

**BIOL 2950G – Directed Study-Gopher Tortoise Behavior**  
**Biology Department, College of Arts and Sciences, Valdosta State University**  
**Fall Semester, 2024**

**CRN 85485 Section F (1 credit hour)**

**Instructor** - Dr. J. Mitchell Lockhart

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**Office Hours:** 9-10 and 11-12 Monday and Wednesday or by appointment

**Course hours:** Not applicable

**Textbook** - Not applicable

**Prerequisites:** BIOL 1107 and BIOL 1108 and 8 semester hours of upper division biology courses.

**Course Objectives:** Our goal is to conduct repeated follow-up survival surveys of 174 Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tagged hatchling gopher tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*) released in 2008 and 2009 at Reed Bingham State Park, Adel, Georgia. Mortality is high in gopher tortoise hatchlings and studying those that survive to subadult/adult age could suggest methods of reducing mortality. Secondary objectives are to evaluate demography parameters of surviving tortoises and to evaluate reliability of PIT tags after 14-15 years to monitor if PIT tagging gopher tortoise hatchlings is a practical tool for monitoring populations.

**Attendance: MANDATORY!** I do keep track of who is and isn't attending lecture and laboratory. This course has a considerable amount of new concepts and terminology and it is in your interest to attend class regularly. Any student disrupting the classroom and affecting the learning experience of others will be asked to leave. Along these lines, **NO** cell-phones, beepers, and/or associated earpieces or headphones are allowed either in the **lecture room or laboratory**. If you bring them to class, they must be turned **OFF (not on vibrate)** and placed **out of view**. Students are not permitted to leave the lecture or laboratory rooms to receive messages during regular course time. My policy is not to give a warning, rather, if a cell-phone or beeper activates during lecture/laboratory or you attempt to view or send messages, **you will lose one LETTER GRADE from your final grade**. Viewing a cell-phone or pager that activates on "silent" mode during a quiz or exam will be treated as an instance of **CHEATING** and handled accordingly (**in addition to the above penalty**). Those wishing to utilize laptop computers **as part of the class** are required to sit in the first few rows of the classroom. Viewing any material other than class material will result in the same penalties above.

If students must be absent due to a quarantine or isolation requirement for COVID-19, they must report this situation via the COVID Self Reporting Link in MyVSU and through the [Dean of Students Office](#)

**From the Valdosta State University Catalog:**

**Whether online or face-to-face, a student who misses or does not participate in more than 20% of the scheduled course or course activities could be subject to receiving a failing grade in the course.**

The University does not issue an excuse to students for class absences. In case of absences as a result of illness or special situations, instructors may be informed of reasons for absences, but these are not excuses.

**I will enforce this absence limit**, therefore after 9 lecture absences (for any reason) a student will be assigned an F for the course. After 6 laboratory absences (for any reason), a student will be assigned an F for the course. **Repeated tardiness** will be dealt with by **administratively withdrawing** the student(s) from the course AND/OR mandatory first of class quizzes for the entire class.

**Students With Documented Disabilities:** Students requiring accommodations or modifications because of documented disabilities should discuss this need with Dr. Lockhart at the beginning of the semester. Students with disabilities who are experiencing barriers in this course may contact the Access Office (<https://www.valdosta.edu/student/disability/>) for assistance in determining and implementing reasonable accommodations. The Access Office is located in University Center Room 4136 Entrance 5. The phone numbers are 229-245-2498 (V), 229-375-5871. For more information, please visit VSU's Access Office or email: [access@valdosta.edu](mailto:access@valdosta.edu). To request reasonable accommodations for pregnancy and childbirth, contact Christina Kidd, Student Conduct Coordinator at [chkidd@valdosta.edu](mailto:chkidd@valdosta.edu). Please note, you will be required to provide documentation from an appropriately licensed medical professional indicating the requested accommodations are medically necessary.

**Grades:** Student is required to produce a poster presentation for potential presentation at multiple meetings.

**Grade Scale:** 90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, 70-79 = C, 60-69 = D, <60 = F

**Privacy Act:** Because of the Buckley Amendment or Privacy Act, grades will not be discussed over the phone, given to friends, or given to relatives.

**Cheating:** Refer to the Student Code of Ethics in the Valdosta State University Student Handbook. A student caught cheating will be penalized ranging from receiving a zero for that assignment or test to failing the class.

**Title IX:** Valdosta State University (VSU) upholds all applicable laws and policies regarding discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex (including sexual harassment and pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, religion, age, veteran status, political affiliation, or disability. The University prohibits specific forms of behavior that violate Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs and activities that receive federal funding. VSU considers sex discrimination in any form to be a serious offense. Title IX refers to all forms of sex discrimination committed against others, including but not limited to: sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, and sexual violence by other employees, students or third parties and gender inequity or unfair treatment based on an individual's sex/gender. The designated Title IX Coordinator for VSU is Mr. Darius Thomas. To view the full policy or to report an incident visit:

<https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/title-ix/>

**Student Opinion of Instruction Statement:** At the end of the term, all students will be expected to complete an online Student Opinion of Instruction survey (SOI) that will be available through SmartEvals. Students will receive an email notification through their VSU email address when the SOI is available (generally at least one week before the end of the term). SOI responses are anonymous to instructors/administrators, and they will be able to access results only after they have submitted final grades. Before final grade submission, instructors will not be able to see any responses, but they can see the percentage of students who have or have not completed their SOIs. While instructors will not be able to see student names, an automated system will send a reminder email to those who have yet to complete their SOIs. Students who withdraw or drop a course will also be sent invitations to complete the Dropped Course Survey. Complete information about the SOIs, including how to access the survey, is available on the [SOI Procedures webpage](#).

**Coronavirus Resources:** VSU cares about student success both on and offline, and a variety of resources are available to help students both academically and personally during the Fall 2020 semester. One of the best resources is VSU's Coronavirus FAQ page located at <https://www.valdosta.edu/health-advisory/faq.php>. Information is available there about a

variety of topics in VSU's return-to-campus plan. A website devoted to the health and wellness of VSU students can be seen at <https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/finance-admin/campuswellness/student-resources.php>.

You can find information, including how you can access the Brightspace Pulse app that will allow you to view BlazeVIEW on your smartphone at <https://www.d2l.com/products/pulse/>. In BlazeVIEW, all VSU students have a course with guides for how to use tools in BlazeVIEW; search for "VSU BlazeVIEW Student Tutorial 2020." **Face Coverings:** As the Blazer Creed articulates, members of the VSU community are expected to live by the high standards of civility, integrity, and citizenship and embrace their responsibility as a member of the Blazer community. In recognition of this responsibility, and in response to the best available science and current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Georgia Department of Public Health, **every student must wear a face covering that covers their nose and mouth at all times while in any campus building, including in this classroom.** This requirement is intended to protect the health and safety of all VSU students, the instructor, and the entire university community. Anyone attending class without a face covering will be asked to put one on or leave. Students should also be sure they maintain a distance of at least six feet away from their fellow students and instructor and are seated in a seat that is designated to ensure that distance. Students who refuse to wear face coverings appropriately or adhere to other stated requirements may face disciplinary action for Code of Conduct violations.

#### **Virtual Proctored Exams:**

##### **USING LOCKDOWN BROWSER AND A WEBCAM FOR ONLINE EXAMS**

This course requires the use of LockDown Browser and a webcam for online exams. The webcam can be built into your computer or can be the type that plugs in with a USB cable. Watch this short video (<http://www.respondus.com/products/lockdown-browser/student-movie.shtml>) to get a basic understanding of LockDown Browser and the webcam feature. A student Quick Start Guide (<http://www.respondus.com/products/monitor/guides.shtml>) is also available.

#### **Important Dates: Midterm – October 10**

**\* The Instructor reserves the right to modify the above contents with proper notification.**