Mon/Wed – 9:00-10:15 – Science & Tech I, Room 124
Office hours: Mon/Wed 1:30-3:00 or by appointment
Website: http://classweb.gmu.edu/dbitler/comm2011
Instructor: Dr. Doris Bitler
Email: dbitler@gmu.edu
Office: David King Hall 2051

Course goals: This course will provide a broad, comparative overview of animal and human communication, with an emphasis on understanding how and why different forms of communication behaviors might have evolved.

University synthesis: This course has been approved to meet the University’s General Education requirement for Synthesis.

Required reading: Reading should be completed by the dates indicated on the schedule. Reading the material in advance will help you to get the most out of lectures, discussions and observations. Readings can be found on E-Reserves (http://furbo.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/ers/OSCRgen.cgi) or through the Mason Libraries (http://library.gmu.edu/).

Grading: The final grade will consist of the following weighted components, based on a 100-point scale
Mid-term exam 20%
Final exam 20%
Projects and Presentations (3 @ 20% each) 60%

Projects: Each project will consist of background research; identification of the subjects and/or setting of interest; and development of an ethogram to quantify observed behavior. The details and requirements of each project will be discussed in class. Projects 2 and 3 will include a brief, in-class presentation.

Absences: In general, assignments and exams cannot be rescheduled or made up except in cases of serious, unavoidable, and documented circumstances that are clearly beyond the student’s ability to control.

Technology expectations: All students are expected to maintain and regularly access their Mason e-mail accounts. Students will need to visit the class website in order to download slides and access the online syllabus and other course-related information.

Attendance and decorum: Class attendance is not recorded, but it is important for students who want to do well in PSYC406 to be in class, prepared, and attentive. In addition to other important information, any extra credit opportunities will be announced in class and will often consist of in-class participation. Preparation for class includes completing reading by the assigned due date. Lectures and presentations will be more interesting and more meaningful for students who have done the reading in advance. In order to be attentive, you should not engage in any multi-tasking activities during class – that means no texting, e-mail, web surfing, doing homework for other classes, etc. Please turn off all cell phones and other potential sources of disruption at the start of class. During class, laptops may only be used for taking notes. If you must arrive late or leave early, please do so as quietly as possible and be considerate of your classmates by sitting near an exit.

Disability accommodations: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me early in the semester. If you have not already done so, contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Please keep in mind that it might not be possible to grant last-minute requests for accommodations, so it important to make all arrangements well before the date when the accommodation is needed.

Honor code: All students are expected to be familiar with, and abide by, the University Honor Code. As required by the Honor Code, all suspected violations will be reported.

Important dates: Last day to add – September 6
Last day to drop – September 30

Enrollment: Students are responsible for verifying correct enrollment. Graded work will not be returned to students who are not officially enrolled.
Schedule:

M Aug 29 Introduction; defining communication
W Aug 31 The evolution of behavior; observing behavior; discussion of project details

M Sep 5 LABOR DAY – No Class
W Sep 7 The evolution of communication

M Sep 12 Bird observation – meet at assigned location
W Sep 14 Bird observation – meet at assigned location

M Sep 19 Form and function; multiple modalities

W Sep 21 Visual signals

M Sep 26 Visual signals (cont’d)

W Sep 28 Auditory signals

M Oct 3 Auditory signals (cont’d)

W Oct 5 Chemical signals

T Oct 11 Tactile signals

W Oct 12 Extreme senses

M Oct 17 MIDTERM EXAM due by 5:00 pm
W Oct 19 Presentations
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<td>W</td>
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