Biology 495 Peer Leadership in Biology  
Syllabus Spring 2016

Instructor:  
Dr. Amy Altick, aaltick@unr.edu  
Office: SFB 208; 775-784-6679  
Office Hours: by appointment

Peer-leaders independently facilitate small discussion groups, which are integrated with large lecture-based introductory biology courses. Discussion groups are weekly, 50-minute, scheduled sessions, which are a structured part of the lecture course. Peer-leaders demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have acquired in previous Core and major coursework to help develop a weekly lesson plan that will reinforce course content, provide study strategies, and facilitate learning for novice students.

This course will satisfy Silver Core Objective 14: application of knowledge and skills developed in previous Core and major classes by completing a structured experience of practical significance.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. The student will be able to critically assess and synthesize course content in order to develop a syllabus, weekly lesson plans, compile a teaching portfolio of the semester’s work, and write a formal report reflecting on the leadership experience.

2. The student will develop and demonstrate basic pedagogical skills to engage novice students in learning.

3. The student will apply study and learning skills they have developed in previous major courses in order to coach novice students for success in an introductory course.

4. The student will be able to modify and adjust their instruction methods based on periodic feedback though written evaluation and effectiveness as rated by peer-mentor or faculty mentor.

5. The student will develop and articulate presentation skills appropriate to their personal and professional goals, including recognizing and addressing diversity within a group.

6. The student will practice and perform leadership in instruction and academic guidance for novice students, which will qualify as a credible experience to include on a curriculum vitae, resume, or as foundation for the student’s further education or professional development.
Expectations and Policy:

- Students will apply to be a peer leader and will be competitively selected by instructor and returning leaders.
- The peer-leader will prepare for and lead assigned discussion group session each week.
- The peer-leader will maintain a teaching portfolio that includes: a syllabus for the semester, weekly lesson plans for each discussion group session, a statement of teaching philosophy, and a brief review of each session written immediately after the session.
- The peer-leader will practice and modify pedagogical methods to facilitate student engagement and learning for the duration of the entire discussion group session each week.
- The peer-leader will be cognizant of diversity within their student group and actively work to engage, teach, and include all students in the weekly discussion.
- The peer-leader will attend weekly “leader meeting” for instruction and information regarding discussion group topics.
- The peer-leader will be required to give one presentation to the other peer-leaders and faculty mentor for critical assessment of both content and pedagogical techniques.
- The peer-leader will be observed periodically throughout the semester. The observer, an experienced peer-leader (peer-mentor), will provide written comments and evaluation for each observation session, as well as review lesson plans from teaching portfolio.
- The peer-leader will modify and improve their instruction methods based on evaluations and written comments from observer and determined by faculty mentor.
- The peer-leader will write a formal report at the end of the semester, which describes and reflects upon their experience, self-evaluation of leadership, teaching philosophy, and goals for improvement of leadership attributes.

Grading Scale:

1) Preparation of content and methods to engage student learning as maintained in teaching portfolio. 30%

2) Active application of pedagogical methods and utilization of entire discussion group session. 20%

3) Attendance and engagement at all discussion groups and weekly meetings. At least one formal presentation is required during the semester. 20%

5) Improvement over the course of the semester based on periodic evaluations and comments from observed sessions. 15%

6) Final written report 15%

90 – 100%      A
80 – 89%        B
70 – 79%        C
< 70%           F
Required Materials:

As per instructor of lecture course for which the student is a discussion group leader.

University Policies

Dropping/withdrawing:
To drop classes and receive a full refund: as per semester calendar
To withdraw from class (W on transcript): as per semester calendar

Academic Dishonesty and Unprofessional Conduct:
Academic dishonesty is against university as well as the system community standards. Academic dishonesty is defined as: cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses. **Plagiarism** is defined as submitting the language, ideas, thoughts or work of another as one's own; or assisting in the act of plagiarism by allowing one's work to be used in this fashion. **Cheating** is defined as (1) obtaining or providing unauthorized information during an examination through verbal, visual or unauthorized use of books, notes, text and other materials; (2) obtaining or providing information concerning all or part of an examination prior to that examination; or (3) taking an examination for another student, or arranging for another person to take an exam in one's place. Any suspected cases of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and may result in your failing the assignment, the course, or both.

Academic Standards:
**Class Conduct:** A student may be dropped from class at any time for negligence or misconduct, upon recommendation of the instructor and with approval of the college dean. **Students may also be dropped for non-attendance upon indication of the instructor.**

Statement of Disabled Access and Reasonable Accommodation:
Qualified, self-identified students with documented physical and learning disabilities have the right to free accommodations to ensure equal access to educational opportunities. For assistance, contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 784-6000 to determine eligibility and appropriate accommodations.

Taping Class Lectures:
Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may have been given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.

For Assistance:
Tutoring Center- 784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring
Writing Center- 784-6030 or www.unr.edu/writing-center
Math Center- 784-4433 or www.unr.edu/mathcenter
Disability Resource Center- 784-6000 or www.unr.edu/drc
WebCampus- Blackboard tutorials for Students:
http://ondemand.blackboard.com/students.htm