

The Third Reviewer: Navigating your way through the review process BIO9216 – Syllabus 2025

1. Course Information

Meeting hours and location: TBA

Tentatively, there will likely be one 3-hour session per week. Each week will either be a lecture or a workshop where students present their work for feedback from others.

2. Instructor & TA Information

Instructor	Email	Office	Phone	Office Hours
Dr. Liana Zanette	lzanette@uwo.ca	Collip 207	519-661-2111 x88317	By appointment only*
*Office hours are not available after classes have ended				

Students must use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses when contacting their Instructor

3. Course Description

This course will introduce students to the peer-review process largely using the field of Ecology and Evolution to explain the process. Students will learn by doing, workshop-style. Attendance and participation is required.

Topics fall into two broad categories:

- (1) Pre-submission Preparation. Everything you need to know to get your manuscript in the pipe. These steps are not as straightforward as they may sound and there are many details to consider. I will walk you through that process. Some items include the editorial structure of journals, how to choose a journal, writing the cover, how to get everything ready for the online submission.
- (2) Post-review Decisions. What to do when you receive the decision letter from the Editor. Some topics include how to interpret the letter from the editor once a decision is made, how to respond to the letter, how to answer comments from reviewers in your resubmission, when you should and should not appeal a decision.

Expected cap of 12 students. Given the highly interactive nature of this course, assignments will be determined according to class size. However, to give you a bit of an idea, these assignments were done previously.

1. Pre-submission Assignment: Write the cover letter: You need to get your manuscript past the gatekeeper – the Editor. **Rejection can occur WITHOUT a review, so cover letter must convince the editor that the manuscript is worth reviewing.** You will write a cover letter based on a paper already published in the literature. We will workshop it to ensure it will make an impression.

2. Post-review Decision Assignment: You will ask your supervisor or another faculty member that works in your area of expertise, to provide you with one negative review they have received plus the original manuscript. The review should be negative and have lots of comments but should encourage resubmission, and in the end, the paper will have been accepted for publication. Check out the requirements of the journal, examine the reviews and indicate in an oral presentation (below) what is in the decision letter and reviews that make you think you have a chance if you resubmit. Write your responses to reviewers paying attention to all comments and alter the manuscript in edit mode. You will then receive the responses your supervisor wrote to compare. In an oral presentation, summarize all of this and be sure to point out the similarities and differences in the responses to reviewer's letters and share with us what tips you learned through this process.

4. Course Materials

Readings

Readings will be required and available for no fee on the Brightspace Reading tab.

Students are responsible for checking the course site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>) regularly for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#) page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Course Conduct Policy in the use of materials and AI

Audio and/or visual recording is not allowed (unless permission is given by the instructor). Use of AI in your actual written material is not permitted.

5. Methods of Evaluation

Tentatively, evaluations may involve oral presentations followed by a workshop. Presentations fall into two categories each equally weighted:

50% Pre-submission exercise: The cover letter

50% Re-submission exercise: Responses to reviewers

Students should be prepared to do at least 2 oral presentations, one for each category. The actual number of presentations will depend on class size.

6. Statement on Academic Offences

The statement: “Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Plagiarism will result in a grade of 0 for the assignment. Higher level penalties may also be applied.

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

Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.”

7. Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Attawandaron peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous peoples (e.g. First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society.

More information about Indigenous Services (<https://indigenous.uwo.ca/>) and this Land Acknowledgement (<https://communications.uwo.ca/comms/land-acknowledgement/>) are available.