

American Museum of Natural History

Seminars on Science

Learning Online

How is learning online different from learning in a classroom?

Seminars on Science courses and classroom courses model the same process of scientific inquiry: learners ask questions, read and research, discuss and synthesize what they've learned, and ultimately generate new questions. Both kinds of courses use textbooks; all the other resources in a *Seminars on Science* course—including original essays, videos, and interactive animations—are web-based. An online course enables you to participate whenever and wherever you choose; you don't need to show up or sign in at a prearranged time. However, regular communication with your instructors and fellow learners through the *Seminars on Science* discussion forum is every bit as important as showing up in class!

How does the discussion forum work?

The discussion forum is the heart of each course: it's where learners, instructors and scientists interact. These are threaded conversations, not live chat, and are very easy to take part in. You can ask questions, delve deeper into new ideas or interesting concepts, and engage your classmates. You can read what everyone else has to say, and respond whenever you're ready. The instructional team guides the discussion threads and answers any questions.

Who will my teachers be?

A teacher–scientist team teaches each course. The course instructor is experienced in the subject area and in teaching online. He or she facilitates discussions in the online forum, helps with assignments, and is responsible for student evaluations. The course scientist is a PhD researcher affiliated with the American Museum of Natural History. He or she is an expert who brings remarkable expertise and research experience to the course. The scientist is available to answer any questions you might have about the material, as well as to share his or her experience in the field and perhaps any views on relevant science policy.

When do I log in to the class?

You can log in whenever it's convenient, but you should do so two or three times a week in order to keep up with the discussions. Your assessment will be based in part on this class participation. Each week the forum starts off with a central question, and the conversation evolves accordingly. For example, a student in New York might respond to the question on Tuesday morning. The instructor might reply later that day. And by Wednesday afternoon, students from California and Florida may have commented on the instructor's reply and posed new questions. Since these are accelerated graduate-level courses, you should plan to spend at least 8 to 10 hours per week on readings, assignments, projects and class discussions.