

Fall 2020 Course Syllabus  
ISCI 3103: Natural History of Georgia  
for Middle Grades Education Majors

Department of Biology, College of Science & Mathematics, Valdosta State University

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Student Hours will be in Room 1043 BSC:

MW 11:00-12:00 in 1043 BSC

MW 4:30-5:00 in 1043 BSC

TR 11:00-11:30 in UC

Graduate Teaching Assistant: Kearsten Jones – [keajones@valdosta.edu](mailto:keajones@valdosta.edu)

1. A Very Important Message to Students: I am making a default assumption that you are in college to get an education. Becoming an educated person takes work, and I expect you to make a sincere effort to learn. The most important contribution to your success will be your personal work ethic because the grade will be based on assignments

## Official Information

**Course Objectives:** This science content course provides an integrated overview of Life Science content in preparation for teaching science at the Middle School grade levels. Topics covered in both the K-12 Georgia Science Standards of Excellence and the Next Generation Science Standards will be addressed in lessons that allow Education majors to learn science in the non-traditional ways they will eventually be expected to teach in their own classrooms.

**Instructional Philosophy:** will bridge the gulf between scientific and educational disciplinary training by allowing future teachers to learn new scientific information through a variety of instructional innovations. The course employs methods that enact the rhetoric of science education reform. By teaching for constructivist learning, emphasis will be placed on the acquisition of conceptual understanding of scientific information rather than mere memorization. An alternative assessment strategy will be used this semester. This nontraditional approach to college science helps prospective elementary school teachers make connections between methods of teaching and learning science.

**Academic Honesty:** Members of the class are expected to maintain high standards of integrity. This course will use the VSU Handbook Code of Ethics as a basic standard of behavior, and everyone in the class is required to read the Biology Department Plagiarism Policy posted at: <http://www.valdosta.edu/colleges/arts-sciences/biology/documents/resources/PlagiarismPolicy.pdf>. Evidence of dishonest conduct or cheating will result in no credit for the assignment and depending on the case, a grade of "F" for the course. Do not expect leniency for claims on the grounds of not knowing better. You will be reported to the Dean of Students and letter of concern documenting the problem will be sent to the College of Education. Be aware that employers such as school systems do call that office at VSU to check on whether you have a record of infractions.

**Statement of Student Support:** I support all students regardless of immigration status or country of origin. As a Dreamer Ally, I support Dreamer students and promote their sense of belonging and safety as they pursue their higher education goals. For more information and resources about higher education visit a website for another university until we have something this on our VSU website: [https://international.uoregon.edu/immigration\\_faq](https://international.uoregon.edu/immigration_faq). I commit to not sharing your status with anyone if you reveal it to me. I also remind you that when interacting with faculty, staff, and offices around campus you are never required to reveal your immigration status.

**Access Statement:** Students with disabilities who are experiencing barriers in this course may contact the Access Office for assistance in determining and implementing reasonable accommodations. The Access Office is located in Farbar Hall. The phone numbers are 229-245-2498 (V), 229-375-5871 (VP) and 229-219-1348 (TTY). For more information, please visit VSU's Access Office or email: [access@valdosta.edu](mailto:access@valdosta.edu).

**Title IX Statement:** Valdosta State University (VSU) is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive work and learning environment free from discrimination and harassment. VSU is dedicated to creating an environment where all campus community members feel valued, respected, and included. Valdosta State University prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex (including pregnancy status, sexual harassment and sexual violence), sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, national origin, disability, genetic information, or veteran status, in the University's programs and activities as required by applicable laws and regulations such as Title IX. The individual designated with responsibility for coordination of compliance efforts and receipt of inquiries concerning nondiscrimination policies is the University's Title IX Coordinator: Maggie Viverette, Director of the Office of Social Equity [titleix@valdosta.edu](mailto:titleix@valdosta.edu), 1208 N. Patterson St., Valdosta State University, Valdosta, Georgia 31608, 333-5463.

**Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act:** Grades cannot be posted by Name or Social Security Number. Scores and student work will not be given over the telephone, by email or to another student.



# Writing Requirements

**Objectives:** You will be required to produce at least one summary paragraph on each daily lesson, a composite paragraph for each weekly topic, and a comprehensive essay on the unit topic as part of each test. These assignments also have been designed to help you to learn, outside the classroom, through your own writing. Writing is an important way to learn because if you can construct sentences about something, it will organize your understanding in your mind or let you know that you need to seek more information about a subject. Notebook entries are also an opportunity to display your knowledge through more than just exams. These assignments also allow you to pursue the connections between your own personal interests and what we cover in class, so you should take pride in them.

**FOCUS:** Well-crafted writing always has a specific purpose. You can brainstorm ideas by writing down any of the terminology you can think of, or using the key words in your notes. Decide on a specific point or argument you want to make - before you start writing. Every composition should have a central idea that is contained in a thesis that should directly address the nature of the writing assignment. Write the thesis down, include it in your introductory & concluding sentences, and check throughout the writing process to be certain that the body of your work supports it. Starting a paper can be the hardest step, so if you feel blocked, try expanding your brainstorming with Google searches on the subject. Take a blank sheet of paper without lines, and just write down any ideas you have or do some reading in the text to get ideas. Then, create an original title for your eNotebook entry or test essay.

**Organization:** Before you begin to write, think through how you plan to develop your thesis and use an outline to structure your thoughts with a sequence that makes sense. An Introduction and Conclusion will be the first and last sentences or paragraphs, but they can actually be written last. Start paper with something catchy in the first sentence to interest the reader. Make it perfectly clear, in the introductory statement or section, what your point or central idea will be. Support that concept throughout the body of your paper. Paragraphs in the middle will be the Body of your text. Quotations & Subheadings are not to be used in these short assignments; let the topic sentences of the paragraphs serve that purpose. Avoid using phrases such as "In this paper I will discuss..." since it is much more sophisticated to avoid this type of "crutch statement."

**Paragraphs:** These assignments will be single-spaced. The first sentence of each paragraph is a topic sentence that shows what the paragraph covers. ONE SENTENCE IS NEVER AN ENTIRE PARAGRAPH because there should be at least 3 sentences elaborating any idea that is significant enough to be separated from the rest.

**Format:** Always have an original title on your paper, centered at the top of the page. Think of something that summarizes the unique slant you are taking because we have to read many of these. It should catch our interest. Your papers are to be typed using something comparable to 12-point Times New Roman type, single-spacing, and 1 inch margins. Other professors often expect double-spacing, but I prefer to read single-spacing and require your papers to be single-spaced. After a draft, if the paper is too long, go back through and shorten it up by taking out the less important aspects. If it is too short, go back and incorporate more support or add more detail to what you are saying. When I say 1-page that means substantial text or no less than 800 words.

**Grading:** These short papers and test essays will each be worth 10 points. Outstanding papers will receive an additional 2-5 points. Assignments will be described in class, so listen carefully and be sure that you know what is expected or ask about anything that is unclear. There will also be a description on the Dropbox in Blazeview. Focus on the objective of the assignment and address it clearly in thesis of your paper. You can dramatically improve your work if you critique your own rough draft and revise it at least once. Outside feedback by other people who write well or even a visit to the Academic Success Center (ASC) in the library can also make a difference. You do not need a science tutor to read these papers. Ask for an English or Writing tutor at the ASC. Proofread your own work to avoid careless errors. Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar do ef01.9 321.26toocovervo your

The reason you are creating these eJs is to articulate what you are learning in a way that is a radical alternative to the usual science tests. To ensure that you stay up to date with what we are doing in class there will be due dates for assignments that are submitted in Blazeview on a regular basis. The grades on these assignments will be an indication of how well you are doing. All it takes to pass this course is a solid work ethic and willingness to learn the science. If you do not remember much from your K-12 science classes, it does not matter. As long as you are willing to make an effort to do the work, you can succeed in this class. Each session constitutes one lesson and after the classes you need to ask yourself if you understand the subject we covered. If you do not feel confident that you grasp the scientific content, it is your responsibility to ask for help and work harder on this topic for your eJ entries. You will do well in the class if you keep up with the science and think about what and how you are learning it as we go along. Since there are no tests, you must document what you have learned from class, through web research, discussions with your classmates, or by asking one of the instructors.

The eJ document will be one continuous PowerPoint that is constructed in Office 365. The first thing you want to do is set up that file and submit the link to your file to the Blazeview dropbox in the course content section. These must be in landscape orientation and the widescreen (16:9) slide size format. The background colors should not detract from the images you display. You may select any