate school Assignment due: Conference attendance
Nov 17	Individual meetings with Dr. Hutchison
Nov 24	Thanksgiving break - no class
Dec 01	Personal statement workshop and feedback - bring your statement with you to class
Dec 08	Strategies for successful interviews How are interviews set up? How to prepare? Potential interview questions?

	Assignment due: Final personal statement
Dec 20 (Mon)	Final exam period (Monday 12/20). Instead of a formal meeting, I will hold office hours from 7:00-8:30 pm (the first 1.5 hrs of our final exam period). If you'd prefer to meet via zoom, I am happy to do that as well if you have questions but cannot make it to my office at that time. Assignments due: Seminar attendance, Geneseo faculty chat

Grading

Writing Assignments 65%

Class Participation 35%

This class is graded S/U; in order to earn an "S" grade, you must earn a 70% or higher. Assignments turned in late will have a grade deduction of 10% per day that the assignment is late (until the grade reaches zero).

Writing Assignments

Most weeks students will have a writing assignment of some kind due. Some writing assignments will be a reflection on class discussions and readings, and in other cases the writing assignments will be directly related to putting together an application for graduate school or an internship (e.g. a personal statement or a letter to a prospective supervisor).



During each of our class meetings there will be class discussions and all students are expected to actively contribute to the discussions; simply attending class is not sufficient to earn 100% of your class participation points. More than 2 unexcused absences will result in a U grade for the course. Please take note of the following participation assignments, as they occur outside of our scheduled class meeting:

Seminar Attendance

Also included in class participation is the requirement to attend a seminar. The Biology department will host seminar events (either on campus or virtual), and you must attend one of these and write up a summary of the seminar. I would also encourage you to chat with the seminar speaker, if possible, about your career plans/goals.

Faculty chat

You will need to set up a time to chat with a Geneseo faculty member (other than myself), in order ask them questions about graduate school and/or careers in Biology. It does not need to be a Biology department faculty member, but ideally should be someone within the sciences. You can schedule time with them in person if they are meeting with students on campus, or you can set up a meeting with them virtually via zoom. I encourage you to speak with a faculty member who you don't already know well (research advisor, etc).