GEOS:6250 PALEONTOLOGY SEMINAR **Fall 2012**

COURSE GOAL: To (1) read and discuss publications on key issues, methods, and concepts in paleobiology and evolutionary biology; and (2) identify unresolved questions and develop practical research plans to address them.

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Hallie J. Sims
Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday 3:00 – 4:30pm or by appointment
Office: 237 Trowbridge Hall
335-0995; hallie-sims@uiowa.edu

MEETINGS: Tuesday 5:00-6:50pm in Room 131 Trowbridge Hall

FORMAT: Each week, the group will discuss several papers on a topic. Everyone is expected to read all assigned papers (part of your final grade is based on participation in discussion). Each assigned paper will be adopted by a student who will lead the class discussion of the paper and provide a handout. Each week, all students will turn in a one page research proposal (see details below).

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

Reading and Participation: (35%)

- Students are expected to read all assigned papers and to actively participate in discussion each week.

Leading Discussions: (35%)

- Each assigned paper will be adopted by a student who will lead the class discussion;
- The discussion leader should provide background, explain key terms and concepts, etc. The goal is to lead a group discussion, not give a lecture, and the discussion leader should be prepared with leading questions and controversies to prompt debate;
- The discussion leader must provide a handout for the class. The handout might contain: an explanation of terms or concepts; a summary of key points and results; graphs or figures from other papers relevant to the discussion; a list of related references; and provocative questions or statements to prompt debate.

Weekly Research Proposals: (30%)

- Each week, each student will develop an original research project proposal that, in your opinion, "needs to be done" to respond to criticisms, omissions, and/or errors in the assigned papers and/or the research area discussed. These might be related to the student's own research or an unrelated field or system. The research proposal should include (a) a clearly stated **hypothesis** to be tested; (b) a summary of the issue and system; (c) a practical outline of the data and methods that would be used; (d) discussion of how potential results would be interpreted relative to the hypothesis; and (e) literature cited. The paper does not need to actually include any new data or analyses;
- Papers summarizing the research proposal (ca. 1-page typed) are due in class. Each week, all students will verbally summarize their research proposal to the class;
- The goal is to move beyond criticizing what prior workers have published and to practice identifying an unanswered question, defining a hypothesis, and developing a practical research plan to address those criticisms.

TEXTS AND READINGS: Assigned reading from journals are available from the university library online. If you have difficulty accessing electronic journals, please ask for help. There are no required text books in this course.

GRADING: There are no exams in this course. Letter grades will be assigned on the basis of the point total at the end of the term (see breakdown of points above). Class attendance and participation will be considered in deciding final grades that are borderline.

ABSENCES: If possible, please e-mail the professor prior to absences (e.g., mandatory religious obligations, medical problems, official university activities, professional meetings, research-related trips) to obtain instructions for a make-up assignment. For example, if you are missing class to attend a conference, the make-up assignment will consist of writing a 1-page summary of a particularly interesting talk or poster that you saw and an original research proposal related to it (as described above).
Unexplained absences will be considered in calculation of final grade.

AMOUNT OF WORK EXPECTED: The College guideline is that one semester hour of credit is equivalent to three hours of work (class time + out-of-class preparation) each week over the course of the semester. This standard is the basis for the Registrar's Office assignment of credit hours for courses.

If the University is closed during our class time for any reason, you are responsible for checking the class ICON homepage for immediate updates. We reserve the right to modify this syllabus and/or course policies as the semester progresses. Any changes will be presented in class and on ICON announcements.

Department of Geoscience Syllabus Information:

Department Office: 121 Trowbridge Hall Telephone: 319-335-1818
Department Chair (DEO): Prof. M.K. Reagan DEO Office: 121C TH
DEO Telephone: 319-335-1820 DEO Email: geology-deo@uiowa.edu

Administrative Home
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.

Electronic Communication
University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences. (*Operations Manua*l, III.15.2. k.11.)

Accommodations for Disabilities
A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Academic Honesty
All CLAS students have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

CLAS Final Examination Policies
The final examination schedule for each class is announced around the fifth week of the semester by the Registrar. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the dates and times of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint
Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor, then the course supervisor, and then the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Student Academic Handbook.)

Understanding Sexual Harassment
Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather
In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Public Safety web site.

Rights and responsibilities in the classroom
The College's statement on student rights and responsibilities can be found at:
http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/x/.

Fall 2012 SCHEDULE:

21 August	***INTRODUCTION AND ORGANIZATION***
28 August	***t.b.a.***
4 September	***t.b.a.***
11 September	***t.b.a.***
18 September	***t.b.a.***
25 September	***t.b.a.***
2 October	***t.b.a.***
9 October	***t.b.a.***
16 October *(SVP)*	***t.b.a.***
23 October	***t.b.a.***
30 October	***t.b.a.***
6 November *(GSA)*	***t.b.a.***
13 November	***t.b.a.***
20 November	***FALL BREAK (No class)***
27 November	***t.b.a.***
4 December	***t.b.a.***