

SYLLABUS BIOL 4131 – HERPETOLOGY LAB

SPRING 2025

MEETING TIME: WEDNESDAY 2:00 PM – 4:50 PM

MEETING CLASSROOM: BEP 128

PROFESSOR:

Marsha G. Williams

Office: HPR 107 or BEP 129 (Main Biology Office)

Office Phone: 903-566-6194

Email: mwilliams@uttyler.edu,

Office Hours: M 1:00-3:00 p.m., W 1:00-2:00 p.m., or by appointment.

GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT:

Addie Munn

Office BEP 118

Phone 903-566-6149

Email: mmunn4@patriots.uttyler.edu

Office Hours: T 9:30 – 11:00 AM; TH 12:30 – 2:00 PM or by appointment.

Week of 1/13 & 4/21: T 9:30 – 11:00 AM; W 9:00 – 10:30 AM

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: Laboratory examination of the diversity of amphibians and reptiles in East Texas. Study of the anatomy and physiology of amphibians and reptiles and ecological, behavioral, and physiological experiments.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. To learn the basic principles of conducting herpetological studies. Success will be measured by your grades on class participation, a midterm exam, and a research paper and oral presentation.
2. To develop critical thinking skills in relation to setting up biological experiments. Progress will be reflected in your midterm exam, paper, and presentation grades.
3. To improve communication skills in presenting information in a written and an oral format. This will be evident in your research paper and oral presentation grades.

TOOLS FOR SUCCESS:

1. Plan for the activities we will be doing in lab that week (i.e., if we have a field trip planned dress for going out in the woods/water, if we plan to work in the lab wear closed toes shoes and long pants, etc.).
2. Listen to the introductory lecture and take notes.
3. Participate actively in labs, i.e. be on time, help collect data, actively participate in class activities.
4. Don't wait until the last minute to start studying for the practicals and be sure to ask lots of questions if you are confused.
5. Take pride in your work! Present your research like it is for a professional job or a professional conference with peer scientists. Practice your oral presentations to make sure you are comfortable with the material and can communicate information effectively.

TEXTS AND MATERIALS:

The only suggested book will be *Amphibians and Reptiles of Texas*, Third Edition, by James R. Dixon. It is out of print so used ones might be harder to find. I will have several copies available in the lab. I will provide any additional lab handouts or post them on Canvas prior to lab.

The following websites are useful for identifying reptiles and amphibians in Texas:

<https://www.herpssoftexas.org/>
<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/herps-of-texas>

Thick gloves, thick pants such as jeans, good tennis shoes or boots, a good camera (cell phones will work), a field guide, and a headlamp and/or a good flashlight will all be very helpful in this class.

EVALUATION: Students will be evaluated based on the following work:

1. Participation **30%** (100 pts.). This will include participating in class, local field trips, and an overnight field trip (10% of total grade). A missed lab is an automatic 5% deduction. Be on time for class, sometimes we will be outside, and we can't wait for you. Actively participate in data collection, data analysis, and classroom discussions.
2. Midterm **30%** (100 pts.). One midterm lab exam will be given. It will cover taxonomy and identification of East Texas amphibians and reptiles.
3. Group Project and Presentation **40%** (100 pts). You will present results of a group research project. We will assign group research project topics later in the semester.

The class will be graded on a 10-point scale (400 points possible):

90-100% = A 80-89% = B 70-79 = C 60-69% = D 0-59% = F

CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM: Obviously, this will not be tolerated (see more below). Do not turn in identical research papers! Cheating on exams will not be tolerated and will result in an automatic zero on the exam. Using AI to generate research reports will result in a zero for the grade and may result in disciplinary action. Beware, there are programs we use that can tell if your paper is AI generated.

DEADLINES/MAKE UP EXAMS:

1. Make-up assignments/exams will not be given except in the case of family emergency or with an excuse from a medical doctor. In such cases, you must contact your instructor as soon as possible.
2. Any absences due to sanctioned university activities (e.g., intercollegiate meets) require an official and **PRIOR** arrangement with your instructor.

FIELD TRIPS AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES: Field trips and outdoor activities make up a large portion of this class therefore, attendance and active participation for field activities is required. We will make every attempt to return to campus by the end of lab but driving time (and unforeseen circumstances) may necessitate a later return – students should make appropriate arrangements ahead of time in case we run late. Appropriate field clothing (shoes and clothes that can get dirty) should be worn on all field trips. There are inherent risks one assumes when

one goes outside, which cannot be controlled by the instructor or the University. Students should be aware that vehicular traffic, poison ivy, ticks, mosquitoes, or biting and stinging insects (bees, wasps, etc.) among others, are all PERSONAL safety issues. Please contact me privately at the START of the course to discuss your specific needs if you believe you need course accommodations based on the impact of a disability or medical condition, or if you have emergency medical information to share.

Planned Field Activities:

- 1) We will be going on off campus field trips where you will be responsible for helping load, transport, and unload sampling equipment. Some field trips will require pre-setting traps the day before. If you would like to help set up traps the day prior, please see the TA.
- 2) We will plan to do one overnight camping field trip to Camp Tyler during the semester to look for reptiles and amphibians (March 28-29th; rain date will be April 4-5th). You will be expected to plan accordingly and ask off for work. We will leave Friday afternoon around 4 p.m. and return on Saturday afternoon around 5 p.m. More details will be provided as soon as possible.

IMPORTANT DATES:

Feb 26th: Midterm Exam

Mar 17-21st: Spring Break (no classes)

Mar 31st: Last Day to Withdraw

April 9th: Mini Presentations

April 23rd: Final Presentations

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

<u>Day</u>	<u>Lab</u>
1/15	Intro to Herpetology; Amphibians of East Texas—identification and taxonomy
1/22	Off Campus field trip – Camp Tyler newt and salamander sampling
1/29	Reptiles of East Texas (Lizards and turtles) —identification and taxonomy
2/5	Reptiles of East Texas (Snakes) —identification and taxonomy
2/12	Specimen Study Lab
2/19	Practical Review
2/26	Midterm (Lab Practical)
3/5	Trip to Caldwell Zoo Herpetarium (tentative)
3/12	Guest Presenter: Alan Lizarraga—Snake safety and Snake Fungal Disease Lecture
3/19	Spring Break (No Class)
3/26	Camping trip preparation -- Overnight Field trip to Camp Tyler (Mar 28 th - 29 th – Rain date Apr 4 th - 5 th)
4/2	Project Introduction
4/9	Project Review (mini presentations)
4/16	Open Lab – work on Projects
4/23	Final Presentations

Academic Integrity: Students should be aware that absolute academic integrity is expected of every student, in all courses taken at The University of Texas at Tyler. Failure to comply can result in strong university-imposed penalties. For instance, submitting plagiarized work to meet academic requirements including the representation of another's work or ideas as one's own; the unacknowledged word-for-word research results shall be grounds for charges of academic misconduct. **Any cheating or other types of academic misconduct will be reported to the university administration and at minimum will result in an automatic failure of the course.**

Exams

- **TALKING** during an exam to anyone other than the instructor or proctor will automatically be considered cheating. It does not matter what you were talking about.
- Any use of a cell phone or any other electronic device that could be used to record or transmit test material is **PROHIBITED**. Phones must be out of sight and silenced during the exam.
- Hats worn during exams must be turned around or removed so the face is not covered in any way.

WHAT IS PLAGIARISM AND HOW CAN IT BE AVOIDED?

Plagiarism may be defined as (1) presenting work, ideas, or phrasing of another, in whole or part, as one's own without giving credit and proper documentation of sources; (2) copying material directly from sources (including electronic media) except when the material is enclosed in quotation marks and the source is clearly identified; (3) paraphrasing too closely to the original, even when the source is identified; and (4) claiming credit for work in any media (electronic, digital, artistic, etc.) where the student is not the original creator of said work. Work that is plagiarized will receive an automatic grade of "F". If you are unsure about this subject, please take the time to talk to your instructor and /or read this:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism>

You will also be required to turn in all written assignments (lab report assignments) in a Word document on **CANVAS** which will use **UNICHECK** to assess your paper for Plagiarism. You will find this on your Canvas page for this lab course; each assignment will be compared to previous student work and the work of your classmates! You will only need to turn in a copy of your assignment via the CANVAS Link.

Use of an AI Generator such as ChatGPT, iA Writer, MidJourney, DALL-E, etc. is **explicitly prohibited** unless otherwise noted by the instructor. The information derived from these tools is based on previously published materials. Therefore, using these tools without proper citation constitutes plagiarism.

Additionally, be aware that the information derived from these tools is often inaccurate or incomplete. **It is imperative that all work submitted should be your own.** Any assignment that is found to have been plagiarized or to have used unauthorized AI tools may receive a zero and/or be reported for academic misconduct.

Corrupted File Policy: Any student that turns in a corrupted file will be given 24 hours to turn in a file that can be opened successfully by the instructor. Failure to do so will earn a grade of "0" (Zero) for the paper.

Students Rights and Responsibilities

To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link:

<http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/StudentRightsandResponsibilities.html>