

Geo 389R/322V
Morphology of the Vertebrate Skeleton
Fall, 2011

Policy Statement

TIME & PLACE: MW 1:30-5; GEO 3.202

INSTRUCTOR: Chris Bell
Office: GEO building 3.316F
Phone (512) 471-7301 (**don't bother**)
E-mail: cjbelle@mail.utexas.edu
OFFICE HOURS: By appointment

ASSISTANT INSTRUCTOR:
Michelle Stocker
E-mail: mstocker@utexas.edu
OFFICE HOURS: TBA

TEXT: No text required.

GRADING: The grade for the class is based on the following:

- A) Weekly lab quizzes 60%
- B) Final lab exam 30%
- C) Final lecture exam 10%

A = 95-100+; A- = 90-94; B+ = 87-89; B = 83-86; B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79; C = 73-76; C- = 70-72; F = below 70

I do not curve grades; your grade is based on your performance.

EXAMS: Every Monday you will take a lab practical exam that emphasizes the previous week's lab material; **ALL QUIZZES ARE CUMULATIVE** in coverage. A total of 11 weekly quizzes will be given; the lowest quiz score of the semester will be dropped before calculation of final grades. The final lab exam will be cumulative in coverage and will be administered during scheduled class time on 30 November.

Students are required to take all exams. Exam questions usually will be specimen identification, taxon identification, orientation (terminology, bone orientation, left/right, etc.), labeling drawings, etc.

Exams will be handed back promptly.

OTHER ISSUES: Please notify me as soon as possible of any modifications or adaptations you may require to accommodate a disability-related need. The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259.

DROP DATES: September 9 is the last day to drop a class for possible refund; September 21 is the last day to drop a class without a possible academic penalty; I will not drop anyone with a "Q-drop" unless you are passing the class with at least a C at the time you make the request; if you are failing the class, I will sign the form as a drop with an F.

ATTENDANCE/ABSENCES: I don't take attendance, but you won't do well if you aren't here. You cannot survive this class if you do not attend. The content is specimen-oriented and time-intensive. There is a lot of material to cover and you will need full class time to work through it all. Unavoidable absences due to illness, death, travel to meetings, etc. happen, and I will try to be accommodating, but I cannot help you at the last minute. Whenever possible, notify me IN ADVANCE of scheduled absences. Make-up exams will, in most cases, **NOT** be given.

CHEATING: I maintain a zero-tolerance policy for cheating. If you cheat, you fail the class.

FOOD and NOISE: Eating, drinking and chewing gum are **not** permitted in the classroom, ever. This includes water. No radios, TVs, cell phones, beepers, or other bleepy junk are permitted in class. When you are in the hallway during exam set-up, or to snack **BE QUIET**; others are working in class or in their offices nearby.

SPECIMEN HANDLING: This is a specimen-intensive course. Throughout the semester you will be handling skeletal specimens of vertebrates from around the world. The time required to prepare these specimens is often extensive and replacement can be difficult to impossible. Apart from powdering a bone under your foot, most laboratory-incurred damages can be repaired if we are notified PROMPTLY. If you damage a specimen, let me or Michelle know right away so that it can be fixed. If you drop a specimen on the floor, immediately make a general announcement to the class so the item can be found and recovered intact. The only thing that pisses me off more than careless handling of materials is a student who conceals damage to a specimen. If you make a mistake, or damage something, own up to it and let me know; DO NOT just put it back in a box and let me discover it later. I anticipate a certain amount of attrition, so I won't completely blow up when it happens, but I do NOT want to find out by opening a box later and 'discovering' the problem on my own.

Unfortunately, we do not have enough material to provide each student with an example of each taxon or bone; therefore we will have to share material. **ALWAYS**

return a specimen to the box or tray from which you took it. NEVER leave a specimen out on a table, for any length of time. If you are comparing multiple specimens, keep track of the box or tray from which each specimen was taken and return them as soon as you are finished with them. **IF YOU GET CONFUSED** (it happens frequently) **ASK FOR ASSISTANCE**; at that point it becomes **OUR** problem to return things to their proper place. Any time you have a question about proper handling, **ASK**.

Pay attention when you unpack a box. Repack the materials carefully and in a way that all the material fits within the box. If I can do it, so can you. Just pay attention. Do not ever, under any circumstances, mark the bones in any way (scratching, chipping, breaking, ink or pencil marks, etc.).

The specimens with which you will work are generally clean, but some specimens may have a slight (or foul) odor. Use common sense when working with skeletal specimens. Wash your hands before and after handling materials and **before** you eat, drink, smoke, or pick your nose.

THE WAY IT WORKS: Every Monday, the first half hour or so of class will be set aside for an exam. After the exam there will be a 10 to 15 minute break. If you stay in the hallway be **QUIET**; other classes are in progress and faculty and staff offices are scattered along the hall. After break, we will have a brief introductory discussion on the new material. The remainder of class will be spent with the new material for that week. The same material will be out on Wednesday for the entire period. The first hour on Wednesday is loosely set aside for discussion, questions, comments, and clarifications. Material from the previous week will be available for review.

Each week you will be given the handouts for the following week's lab. This will enable you to begin preparations for the next week **before** class begins. Our expectation is that you will do so (and the course content and exams are structured accordingly). Because the course and exams are cumulative, if you fall behind it will be difficult to catch up. It is especially important that you prepare in advance for the labs dealing with skulls. you are expected to know the skull elements in articulated and disarticulated conditions; you can learn the basics of the articulated skull from the handouts; that gives you class time to work with the disarticulated elements. Your life will be easier if you come to class prepared. To facilitate preparation, an on-line learning resource is available to you. The URL <http://fasttex.ctl.utexas.edu/vertebrate/> will take you to a web site with a focus on the skull. Many of the specimens in this course were used for the web site. Please let us know of any and all errors on the web site. It is being beta-tested this semester.

Because of the commercial value associated with many of these specimens, we cannot make specimens openly available outside of scheduled class time. Graduate students will have 24-hour access to specimens in JGB 3.314A. There are a lot of specimens in the room, so be careful when using that space and always return

specimens to the same place you found them. If you see a problem bring it to our attention immediately. The room must remain secured at all times. Specimens will not be available on Monday between 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. You also may examine materials during our office hours, or make an appointment to see specimens if you need to do so outside of regularly scheduled class time and office hours.

Many of the specimens we will utilize are small and will require you to use a microscope; become familiar with using the microscopes as soon as possible. I will not hesitate to use microscope specimens on the exams.

This is a time-intensive course, but also a lot of fun (if you like dead stuff). You are expected to be prepared when you walk in the door. Manage your time wisely.