Psychology of Communication  
Psyc406-A01 - Summer 2012

Mon/Tue/Wed – 9:30-11:00 – Innovation 133  
Thu – 9:30-1:30 – Field trips  
Office hours: Mon/Tue/Wed 11:10-11:30 or by appointment  
Website: http://classweb.gmu.edu/dbitler/comm2011

Instructor: Dr. Doris Bitler Davis  
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.

Summer Schedule: The summer schedule is designed to allow for three in-class meetings (Mon-Wed, 9:30-11:00) and one class field trip (Thu, 9:30-1:30) each week.

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

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam (material covered during Weeks 1 &amp; 2)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam (material covered during Weeks 3, 4 &amp; 5)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Projects (4 @ 10% each)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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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.

Field trips: The class field trips are required. Although it is possible for students with unusual circumstances to visit the locations on their own, important information and project guidance provided during these trips will not be available to them. Students who do not participate in the group excursions should not expect to complete the projects with satisfactory grades.

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 Disability Resource Center (DRC) 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 an A Session class – May 25  
Last day to drop an A Session class – June 1

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

**Schedule and readings:**

**Week 1**

**May 21**  Defining communication  
Assignment – Project #1, Part A

**May 22**  Observing behavior  
Chapter 1, Introduction, p. 1-21. (E-Reserves)

Project #1, Part A due

Assignment – Review Canada goose ethograms – Project #1, Part B

**May 23**  Signals and displays; Multi-modality signalling  

Chapter 2, The diversity of displays, p. 23-45. (E-Reserves)

Assignment – Create ethograms for either ducks or crows – Project #1, Part C

**May 24**  Field Trip: Burke Lake Park (7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station, VA)  

Assignment – Project #1, Part D

**Week 2**

**May 28**  Memorial Day – No class

**May 29**  The evolution of communication  
(Available online through Mason Libraries, call number QL776 .H38 1996eb)

(Available online through Mason Libraries, call number QL776 .H38 1996eb)

Burke Lake Park Project #1 due (Parts B, C & D)

**May 30**  Visual signals; Courtship  
Flash and dance, p. 165-191. (E-Reserves)


**May 31  Field Trip:** Frying Pan Farm Park (2709 West Ox Road, Herndon, VA)

**Week 3**

**Jun 4  Auditory signals; Alarm**


Frying Pan Park Project #2 due

**Jun 5  Chemical signals; Territory defense and cohesion**


**Jun 6  Tactile signals; Extreme senses; Deception**


**Jun 7  Field Trip:** Reston Zoo (1228 Hunter Mill Road, Vienna, Virginia, 22182)

**Mid-term Exam**
The final exam will be a take-home exam due to me by e-mail **no later than** 5:00 pm June 9

**Week 4**

**Jun 11  Communicating with domesticated and companion animals**


Reston Zoo Project #3 due
Jun 12  Human communication: Form and function


Jun 13  Human communication: Form and function


Jun 14  Field Trip: Vienna Dog Park (located in Moorefield Park, 700 Courthouse Road, Vienna, VA)
General information: [http://www.viennava.gov/Town_Departments/parklist.htm](http://www.viennava.gov/Town_Departments/parklist.htm)

Week 5

Jun 18  Language and animal communication


Vienna Dog Park Project #4 due

Jun 19  Language learning in animals


Jun 20  Catch up and review

Jun 22  Final Exam Scheduled 10:30-1:15
The final exam will be a take-home exam due to me by e-mail no later than 1:15 pm on June 22