

## MASS EXTINCTIONS

### READINGS, WRITE-UPS AND ONLINE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#### Video lectures

Except for the first week and for weeks 8-14 in which students will be on campus for lectures and presentations, lecture content will be delivered by video podcast (vodcasts) and made available through the course website. Vodcasts should normally be made available at the beginning of the scheduled course time (Wednesday's at 4 PM). It would be beneficial to view the vodcasts prior to doing the assigned readings, write-ups, or discussions as they often provide necessary background information, principles, and vocabulary necessary to make sense of the readings.

#### Readings

Each week, one or more readings will be assigned dealing with that week's topic. Assigned readings will normally consist of sections from the text (Hallam, 2005) plus one or two additional scientific peer reviewed articles. All readings (except for those from the Hallam text) will be made available as downloadable Adobe pdf files from the course website. It is expected that students carefully read and understand the contents of assigned readings in order to (1) write up and submit a 1-page summary, and (2) use the content in the on-line discussion.

#### Weekly write-ups

Each week (prior to Wednesday at 4 PM) each student will email to me a 1-page summary of the assigned reading. If more than one reading is assigned, there will be instructions as to which reading should be used for the written review summary. Write-ups will be submitted as email attachments as either Adobe pdf files or as Microsoft Word files.

Your write-up of the reading will be in the following format: a full page (no more and no less), 1.5 line spacing and 1" margins. The first line(s) heading will be "A review of *Article title and author by Student Name*".

## Online Discussions

The instructor will start each online discussion by posting one or more questions at the beginning of each scheduled class (Wednesday). The discussion will continue until the following Tuesday night, at which time the discussion board will close for that week. Please focus on the questions posted. But do bring in related thoughts and material, other readings, or questions that occur to you from the ongoing discussion.

You are expected to post at least **two** substantive messages for each discussion question. Your postings should reflect an understanding of the course material.

Your postings should advance the group's negotiation of ideas and meanings about the material; that is, your contributions should go beyond a "ditto." Some ways you can further the discussion include:

- A) Expressing opinions or observations. These should be offered in depth and supported by more than personal opinion
- B) Making a connection between the current discussion and previous discussions, a personal experience, or concepts from the readings
- C) Commenting on or asking for clarification of another student's statement
- D) Synthesizing other students' responses
- E) Posing a substantive question aimed at furthering the group's understanding