



**Course Syllabus
Seminar in General Biology / BIO 8191
Spring 2018**

Instructor: Donna M. Gordon, Ph.D.
Class Location: myCourse BlackBoard Learn portal, Distance Learning Course
Class Meeting Times: N/A
Required Textbook: N/A
Contact information: Email within myCourses is the preferred method of contact
Alternative email: gordon@biology.msstate.edu
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Course Description:

Conduit for interactions with faculty members to assist students in preparing for the comprehensive exam in the M.S. in General Biology degree program.

Course Prerequisites:

Completion of 33 hours of BIO graduate course work within the M.S. in General Biology (MSGB) degree program. Students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher to enroll.

As per the Office of the Graduate School rules, to take a final Comprehensive Exam, a student must:

- have a cumulative GPA of ≥ 3.0 on all coursework after admission to the degree program,
- be within the last 6 hours of coursework,
- be in good academic standing (i.e. not on academic probation),
- not have earned a grade less than C on a course within their program of study, and
- be enrolled in coursework at Mississippi State University during the semester the Comprehensive Exam is administered.

Required Materials:

Study materials used for the prior completion of courses within the degree program. Such items may include textbooks, notes, recordings, and tests/quizzes.

Goals:

The goal of this course is to provide an opportunity for students to communicate with MSGB faculty for the purpose of preparing academically to retake their written comprehensive exam.

Expectations:

Exam Proctoring

You will need to take the exam at an approved proctoring site. Approved sites include testing centers found at University and Community Colleges. Sites must be approved by Dr. Gordon **in advance** of the exam date. Since your initial site might not be approved, it is suggested that you try to identify a site as soon as possible.

The Proctor request form is posted under the "Information on retaking Comprehensive Exam" tab of the Blackboard Learn site for BIO 8191. Please note that you are required to complete a proctor

request form in each semester you register for BIO 8191. Proctor Request forms should be emailed to Dr. Gordon (gordon@biology.msstate.edu).

Studying

Please use the time this semester to study the material from all 10 courses in the MSGB program. If you are unsure about material presented in any of the courses, you are encouraged to contact the instructor using the email link within Blackboard Learn. Questions can also be posed within the Discussion section of this site if you believe that the questions/answers would be of general interest to your fellow students.

As outlined in the Graduate Student Catalog, a student that fails their comprehensive exam twice will be removed as a master's degree candidate (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/>).

Exam Window

According to the Spring 2018 Graduate Academic calendar, graduate students must take their comprehensive exam by March 9, 2018 to meet the May 2018 graduation deadline (<https://www.grad.msstate.edu/calendar/>). Given these requirements, students enrolled in BIO8191 may take their comprehensive exam during the following window:

Thursday, March 1, 2018 to Monday, March 5, 2018

Student Responsibilities with Proposed Deadlines:

1. Identify a proctoring site in your area. Complete and submit the Proctor Request form. Do this as soon as possible!

Deadline to submit a completed form: Friday, February 9, 2018

2. Once your proctoring site has been approved, contact Dr. Gordon with the date you would like to take the exam. This process can be started immediately, with the understanding that the finalized date may depend on identification of an approved proctoring site.

Deadline to finalize an exam date: Friday, February 16, 2018

3. Prior to taking the comprehensive exam: the exam site, the individual proctoring the exam, and the exam date must be approved in advance.

4. Study, study, study.

Class Attendance Policy:

Students enrolled in this course are expected to use their time to study for their comprehensive exam. Other than the deadlines posted above with regards to identifying a proctoring site and selecting a date for the exam, there are no additional requirements outside of taking the exam. Therefore, completion of the comprehensive exam will satisfy the attendance requirement for this course.

Exam Format:

Students will be allotted 4 hours to complete exams for each of the following courses:

BIO 6013 (Genetics & Molecular Biology)
BIO 6023 (Principles of Evolutionary Biology)
BIO 6033 (Fundamentals of Biotechnology)
BIO 6043 (Dev. & Reproductive Biology)
BIO 8023 (Modern Microbiology)

BIO 8033 (Advanced Cell Biology)
BIO 8043 (Ecology & the Environment)
BIO 8053 (Comp. Study of Animals)
BIO 8063 (Comp. Study of Plants)
BIO 8093 (Exp. Biology & Biostatistics)

The exam will be available as a single packet containing 11 individually stapled sections, one section for each course plus one set of 10 blank sheets. The blank sheets can be used as scratch paper and/or for completing written responses to exam questions. All exam materials must be returned to the proctor at the end of exam period, even unused blank sheets. Please cross through any sheets that contain text that should not be graded.

Exam question formats vary from instructor-to-instructor, course-to-course, and even semester-to-semester. Students should therefore expect to be able to answer questions posed in Multiple Choice, Short Answer, and/or Essay format.

Permissible and Non-permissible Items:

The following items will be allowed in the room with the student during the exam:

Any writing associated instrument (pens, pencils, highlighters, erasers, etc.)

Nonprogrammable scientific calculator

The following items must not be accessible to the student during the exam:

Electronic devices such as a computer, tablet, or cell phone

If necessary, other items may be allowed on your desk during the exam period (e.g. tissues, water bottle, cough drops, etc.). You will be required to confirm with the onsite exam proctor the acceptability of these items prior to the start of the exam.

Pass/Not Pass:

The Comprehensive Exam is scored on a pass/fail basis with each exam weighted equally when determining the student's final performance. With an exam for each of the 10 courses, each exam is 10% of the student's final exam score. There is no set 'cut-off' score for determining what constitutes a passing grade each semester. However, as a General Biology degree program, it is expected that students earn a passing score for each of the 10 exams. Because there is no 'set' passing grade, the cut-off may vary from semester-to-semester based on the cohort's collective performance. Graduate faculty familiar with the MSGB degree program review student scores and discuss where the cut-off should be for each administration of the Comprehensive Exam. This means that the score needed to pass the exam taken during this semester could be higher than the score needed in the previous semester.

Course Grading:

Completion of all course requirements by the above stated deadlines will result in a satisfactory grade for the course. Students do not need to pass their Comprehensive exam to earn a satisfactory grade. Students unable to meet the posted deadlines are encouraged to contact the instructor as soon as possible. In some unique circumstances, an extension of the deadline may be possible. Earning an unsatisfactory grade could result in a student being placed on probationary status which will negatively impact their ability to take their Comprehensive exam. Students are encouraged to review the Graduate catalog in effect at the time of their admission for more details.

If a situation arises that will prevent completion of an exam as scheduled, students are encouraged to contact the instructor as soon as possible so that possible resolutions can be discussed. Sufficient notification along with a sound justification for delaying an exam may be necessary to avoid an unsatisfactory grade in the course.

Registering for Graduation:

Students that have meet all of the degree requirements, which includes passing their Comprehensive Exam during the Spring semester will be eligible to graduate in May. To graduate, students must apply to graduate by the deadlines posted in the MSU Academic Calendar (<http://www.registrar.msstate.edu/Calendars/academiccal.html>). Applications are to be submitted

through myState and is available beginning January 16, 2018. Degree applications and application fees do not roll over. Therefore, if you fail to graduate in the term for which you applied, you must reapply for graduation and repay fees associated with graduation for the later term. All students must pay their account balances in full prior to the graduation ceremony.

Commencement regalia can be rented through the Barnes and Noble Bookstore. Commencement information is typically available three weeks before graduation and can be found at the following link: www.registrar.msstate.edu. Diplomas will be mailed to the address provided in your graduation application 4-6 weeks after the degree has been cleared by the Registrar's office. To order copies of your official transcript, follow the instructions provided at the following site: <http://www.registrar.msstate.edu/Students/transcripts.html>

Student Support Services:

Students who need academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Office of Student Support Services (01 Montgomery Hall) at 662-325-3335, or visit their website for more information: www.sss.msstate.edu.

Maroon Alert:

Maroon Alert is the emergency notification system of Mississippi State University. It includes several methods of notifying the university community of hazards and concerns, including text messages, emails, alerts on web pages, social media, and sirens. To be fully informed, please verify your Maroon Alert subscription information at my.msstate.edu. To report an on-campus emergency, dial 911 or (662) 325-2121. You can find more information about the Maroon Alert system at <http://www.emergency.msstate.edu/maroon-alert/>

Title IX:

MSU is committed to complying with Title IX, a federal law that prohibits discrimination, including violence and harassment, based on sex. This means that MSU's educational programs and activities must be free from sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and other forms of sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know has experienced sex discrimination, sexual violence and/or harassment by any member of the University community, you are encouraged to report the conduct to MSU's Director of Title IX/EEO Programs at 662-325-8124 or by e-mail to titleix@msstate.edu. Additional resources are available at <http://students.msstate.edu/sexualmisconduct/>

Student Honor Code:

Mississippi State has an approved Honor Code that applies to all students. The code is as follows: "As a Mississippi State University student, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do." Upon accepting admission to Mississippi State University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor Code.

Student will be required to state their commitment on all academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the MSU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor Code. You will be asked to sign an Honor Code statement. Failure to sign the Honor Code statement may result in a finding of 'not passing' for the comprehensive exam. For additional information, please visit: <http://honorcode.msstate.edu/policy>

Deadlines for May 2018 graduation

1. March 9 - Deadline to apply for graduation via myState with NO late fee. Site opens January 16.
\$50 cost
2. April 25 - Final deadline to apply for May graduation. No applications accepted after this date!
\$50 application fee + \$100 late fee
3. May 4 - Deadline to pay account balance.

You must apply online for a degree to graduate. Even if you have no intentions of walking for graduation, you must complete the online application to graduate.

If you meet all of the requirements to graduate in May but do not apply online to graduate by the deadlines listed above, you will not graduate. Applications initiated in a prior semester will not transfer.

Spring Semester 2018

Date	Description
January 3, 4, 5	Teaching Assistant Workshop
January 7	Deadline for international applications for Distance Unclassified or domestic Unclassified applications for Starkville, Meridian, Distance campuses--Spring semester
January 8	Classes begin
January 12	Last day to drop a class without a grade (5th class day) - 5:00 PM
January 15	Holiday
January 16	Last day to register or add a class (6th class day) - 8:00 AM
January 16-March 9	Apply via MyState for May graduation; \$50 fee
February 1	Last day for doctoral preliminary/comprehensive examination for August graduation
February 27	Mid-point of semester
February 27	Last day to drop a course with a W grade (36th class day) - 5:00 PM
March 1	Deadline for international applicants to apply for degree programs or Unclassified on Starkville or Meridian campus--Summer semester
March 9	Last day for thesis/dissertation defense and non-thesis comprehensive exam for May graduation
March 9	Last day to apply via MyState for May graduation; \$50 fee
March 10-April 25	Late application via MyState for May graduation; \$50 fee plus \$100 late fee
March 12-16 (dates subject to change)	Spring Break
March 19-30	Faculty advising for pre-registration
March 23	Last day for initial submission of thesis/dissertation to the Library for May graduation
March 23	Last day for department to submit signed examination results to the Graduate School for May graduation
March 30	Holiday
April 1-September 30	TAGGS online application for July 1-December 31, 2018, travel period
April 2-13	Pre-registration for Summer and Fall semesters
April 11	Last day to withdraw from the University (10 days of classes remaining)
April 20	Last day for submission of Library-approved thesis/dissertation to the Library for May graduation
April 25	Last day to apply via MyState for May graduation; \$50 fee plus \$100 late fee
April 25	Deadline for graduate students receiving an Incomplete grade in the previous semester to submit the coursework
April 25	Classes end
April 26	Reading day
April 27-May 3	Final examinations

Date	Description
April 28	Make-up day if needed
May 1	Deadline for domestic applicants to apply for degree programs on Starkville or Meridian campus-- Summer semester
May 1	Deadline for international applicants to apply for degree programs or Unclassified on Starkville or Meridian campus for Fall semester
May 4	Last day for May 2018 degree applicants to pay account balance
May 4	Make-up day (if needed)
May 5, TBD	MSU-Meridian Commencement, MSU Riley Center
May 5, TBD	Starkville Commencement
May 7	Final grades due 10:00 AM
May 7	10:00 AM - Deadline to pass thesis/dissertation defense after all other requirements are met except thesis/dissertation submission to Library, allowing student to enroll in GRD 9010 in Summer OR Fall 2018. Student may register for this course only one time.
May 15	Deadline for all applicants to apply for Distance degree programs for Summer semester

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