

Biology 574 Population Genetics (Fall 2021, Credits: 3)

Course Description:

Population genetics has always been a field that is strong on theory. With technological advances (especially in DNA sequencing technologies and computational power), the field is enjoying a renaissance and explosion. This course is designed to give advanced undergraduates and graduate students an introduction to demographic, quantitative and evolutionary genetic models, and the analysis of genetic data at the population level. These models provide a framework for the understanding and analysis of genetic diversity and evolutionary processes. Learning is through a combination of lectures, discussion, hands-on exercises (computer simulations) and paper reading. The textbook readings should acquaint the student with the basic theories of population genetics and give some examples of experimental observations that illustrate tests of these theories.

By the end of the course students should be able to make predictions about micro-evolutionary process and should understand what types of forces act in determining the genetic composition of populations.

Goals:

- A. To present students with a balance between theory and data. This reflects a decades-long trend in the field to generate, test and combine theories with molecular data.
- B. To enable students to read and understand original literature.
- C. To enable students to solve (somewhat open-ended) questions with knowledge of population genetics theories.
- D. To enable students to begin to manipulate and analyze population genetics data. Choice of analytical approaches will depend on the salient questions, data generated, assumptions and software limitations
- E. Through hands-on computer exercises, students will learn how manipulating evolutionary forces will result in changes in population genetics data.

Lectures:

Tuesday 4:30-7:10 pm Prince William: Colgan Hall 204. Typically lectures followed by computer lab/paper discussion.

Instructors:

Haw Chuan (HC) Lim, Asst. Professor of Biostatistics and Bioinformatics
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Office hours: see Blackboard or by appointment

Blackboard:

I will use the learning management system Blackboard in this class. Lecture notes, announcements, assignments, in-class exercises, papers, etc will be posted to this site. Log in at <http://mymason.gmu.edu>.

Text:

Population Genetics, 2nd Ed; Mathew B. Hamilton; Wiley-Blackwell Press.

Websites: <https://hamiltonlabpage.weebly.com/text-book.html>

*Note: The second edition came out in early summer 2021 and I am in the process of transitioning to that. My current slides are based on the first edition and, honestly, I don't see many differences between the two (but I have yet to read the new edition from cover to cover). So, you are free to use the first or second edition. You can find some chapter resources for the first edition at the link below.

Chapter resources (first ed): <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/hamiltongenetics/default.asp>
Chapter resources (second ed): https://higheredbcs.wiley.com/legacy/college/hamilton/1118436946/link/web_page_2E_v1.9.html

Graded Work:	Points
4 take-home assignments, each containing multiple short-answer type questions. The questions will ask for quantitative and descriptive answers.	10
In-class computer lab exercises and class participation. Binder with exercises will be inspected before thanksgiving recess and after the final week of class. You will need a binder and spiral notebook/writing pad.	32 (lab exercises + literature review)
Literature review assignments. Each paper will be led by a student and discussed during class.	
Independent project and presentation (Population genetics R packages). 20 min presentation (17 min presentation + 3 min Q & A) that demonstrates the functionalities of a chosen R package. Students can use dummy datasets (usually provided with the R package) to demonstrate various aspects of the R package, such as importing and viewing data, conducting analyses and plotting results. Please discuss with me before deciding on a package that you will work on.	8
Final exam	20
	100

Reading assignments: Scientific papers and discussion

Each student will choose a recent scientific paper that focuses on either analysis of empirical data or theoretical issues. The student will then lead a discussion of the paper with other students actively participating. To aid discussion, the student will prepare a PowerPoint that contains salient discussion points and important figures. For each scientific paper, a review will also be turned in.

Students are expected to participate actively during paper discussion. Since class members will have read the article, avoid simply summarizing and instead pose critical questions

regarding the study design, important findings, how the study fits into the class topics and the field in general, and issues that future research should address. Students will be graded on the depth of their understanding of the article and the insights they share with the class.

In-class computer exercise

After each lecture (except on days with paper discussion), students will conduct computer exercises and simulations to reinforce the concepts and formulae learned during class. The computer exercises will be based on excel (using macros), web pages, teaching software and R (eg, learnPopGen). All exercises will be placed in a binder to be submitted and graded.

Independent project and presentation

At the end the semester, each student will showcase a piece of R-based population genetics or phylogenetics package that is used to analyze or simulate data. The student is free to select a package that is related to his or her research (software choice subject to approval). Dummy data (eg, from software tutorial) or real data will be used to demonstrate the interface, utility, functions and output of the software.

Grading and late work policy:

Unless you have received prior permission, you should not expect to be allowed to turn in assignments after the due date for full credit. Late work will not be accepted except in the case of a documented personal emergency or excused absence. You will not be allowed to make up an exam or other in-class graded work (eg, presentation) unless you have a documented, excused absence. It is your responsibility to provide written documentation from a third party of your emergency or university-excused absence. I do not consider work-related absences, work in other classes, oversleeping, or meetings with other professors a personal emergency. I do not add points at the end of a semester to “bump up” your letter grade.

Grading schema

Your final grade will be based on your score out of 100. See below for grading scale. All inquiries about partial credits or potential grading mistakes need to be addressed soon after the graded work is returned, not toward the end of semester.

A+	97-100	B	80-86
A	93-96	C	60-79
A-	90-92	F	59 or less
B+	87-89		

Academic integrity

If you are caught cheating, you will be taken to the honor committee. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification.

Disability Accommodations

If you have a learning or physical difference that may affect your academic work, you will need to furnish appropriate documentation to the Office of Disability Services. If you qualify for accommodation, the ODS staff will give you a form detailing appropriate accommodations for your instructor. In addition to providing your professors with the appropriate form, please take the initiative to discuss accommodation with them at the beginning of the semester and as needed during the term. Because of the range of learning differences, faculty members need to learn from you the most effective ways to assist you. If you have contacted the Office of Disability Services and are waiting to hear from a counselor, please let your instructor know.

Diversity

George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth.

An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected.

The reflection of Mason's commitment to diversity and inclusion goes beyond policies and procedures to focus on behavior at the individual, group and organizational level. The implementation of this commitment to diversity and inclusion is found in all settings, including individual work units and groups, student organizations and groups, and classroom settings; it is also found with the delivery of services and activities, including, but not limited to, curriculum, teaching, events, advising, research, service, and community outreach.

Acknowledging that the attainment of diversity and inclusion are dynamic and continuous processes, and that the larger societal setting has an evolving socio-cultural understanding of diversity and inclusion, Mason seeks to continuously improve its environment. To this end, the University promotes continuous monitoring and self-assessment regarding diversity. The aim is to incorporate diversity and inclusion within the philosophies and actions of the individual, group and organization, and to make improvements as needed.

Canceled and 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 in our next scheduled class).

If you are having problems: please come and see me. I am here to help you learn this material and master population statistics. I will do what I can to make sure that you make it successfully. Please don't wait too long if you are having difficulties.

Please try to be in class. You've probably heard it a million times already, but it's particularly true in this class. You will probably not do well if you are absent too often.

Tentative schedule

Week	Date	Topics	Book (1 st edition)	Book (2 nd edition)	Lit review	Assignments Due
1	8/24/2021	Introduction H-W, genotype frequencies	2.1 - 2.4	2.1 - 2.4		
2	8/31/2021	Fixation index and gametic disequilibrium	2.5-2.7	2.5-2.7		
3	9/7/2021	Genetic drift	3.1-3.5	3.1-3.5		
4	9/14/2021	Coalescence model of genetic drift	3.6.-3.7	3.6-3.8	Paul	
5	9/21/2021	Population structure & direct measures of gene flow	4.1-4.2	4.1-4.3		Due Assignment 1
6	9/28/2021	Population structure and patterns and indirect measures of gene flow	4.3-4.5	4.3-4.7	Daya	
7	10/5/2021	Mutation 1	5.1-5.2	5.1-5.2		Due Assignment 2
8	10/12/2021	Fall Break				
9	10/19/2021	Mutation 2 - mutation models, genetic distance	5.3	5.3		Computer exercises binder due
10	10/26/2021	Mutation 3 - reversible mutations, mutation drift & effective pop size (population mutation rate)	5.4	5.4	Paul	
11	11/2/2021	Mutation 4 Coalescent with mutations and molecular evolution (intro)	5.5	5.5		
12	11/9/2021	Neutral theory and molecular evolution	8	8	Daya	Due Assignment 3
13	11/16/2021	Natural selection 1	6.1-6.3	6.1-6.4		
14	11/23/2021	Natural selection 2 and 3	7.1-7.4	7.1-7.4		
15	11/30/2021	Independent Project Presentations				
	TBA	Final exam				Due Assignment 4 Computer exercises binder due