

September - December 2011

## Biology 1229f: Biology: The Secrets of Life

<p>Instructor: <b>Dr Brent Sinclair</b>          Department of Biology          BGS 2078          Email: <a href="mailto:bsincla7@uwo.ca">bsincla7@uwo.ca</a></p>	<p>Available:          9.20am-9.30 each day of class ,          in BGS 2078 during office hours:          Tuesday 8-9 am          Wednesday 12-1 pm          Thursday 4-5 pm,          or by email appointment</p>
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**Lectures:** Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9.30-10.30 am, Kresge K106

### Course Summary:

This course is designed specifically for non-science, first year students. The purpose of the course is to introduce students to science, especially the biological sciences. This is a lecture-only course that will first cover the basics of biology, and then use that knowledge to address a variety of topics, including guest lectures by biologists.

### Course Requirements

Participation in this course will require attending three lectures per week, reading at least one book about biology, and writing three short essays.

### Evaluation

Paper summaries (see below)	40 %
Mid-term exam (17 October 2011)	20 %
Final Exam (December exam period)	40 %

### Deadlines

Essay 1	5 October 2011 (Wednesday)
Essay 2	4 November 2011 (Friday)
Essay 3	25 November 2010 (Friday)

### Contacting the instructor

I encourage you to come to me with questions and/or comments, or to discuss biology in general. This can often be done immediately before or after class, but you can also post on the discussion boards on WebCT (your peers may also be able to answer your question, or learn from it), or by email. If you would like to meet in person, please email to arrange a mutually convenient time or come to my office hours. Please bear in mind that my office hours are shared between this and a large 2<sup>nd</sup> year class, so there may be times when you have to wait your turn... emailing for an appointment is a good alternative approach.

For your own protection, please only send emails from your uwo account – emails from non-uwo addresses will be deleted, as will emails that are impolite or written in the manner of a text message. Please begin your emails with a salutation (“Dear Dr Jones”) and end with some identifier of who you are (“Joseph P. Student”). Your student number

and email address also help. I will not usually respond to e-mails received on weekends, holidays or outside normal working hours, and will hold them until the next business day.

**Textbook:** There is no textbook for this course. However, if you wish to learn more about Biology, or feel the urge to back up my brief lectures with more detailed information, there is a wealth of popular science writing out there – feel free to ask me for details of specifics. I will also post a list of general reading about science on the WebCT page for those interested in taking it further. If you would like something a bit more formal, you could purchase a cheap, second hand 1<sup>st</sup> year biology text (any edition from the past decade or so would be fine) from the bookstore or from an online retailer like Amazon.ca. A quick search indicates that the 2004 edition of ‘Biology’ by Campbell and Reece can be acquired for about \$20. There are also many first year biology texts on reserve in the Taylor library.

**WebCT:** Much material, including lecture handouts (usually available 24 h before the lecture), additional reading, pictures and turnitin submission will appear on the WebCT site. In addition, important announcements will be made on WebCT, and you are responsible for obtaining this information. The discussion boards are also there to discuss concepts and to help each other out. I will keep tabs on discussions, but will not necessarily contribute to them myself.

**Lectures:** The lectures will provide a broad overview of biology, illustrated by specific examples. There is no text in this course and detailed notes will not be distributed. Although some lecture material will be made available, this material cannot be considered to represent lecture notes. Therefore, it is imperative that students attend all lectures and construct their own set of notes.

It is **your responsibility** to gather and review the information and to ask questions. It is **my responsibility** to present the information and to answer your questions.

Skills acquired from the lectures will include: learning to follow the class schedule, learning to pay attention, learning to record information, and learning to integrate information into a broad picture.

**Exams:** The mid-term exam (worth 20%) will be in the form of written answers, involving short answer questions (ranging from one line to a short paragraph) about specific facts and concepts from the lectures.

The final exam (worth 40 %) will also be in the form of written answers (ranging from one line to a short paragraph) about facts and concepts from the lectures. In grading the exams, I will be looking for your specific knowledge about key concepts and the biology of specific animals, as well as your grasp of the broader picture.

If you do poorly on the mid-term exam you may opt to discount its value from 20% to 10%, making the final exam worth 50% rather than 40%. This will maximize your learning potential associated with the mid-term exam and permit you to learn from your

mistakes. **If you wish to discount the value of your mid-term exam, you must request this in an email to Dr Sinclair within 7 days of the midterm marks being posted.**

If you request a review of your exam performance, I will be happy to provide it. However, keep in mind that I will only correct any mistakes I have made in addition and will not negotiate the grade awarded for any specific question.

**Paper summaries:** There are three paper summaries to write in this course, worth a total of 40 % of your final mark. You will select a scientific publication from a list provided, and write a summary of that article, according to a template that is available on WebCT. Note that there is a different list of papers for each essay, and you will not receive a mark if your summary is about an article that is not on the list. The purpose of these summaries is to give you experience looking up library and other resources, and to get experience reading scientific literature.

There are very specific instructions about the format of the summary and how to hand it in. You can lose a lot of marks by not following these instructions, and you are strongly encouraged to read the instructions carefully and follow them. Further details about the requirements are available on WebCT and in class.

#### **Paper summary contributions to your final grade**

Each summary you write will be given a mark out of 100. For your final grade, your essays will be weighted according to your performance in each. Your best essay will be worth 20 % of your final grade, your next best essay 15 %, and the essay for which you received your lowest mark will be worth 5 %.

#### **Turnitin.com**

Note that in this course I will require you to submit your summary to turnitin.com, as well as in hard copy. If you haven't come across it yet, turnitin.com is an anti-plagiarism tool that checks the text of your submission against the work of your classmates (which shouldn't be a problem, since you all have different topics), the turnitin.com database (previous assignments submitted to turnitin.com) and **the entire internet**. This means that if you copy things from the internet, you will be caught. Please be aware that turnitin.com is clever enough to detect plagiarism where a few words are changed in an attempt to make the passage 'different'.

**Submitting Summaries:** To hand in your paper summary you must perform the following actions by the deadline (which is the start of the lecture on the day of the deadline):

1. Submit an electronic copy to turnitin.com and **write the paper ID** that turnitin.com returns on the cover page that you can download from WebCT.
2. Download, print out, sign and attach a cover sheet to your hard copy. This attests that the copy you have submitted to turnitin is identical to the hard copy submitted for marking. It also has a convenient checklist of the common mistakes in essays to make it easy for you to make sure you will not lose marks unnecessarily.
3. Submit your hard copy at the beginning of class on the day it is due.

**Note that if you fail to perform one or more of the above steps, I will consider your work ‘not submitted’ and you will receive a late penalty – the mark you receive on the summary will be reduced by half** (ie: if your assignment would have received 90%, you will only receive  $90/2 = 45\%$ ).

Paper summaries will be subject to submission to turnitin.com for textual similarity review by the commercial plagiarism software under license to the University. All summaries submitted to the turnitin.com system will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in summaries subsequently submitted to the system. Use of this service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

### **Missing an exam or essay because of illness or other circumstances:**

If you miss an exam or test or summary deadline because of genuine circumstances, please take appropriate documentation to your Dean’s office. The counselor will contact me directly. Once you have taken your documentation to the Dean’s office, please also inform me (by email is fine), and we can talk about how to accommodate your absence. Note that you are not required to provide any details of the reason for your absences (this is assessed confidentially in the Dean’s office), but that the agreed-upon accommodation will not be valid if I do not hear from the Dean’s counselor.

Being ‘very busy’ is not a valid excuse. We are all busy, and the deadlines in this course are set well in advance. It is up to you to manage your time in a way that allows you to meet them.

### **Academic Integrity:**

As you know, we take academic integrity seriously at Western. Plagiarism in paper summaries or cheating in exams will be viewed as academic offenses and dealt with as such. Penalties range from severe mark penalties to failure of the course or expulsion from the University. More information on plagiarism is available from the following website, or from the academic calendar.

<http://www.usc.uwo.ca/education/scholastic.htm>

Common sources of plagiarism include making use of a previous year’s summary and deliberately or inadvertently copying it and wholesale copying of material from the internet or a published article.