

# BIOL 440: Student's Guidelines for Seminar Topic Proposal

Revised August 2009

BIOL and BCMB majors presenting a senior seminar in BIOL 440 are required to have an initial meeting with a seminar advisor in the semester preceding their scheduled seminar presentation. In addition, each student must submit for approval by the Department of Biology faculty a Seminar Topic Proposal no later than the 10th week of the semester prior to their presentation. The Seminar Topic Proposal will contribute 5% of the overall BIOL 440 course grade. Failure to submit a completed proposal by this deadline will result in zero points earned for this portion of the course grade.

Seminar Topic Proposals which are poorly composed, are incomplete and appear to be the result of little or no effort on the part of the student will receive a grade of zero points earned. Seminar Topic Proposals may be revised and resubmitted to the student's seminar advisor. However, no additional points can be earned after the faculty have evaluated the submitted proposals. Any credit to be earned by revising the proposal is at the discretion of the advisor and can only be credited in the Advisor's Score category of the Seminar Evaluation Form.

The submitted Seminar Topic Proposal will be reviewed by participating Department of Biology faculty members. A recommendation to *Approve*, *Disapprove*, or *Provisionally Approve* the Seminar Topic Proposal will be returned to the presenter's advisor in a timely manner. Students are expected to heed the forewarnings and admonitions returned with a provisionally approved proposal. Failure to do so will result in severe score reductions for one or more categories on the Seminar Evaluation Form.

Approval of a student's Seminar Topic Proposal does not guarantee the student will receive high scores on the Seminar Evaluation Form. All other deadlines must be met and the student's performance will be evaluated according to the published rubric. Approval of the Seminar Topic Proposal indicates the faculty agree that the topic has the potential for developing a quality presentation.

Your Seminar Proposal should not exceed 500 words. It must include the following sections and provide the information stated.

## **I. Theoretical Framework**

In a few sentences provide a theoretical framework in which you give the relationships among the variables and factors you will address. Your framework should provide enough information regarding the interrelated concepts to allow the reader to understand the theorized relationships between the variables you will address. It should offer a logical explanation of how your topic relates in a broad sense to the larger context of the primary biological literature.

## **II. Questions or Hypotheses**

In a few sentences clearly and succinctly identify and explain the specific scientific inquiries you will address in your seminar. These questions should be couched within the framework of the theory related in Section I of the proposal.

## **III. Design Plan**

In bulleted form, lay out your plan for the structure of your seminar. Indicate the methodical steps you will take to answer your seminar question. This section should incorporate a minimum of three (3) primary literature articles to be used in your seminar.

## **IV: Literature Cited**

Your submitted Topic Proposal must include a Literature Cited in a format acceptable for publication. Choose either the journal *Cell* or *Ecology* and list your three (or more) articles in the specific format dictated by the journal.