

Mammalogy, fall 2025

BIOL/EVPP 438/538

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Course web page:

<http://mason.gmu.edu/~alaemmer/mammalogy/main.html>

You'll find a copy of this syllabus, lecture notes, and other information. Notice that Canvas won't be used for this class except to post your final exam scores.

Texts:

Mammalogy, 6th ed. T.A. Vaughan, J.M. Ryan and N J. Czaplewski. 2013, Jones and Bartlett, Publishers, LLC.

A field guide is also recommended/required*. There are several choices:

Mammals of North America, 2nd ed., Kays, R. W. and D. E. Wilson. 2009. Princeton Field Guides.

Newer, with updated taxonomy.

Peterson Field Guide to Mammals of North America, 4th ed., F. Reid. 2006. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

A standard, although a bit outdated.

The National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mammals: (Revised and Expanded). 1996. Alfred A. Knopf.

Uses photographs instead of drawings. Obviously a bit older than the others. Still, some people do prefer this one or use it as a secondary source.

* **Note:** these are probably not in the bookstore; they're available on line (try Amazon) and are probably cheaper that way.

Lecture exams:

Two exams, a midterm and final. Each is worth 35% of your total grade. Each exam is closed book, and will contain a combination of short essays, multiple choice, fill in the blanks, labeling and other things.

The midterm will use the entire class period (1:15 minutes). **On or about October 8th.**

The final (also 1:15) is not cumulative. **Monday, December 15th, at 10:30 a.m. (note time!).**

Labs:

Lab is worth 30% of your grade. You have three lab exams as well as various miscellaneous assignments.

Three identification exams, worth 7% each

Miscellaneous assignments worth 9%

Field trips are worth 1/2 extra credit point each (all you need to do is attend!).

Grading scale:

Your final grade will be based on your percent out of 100. The following grading scale will be used:

Undergraduates:

96-100 = A+	90 - 95 = A	86 - 89 = B+	80 - 85 = B
76 - 79 = C+	70 - 75 = C	60 - 69 = D	0 - 59 = F

Graduate students:

96-100 = A+	90 - 95 = A	86 - 89 = B+	80 - 85 = B
76 - 79 = C+	70 - 75 = C	0 - 69 = F	

You will notice that (-) grades are not used.

Miscellaneous

Honor code: if you are caught cheating, you will be taken to the honor committee. No arguments. Although quite rare, they have expelled people even for a first offense. Offenses are treated more severely for graduate students. All of this goes on your record. Use of AI (e.g. ChatGPT) is obviously a violation and will be dealt with most severely).

You are responsible for information and announcements presented in class and/or through e-mail. Not being in class or not checking your e-mail is not an excuse. Make sure your GMU e-mail is working: this is *your* responsibility!

Please do not be disruptive in class. No one is forcing you to be in class. If you want to have a conversation, use your phone, etc., please do it outside of class or you may be asked to leave.

Missed class : if for some reason class is canceled, then the following class will cover the material for the missed class. This is particularly important should an exam day be canceled for whatever reason (the exam will take place during our next scheduled class).

If you are having problems please see me. I'm here to help you learn this material **and** help you pass this class. I will do what I can to make sure that you make it through this class successfully. *Please don't wait too long if you are having difficulties.*

Finally, please try to be in class. *You will almost certainly not do well if you are absent too often.*

Tentative schedule:

Lecture dates may change a bit. Lab dates in particular may change depending on availability of destinations.

Week	Lecture topic	Lab topic (Wednesdays)	Comments
Aug. 25 / 27	Intro/Taxonomy	Introduction/Lab procedures	
Sept. 1 / 3	Evolution/origin	Skin lab	No class Monday (Labor day)
Sept. 8 / 10	Anatomy/physiology	Self study	No class Monday (Labor day)
Sept. 15 / 17	Anatomy/physiology	Self study	
Sept. 22 / 24	Mammal diversity	Skin exam	
Sept. 29 / Oct. 1	Mammal diversity <i>No lecture Wednesday</i>	<i>Camera traps at Piedmont (date is tentative)</i>	
Oct. 6 / 8	Mammal diversity Midterm (tentative)	Skull lab	
Oct. 13 / 15	Mammal diversity	Self study	
Oct. 20 / 22	Mammal diversity	Self study	
Oct. 27 / 29	Misc. topics (e.g. echolocation)	<i>Camera traps at Piedmont (date is tentative)</i>	
Nov. 3 / 5	Ecology	Skull exam	
Nov. 10 / 12	Ecology	Photo lab	
Nov. 17 / 19	Conservation biology	Self study	
Nov. 24 / 26	No class	No class	Thanksgiving (<i>we will take off the entire week</i>)
Dec. 1 / 3	Conservation biology	Photo exam	

Note: our field trip to the Piedmont will require more than 2 hours and 40 minutes, so for these days, lecture will be canceled so that we can use the entire time (4 hours and 15 minutes) for our field trip.

Information that applies to all classes at GMU:

(Some of this is a bit repetitive, but important. It applies to *all* your classes at GMU.)

Academic integrity

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit to those people in the proper, accepted form. When doing homework, the work must be yours. It is totally unacceptable to copy the work of another student in this course in any form.

GMU email accounts

Students must use their Mason email accounts—either the existing “MEMO” system or a new “MASONLIVE” account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES:

Writing center

A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

University libraries (“Ask a Librarian”)

<http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

Counseling and psychological services (CAPS)

(703) 993-2380;
<http://caps.gmu.edu>

University policies

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

Disability Resource Center

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.