Biology 36 - Course Syllabus

Animal Behavior

This syllabus [Full Version] contains all pertinent information about the class. It is written to make your life easier and to give you an idea about the format of the course. Keep it accessible in your binder and refer to it if you have questions about the class. Make sure to read it before the next class meeting.

Peter Svensson
Office Hours: Mondays 9:30am-12:30pm in room SM 23B [next to the zoology lab at the end of the long indoor hallway [perpendicular to the main hallway] in the Science/Math building] (These hours may change.) Use this time for asking questions, to obtain guidance and to get help with the class. The students who take advantage of office hours to ask questions about the material they are learning usually do better in the class. I am one of the many resources available to help you succeed in your studies in biology at WVC. Use these hours!

Messages: The best way to contact me is via e-mail. My voice mail is (408) 741-2558. I have a mailbox in SM1 in case you need to drop something off.

E-mail: Peter_Svensson@westvalley.edu

Web Sites: There is a site tailored towards the needs of my lecture section: http://instruct.westvalley.edu/svensson [follow the link to Biology 36 / Animal Behavior].

Lecture: The lectures take place on Fridays between 9:20am-12:30pm in SM30. Please arrive and leave on time.

Biology 36 is three unit class acceptable for credit at the California State University as well as at the University of California.

Animal Behavior: This non-majors course will give you an opportunity to study the field of animal behavior. All of us often ask questions related to the behavior of animals around us. Pets are often a starting point, but birds and insects in particular tend to catch our eyes. Why do they behave the way they do? How did the behavior pattern evolve? How is the behavior pattern triggered? Is there any purpose to the behavior? Do we as humans have behavior patterns? Are there other social animals?

We are going start out by exploring the “wiring” of organisms, i.e the effect of genes as well as the environment on the development of behavior. Next we will study how the nervous system controls behavior (neurons and hormones are crucial). After all, the way we sense and process our surrounding world is crucial for the behavior patterns that evolve in animals. However, the bulk of the time will be spent on the major themes of behavior: avoiding predation, feeding, communicating, nesting, finding mates and reproducing, parenting as well as taking a close look at social behavior. We will end the semester by examining the behavior pattern of our own species. We will use numerous examples of behavior patterns found in a large diversity of different animal species. The bulk of our examples in class will be drawn from insects, fishes, reptiles, birds and
mammals. As you complete the course it is my hope that you will have a good understanding of why animals behave the way they do and perhaps a better understanding of our own species. You are expected to attend all lectures and to read all the assigned material in this course. Poor attendance and effort generally results in a D or an F as a final grade.

**Required Materials:**
These can be purchased directly in our bookstore or from the internet via the links I provide on the Biology 36 web site. Make sure to visit the links. Books are expensive and it is worth the time to consider your options as a student.

- **Textbook:** Alcock "Animal Behavior" 8th ed. (2005) Sinauer. This is your main resource in the class and will accompany you many late nights. It is helpful to bring the text to your required laboratory section.
- **A calculator, a notebook, paper, 4 scantrons (50 q on each side) and #2 pencils.** It is your responsibility to bring a scantron and a #2 pencil to each exam.
- I recommend a binder for the manual, as well as color pencils for labs and notes.

**Computers:** This class takes advantage of the outstanding resources provided by the internet. You will access resources on the web. You can access campus computers in the library or in our technology center (or your home of course). A low fee of about $5-10/semester [subject to change] gives you access to all the resources at our technology center (computers, printers, scanners etc). Make sure to bring your student ID card as you sign up in the center. It is highly recommended that you take advantage of these resources to help you succeed at WVC.

**The World Wide Web:** You can access my instructional web page at [http://instruct.westvalley.edu/svensson](http://instruct.westvalley.edu/svensson)

On the page you can access a link devoted towards our Biology 36 class [Animal Behavior] (please bookmark the page in your browser). The site will be updated continuously throughout the semester. These pages will contain information about the class, assignments, links to resources and other pertinent material. Study questions will be available on the site. View, copy or print them at home, at the library or at the Technology Center.

**The Class Room:** Please follow these rules to enrich your lecture experience:

- Be an **active participant** in the class. Biology will come to you much more easily if you prepare for class. Ask questions! Be curious!
- **Arrive and leave on time.** It is disruptive for all the students in the class to have other students arriving late or leaving early. Please follow the schedule!
- **Our lecture halls are cell phone free environments. Turn off the ringers on your cell phones.** Do **not** take or make calls in the lecture hall.
- **Do not talk in class** unless you are participating in an instructor initiated discussion or are asking direct questions about the material.
Important Exam Dates: It is your responsibility to keep up with the class, turn in assignments as well as to take the exams on the specific dates. Look at your Biology 36 schedule for other important dates. Exam dates are not negotiable. Record the following dates in your planner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam 1 (100 pts)</th>
<th>Friday March 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 2 (100 pts)</td>
<td>Friday April 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam 3 (100 pts)</td>
<td>Friday May 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam (150 pts)</td>
<td>Friday May 29 9:40-11:40am in SM30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Last day to drop without a ‘W’ is 2/20. Last day to drop with a ‘W’ is 5/1. It is your responsibility to follow the deadlines posted by West Valley College. If you do not notify admissions/records you will end up with an ‘F’ as a final grade.

Exams: Written exams will consist of multiple choice questions, figures as well as essay questions. The first three exams (100 pts each) are not cumulative. The final exam is worth 150 pts. If you for some important reason miss an exam you will need to notify me within 24 hours by phone (408 741-2558) or via e-mail. If you fail to do so you will not be able to make up the exam. There will be no make-up exams unless you have a valid documented reason (e.g. medical emergencies etc. [e.g. vacations or dental appointments do not qualify]). Do not make appointments or plans that conflict with your scheduled class hours. During your exams you are only allowed to use your pencil and scantron unless instructed otherwise. You cannot use additional sheets of paper, dictionaries, calculators, walkmans etc. unless you have received special permission. Hats/caps need to be removed during the exams.

Point Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>100 points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal Study Project</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams (3x100)</td>
<td>300 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>150 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total points possible in lecture</td>
<td>650 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grades: Your final grade in the course is based on the number of points you accumulate during the semester. Grading Scale: A 90-100%; B 80-89%; C 65-79%; D 55-64%; F < 55%

Keeping track of your grades: Approximately once per month (after each exam) I will post a score sheet on the web as well as on the bulletin board outside my office so you can have an idea about how you are doing in the class. I highly recommend that you keep track of your own grade during the semester by recording the scores you receive on the exams as well as the point value of each exam. With those figures you can easily calculate your percentage. The scale above will give you your current grade.

Cheating: is not tolerated and is unfair to the other students in the class. Cheating includes plagiarism (copying material from a source, e.g. a book or the web), looking at another student’s exam/scantron, using notes or talking/whispering during an exam.
Plagiarism is a serious and common problem. Read about it at: http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html. Do not copy any sentences or paragraphs from any source into the pages of your written assignments. The copy/paste function of your word processor is a fantastic tool. However, write your own papers/assignments. The student will be reported to the chairman of the division, and the incident will be recorded in the student’s permanent record. A student found cheating will immediately be dropped from the course and receive an ‘F’ as a final grade. Read this section one more time. It is essential that you understand the consequences of this class policy. I will fail a student found cheating in my class or on any of the course assignments.

The Lectures: The lecture introduces and covers an array of topics within the file of animal behavior. Take good lecture notes and read the accompanying chapters from the text to master this aspect of the course. It is important that you are an active note taker. The process of note taking keeps you alert and focused on the main components of the lecture. A student that just sits back and “enjoys”/ "absorbs" the lecture is likely to not remember much of the material when the exam is coming up a few weeks later. Even if you do not study your notes at a later date the activity of taking them helps you to learn the material. Personally I find notes to be a useful tool to actively learn material as I am making them and an excellent review in preparation for the exams.

Study Techniques: I will work hard to present the material in the class and serve as a resource to you. Unfortunately, I am not taking your exams. You are expected to keep up with the assigned readings. It is a good idea to regard a class and its associated study time in the same way as you would a job [i.e. one shows up on time, leaves on time and do the work one is expected to do in and outside of class]. You will do poorly in the course if you fall behind. I strongly encourage looking over the assigned chapter/s before lecture, and reading it/them as soon as possible after lecture. It is important to take good lecture notes (i.e. to not only copy the board/screen but to actually record keywords, concepts and facts from the lecture). Try to make an outline of the concepts and terminology covered in lecture as you take notes. Make an effort to go over your notes within a day or two. The best setting for such a review is with one or two other students from the class. The students should preferably be at the same level as yourself (i.e. equally motivated and interested). Forming a study group is often a key to success in this course. Let me know if you are interested in forming such a group as soon as possible. Contact me in case you have questions about the material. According to college guidelines, in order to earn a ‘C’ in the class, one should study two hours for every hour one spends in class [3 hours of lectures per week is equivalent to 6 hours of active and focused studying per week]. Gear your time based on the grade you hope to receive. I recommend a time allocation of 10 hours per week for an ‘A’. Biology is a lot of fun but it is also time consuming. The following web site contains several useful links in regards to notetaking skills: http://www.ex.ac.uk/dll/studyskills/note_taking_skills.htm

Special Accommodations: Please come and talk to me in case you need special accommodations in my class. West Valley College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should notify the Disability and Educational Support Program (DESP) at 741-2010 of any special needs.

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. You should also
contact DESP (408.741.2010 or 408.741.2658 TTY) to coordinate reasonable accommodations for your verified disability.

**Counseling:** The college provides free initial counseling sessions for students in need of such services. Feel free to contact Counseling Services in case you are having problems at school or at home (x2009).

**Recycling:** There are special containers devoted towards recycling glass, plastic and aluminum cans outside each classroom. As a class you go through an enormous volume of recyclable materials during the semester. There are also containers for recycling paper in the main hallway of the Science Math building. **Please use them!**

**Emergencies:** Call 911 (9-911 on a campus phone) for life threatening emergencies. Other important phone numbers are: Student health services (x2222); Safety escort services (x2092). In case of an emergency in which we need to evacuate the room you should follow the following directions:

- Leave the room through the backdoors
- Head out towards the parking lot (steer to your right towards Fruitvale Avenue).
- Meet at the end of the parking lot and wait for further instructions.