Goal 1.3 Reflection

In Biology 251 the main goal presented was to introduce the class to ecology and evolution principles. We were able to achieve this goal by conducting a research project on human demography. This project was to investigate a difference in survivorship between males and females. The deaths charted were between pre-1925 and post-1975 time periods. The deaths were tallied from visible death records labeled on the headstones of graves in Westview Cemetery. It was found that females lived longer than males, and it was presumed that this was because of the evolution of medicine and technology as well as the evolution of female immune systems.

This class was one of the first classes that forced me to think far outside the box. I would have never imagined myself using research in a field such as a cemetery. This lab allowed me to learn how to work in uncomfortable fields outdoors. It allowed me to compare the difference between an enjoyable study and one that is far outside my comfort zone. This is a great lesson to learn because not every experiment will be enjoyable or comfortable. This lab also taught me how to effectively analyze the area at hand. I know now not to bring too many items into the field because they will get in the way and distract me from the task. This isn’t something you would have to worry about in an indoor lab because you can always place the items in a cabinet or farther down the work bench.

The second class that required me to analyze different aspects of ecology and evolution was my Ichthyology class. I was required to write a very short paper on fish adaptations. These adaptations were all from previous knowledge, and the professor used this information as a comparison for future learning. Once I finished the class, I was able to go back to the paper and mentally add detailed information that I had learned and critically analyze different concepts of the fish’s ecology. This was a new approach for me because I was used to learning about information and then writing about it, but this class wanted us to write previous knowledge down and compare in the future.

Lastly, my Ichthyology class also required me to study Largemouth Bass. We had to present information on the fish’s taxonomy, distribution, morphology, conservation status, and information on Virginia’s species. Once all of this information was collected, we were then asked to go into the field, collect specimens, bring them to the lab, and collect different data on them. This data was then compiled and used to compare to the previous information that was obtained.

These classes allowed me to connect multiple biological principles and learn new techniques and skills. If I were to work in another environment such as these one, or ones that I do not enjoy I will be able to use my previous knowledge and apply it to my current state. This also means that if I work in an ecology style career then I will be ready for different tasks.