General Vertebrate Zoology Biology 406 Fall 2026

Lecture: TTH 1230-1345, Cast 51 [some lectures via video]; reading: announced in lecture; lecture materials: stevenpoe.net

Instructor: Steve Poe, Castetter 180/anolis@unm.edu; Office hours: by appointment, after lecture, haphazard

Grading and requirements:

One of two overall grading schemes will be used

--Scheme 1: A = 90-100%, B = 80-89.9%, C = 70-79.9%, D = 60-69.9%, F = 0-59.9%

--Scheme 2: At the end of the semester, the distribution of points among students is examined for clumps of scores near 90, 80, 70, etc., and for distributional breaks between such clumps. Scores in the top clump receive an A, in the second clump receive a B, and so on. Scores below 60 receive a failing grade.

--I will use the grading scheme that gives the most students the highest grades.

--Four exams (1: 15%, 2: 25%, 3: 30%, 4: 10%)

--Research project, 20%: Projects are completed by individual students. *The project is a summary of information for a species or group of species of vertebrate that was not covered in depth during lecture*. The student chooses a species/group to work on and presents a summary of the biology of and recent research on the species/group. Your goal is to become the world's expert on a species or group of species of vertebrate and convey this information as an oral presentation to the class.

The presentation should be 10 minutes long, and should include the following:

--relationships of the studied species/group, including what analyses and data were used to estimate relationships (not just taxonomy); natural history, range/distribution, habitat, behavior, and ecology of the species/group; conservation status of the species/group, including how this status was determined

--discussion of a research paper published **after 2020** that tested an important biological hypothesis using your species/group as the primary study organism. *This discussion should take up approximately 50% of your speaking time.*

--use of information from publications from scientific journals (i.e., not from nonpeer-reviewed sources on the internet)

--meet a minimum time requirement of 8 minutes, maximum of 12 minutes

--good organization (background, species info, research paper, summary)

--PowerPoint or similar program used

--good presentation style: talk slow, speak to audience, don't read slides, slides well-organized with concise and grammatically correct text without spelling errors, good photos, answer questions well, etc.

Negative aspects of presentation (i.e., aspects that result in lower grades):

--poor use of sources/superficial treatment; research publication poorly understood; AI syndrome: use terms that you do not understand, course directions not followed; Wikipedia syndrome: too general, few citations of primary literature; lots of information available for the species/group that was not presented; inappropriate emphases of topics (e.g., focus on conservation of a species that is Least Concern); poor presentation style: confusing organization, talk too fast, stare at notes or slides, unhelpful figures/photos, slide text wordy or with spelling errors, use of profanity, handle questions poorly, presentation is too long or too short.

Week	Date	
1	18 Aug	Course logistics; sources of information
	20 Aug	History; species
2	25 Aug	Evolution, ecology, phylogenetics, species
	27 Aug	Evolution, ecology, phylogenetics, species
3	1 Sep	**Test 1**
	3 Sep	Close relatives of vertebrates
4	8 Sep	Cartilaginous fish
	10 Sep	Actinopterygian fish
5	15 Sep	Coelacanth, lungfish; transition to land, tetrapod characteristics
	17 Sep	Amphibians; salamanders
6	22 Sep	Caecilians; frogs
	24 Sep	Frogs
7	29 Sep	Turtles
	1 Oct	Lizards
8	6 Oct	**Test 2**
	8 Oct	**Fall Break**
9	13 Oct	Snakes; amphisbaenids
	15 Oct	Crocodylians
10	20 Oct	Dinosaurs
	22 Oct	Birds
11	27 Oct	Mammals
	29 Oct	Primates; humans
12	3 Nov	Naturalized vertebrates
	5 Nov	Environmental ethics
13	10 Nov	**Test 3**
	12 Nov	Student presentations
14	17 Nov	Student presentations
	19 Nov	Student presentations
15	24 Nov	Student presentations
	26 Nov	**Thanksgiving**
16	1 Dec	To be announced
	3 Dec	**Test 4**

2026 Fall finals: Dec 7-12

Accommodation Statement:
In accordance with University Policy 2310 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), academic accommodations may be made for any student who notifies the instructor of the need for an accommodation. It is imperative that you take the initiative to bring such needs to the instructor's attention, as he/she are not legally permitted to inquire. Students who may require assistance in emergency evacuations should contact the instructor as to the most appropriate procedures to follow. Contact Accessibility Resource Center at 277-3506 for additional information.
Accessibility Resources Center (Mesa Vista Hall 2021, 277-3506) provides academic support to students who have disabilities. If you think you need alternative accessible formats for undertaking and completing coursework, you should contact this service right away to assure your needs are met in a timely manner.

Title IX Statement:
In an effort to meet obligations under Title IX, UNM faculty, Teaching Assistants, and Graduate Assistants are considered "responsible employees" by the Department of Education (see pg 15 - http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/qa-201404-title-ix.pdf). This designation requires that any report of gender discrimination which includes sexual harassment, sexual misconduct and sexual violence made to a faculty member, TA, or GA must be reported to the Title IX Coordinator at the Office of Equal Opportunity (oeo.unm.edu). For more information on the campus policy regarding sexual misconduct, see: https://policy.unm.edu/university-policies/2000/2740.html. If you have experienced sexual violence or sexual misconduct, please ask a faculty or staff member for help or contact the LoboRESPECT Advocacy Center (see: https://loborespect.unm.edu/advocacy-center/index.html).

Academic Integrity Statement
Each student is expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters. The University reserves the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against any student who is found guilty of academic dishonesty or otherwise fails to meet the standards. Any student judged to have engaged in academic dishonesty in course work may receive a reduced or failing grade for the work in question and/or for the course.
Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, dishonesty in quizzes, tests, or assignments; claiming credit for work not done or done by others; hindering the academic work of other students; misrepresenting academic or professional qualifications within or without the University; and nondisclosure or misrepresentation in filling out applications or other University records.

UNM Indigenous Peoples' Land and Territory Acknowledgement
"Founded in 1889, the University of New Mexico sits on the traditional homelands of the Pueblo of Sandia. The original peoples of New Mexico — Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache — since time immemorial, have deep connections to the land and have made significant contributions to the broader community statewide. We honor the land itself and those who remain stewards of this land throughout the generations and also acknowledge our committed relationship to Indigenous peoples. We gratefully recognize our history."
Developed by the Special Assistant for American Indian Affairs to the UNM President in consultation with the Native American Faculty Council.