

Biology 4436G: Evolutionary Behavioural Ecology
Course Outline (Winter 2026)
2 January 2026 draft

1. Course Information

Lectures:

Laboratory/seminar:

Prerequisites:

Biology 3436F/G or Psychology 3221F/G and either completion of at least 1.5 Biology courses from the 3000 level or above, or registration in year 4 of the Honours Specialization in Animal Behaviour.

Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from the Department of Biology to enroll in it, you may be removed and withdrawn from this course in accordance with university policy. This may be done after the add/drop deadline of the academic term, and the course will be marked as withdrawn (WDN) on your academic record. This decision may not be appealed.

2. Instructor Information

Instructors	Email	Office	Office Hours
Dr. Yolanda Morbey			

During the semester, electronic correspondence about Bio 4436G should be done in OWL Brightspace using the Discussions tool. Students must use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses when contacting the instructor or TA.

3. Course Syllabus, Schedule, Delivery Mode

Course Description: An introduction to the theory and practice of behavioural ecology, with a focus on strategies related to foraging, habitat selection, predator avoidance, competition, reproduction, parental care, and social behaviour.

Learning Outcomes and Objectives:

By the end of this course you should be able to:

1. Engage in meaningful discussion about behavioural ecology as a disciplinary framework.
2. Recall and explain key behavioural ecology theories.
3. Critically evaluate text in the context of behavioural ecology theories.
4. Independently collect and synthesize information to address a question in behavioural ecology.
5. Communicate behavioural ecology knowledge in written forms.

Key Dates:

4. Course Materials

Required:

Laptop: Use your own. You must have a stable internet connection and a working microphone.

OWL Brightspace: All course documents and information (syllabus, lecture files, instructional documents, required readings, etc.) **will be posted to OWL and students are responsible for checking the course OWL site <https://westernu.brightspace.com/> on a regular basis for updates.** If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the OWL Help page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk, which can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Book: Davies, N.B., J.R. Krebs, and S.A. West. 2012. An introduction to behavioural ecology. 4th edn. Wiley-Blackwell (the e-text is available for purchase for \$54.00 from the bookstore)

Texts: Additional readings will be drawn from the primary literature.

Software: Statistical analysis software (preferably R and R Studio).

5. Methods of Evaluation

Grading Scheme and Assessment Dates

15%	Midterm test
5%	Crayfish Lab write-up
5%	Commonplacing book check
5%	Optimal Foraging Lab write-up
10%	Goose Lab write-up
5%	Commonplacing book check
20%	Proposal
35%	Final exam (date TBA)

The final exam will be in person. The exam is cumulative will cover all lecture content & readings.

- ☒ Written assignments will be submitted to Turnitin (statement in policies below)
- ☒ Students will have 1 submission to Turnitin
- ☒ Rubrics will be used to evaluate assessments and will be posted with the instructions
- ☒ After an assessment is returned, students should wait 24 hours to digest feedback before contacting their evaluator

Click [here](#) for a detailed and comprehensive set of policies and regulations concerning examinations and grading. The table below outlines the University-wide grade descriptors.

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

Use of Generative AI Tools

Guidance for the use of generative AI tools can be found here: <https://ai.uwo.ca/Guidance/index.html>.

Use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini) for content generation **is prohibited for all assignments** in this course. Ultimately, everything submitted for grading is the students' responsibility.

Generative AI tools may be used to support studying, but when doing so, students must accept the risks and understand the ethical ramifications.

Appropriate uses in this course:

- Clarification of terms & concepts
- Brainstorming

Inappropriate uses:

- Content generation
- Code writing
- Translation
- Summarization of readings
- Grammar & spell-checking (instead, use spelling and grammar checking in Word)
- Submission and/or revision of written text
- Plagiarism
- Infringement of copyright
- Presentation of fabricated or false information

General information about missed coursework

Students must familiarize themselves with the *University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs*, posted on the Academic Calendar:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf,

This policy does not apply to requests for Academic Consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person.

The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult [Accessible Education](#).

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

All Academic Consideration requests must include supporting documentation; however, recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make one

Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** in this course. However, the following assessments are excluded from this and, therefore, always require formal supporting documentation:

- Midterm test
- Final exam

When a student mistakenly submits their one allowed Academic Consideration request without supporting documentation for the assessments listed above or those in the Coursework with Assessment Flexibility section below, the request cannot be recalled and reapplied. This privilege is forfeited.

Deadlines are fixed. Late penalties (1% of course grade per 24 h) will accrue immediately after a deadline. All deadlines (except for the April 9th deadlines) will be subject to a 48 h **No-Late-Penalty Period** when accrued late penalties will not be deducted. For example, if you hand in the Crayfish Lab write-up 40 h after the deadline, a 2% late penalty will have accrued but this late penalty will not be applied. If you hand in your Crayfish Lab write-up 50 h after the deadline, a 3% late penalty will have accrued and this late penalty will be applied (i.e., the maximum grade you can achieve on this assignment will be 2/5).

If you are unable to meet a course requirement on time due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

Assessments worth $\geq 10\%$ of the overall course grade:

Formal academic accommodations will be considered for the following evaluations:

- Midterm test or make-up midterm test (15%). The make-up date for the midterm test will be If you miss the make-up midterm for accommodated reasons, your final exam will be worth 50%.
- Goose Lab write-up (10%). The period of accommodation is the period prior to the deadline. An extension will be granted equivalent to the period of accommodation.
- Proposal & final commonplace book (25%). The period of accommodation is the period prior to the deadline. An extension will be granted equivalent to the period of accommodation.

Assessments worth $< 10\%$ of the overall grade:

- Crayfish Lab or Optimal Foraging Lab write-ups. Report an Undocumented Absence (1 per term per course). The period of accommodation is the period prior to the deadline. An extension will be granted equivalent to the period of accommodation. If there are no undocumented absences remaining, obtain formal academic accommodation or forfeit the assignment. If forfeiting, the grades will be re-weighted to the final exam.
- Mid-term commonplace book check-in. Report an Undocumented Absence (1 per term per course). The period of accommodation is the period prior to the deadline. An extension will be granted equivalent to the period of accommodation. If there are no undocumented absences remaining, obtain formal academic accommodation or forfeit the assignment. If forfeiting, the grades will be re-weighted to the proposal.

When a student misses the Final Exam and their Academic Consideration has been granted, they will be allowed to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam). See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)), especially for those who miss multiple final exams within one examination period.

6. Additional Statements

6.1 Religious Accommodation

When a recognized religious holiday or observance conflicts with an examination, test, or other scheduled academic obligation, students must request accommodation via the University's Student Absence Portal (SAP). This request should identify the conflict and specify which course component(s) (e.g. test, midterm, exam) are affected.

Students are encouraged to submit the SAP request as early as possible, but no later than two weeks before any examination, or one week before any mid-term test or quiz, to allow sufficient time for adjustment.

The SAP request serves as official notification to both the course instructor and the Academic Advising Office, in accordance with University policy:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf

The Faculty of Science considers religious accommodations as scheduling conflicts. Instructors should provide either a make-up exam or an earlier sitting of the same exam to accommodate the student.

For more information on recognized religious holidays, please visit the Diversity Calendar posted on the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion website - <https://www.edi.uwo.ca>

6.2 Academic Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf.

6.3 General Academic Policies

The website for Registrar Services is <https://www.registrar.uwo.ca/>.

Use of @uwo.ca email: In accordance with policy, https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section1/mapp113.pdf, the centrally administered e-mail account provided to students will be considered the individual's official university email address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that emails received from the University at their official university address are attended to in a timely manner.

Requests for Relief (formally known as "appeals")

Policy on Request for Relief from Academic Decision:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/requests_for_relief_from_academic_decisions.pdf

Procedures on Request for Relief from Academic Decision (Undergraduate):

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/undergrad_requests_for_relief_procedure.pdf

6.4 Scholastic Offences

Policy on Scholastic Offences: https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

Procedures on Scholastic Offences (Undergraduate):

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/undergrad_scholastic_offence_procedure.pdf

Use of Electronic Devices During Assessments

In courses offered by the Faculty of Science, the possession of unauthorized electronic devices during any in-person assessment (such as tests, midterms, and final examinations) is strictly prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to: mobile phones, smart watches, smart glasses, and wireless earbuds or headphones.

Unless explicitly stated otherwise in advance by the instructor, the presence of any such device at your desk, on your person, or within reach during an assessment will be treated as a *scholastic offence*, even if the device is not in use.

Only devices expressly permitted by the instructor (e.g., non-programmable calculators) may be brought into the assessment room. It is your responsibility to review and comply with these expectations.

Use of Generative AI Tools

The use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini, or similar platforms) is **not permitted** in the completion of any course assessments, including but not limited to: assignments, lab reports, presentations, tests, and final examinations (see Section 5). Using such tools will be treated as a **scholastic offence**.

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>).

6.5 Support Services

Please visit the Science & Basic Medical Sciences Academic Advising webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, requests for relief, exam conflicts, and many other academic-related matters: <https://www.uwo.ca/sci/counselling/>.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

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

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.

Please contact the course instructor if you require lecture or printed material in an alternate format or if any other arrangements can make this course more accessible to you. If you have any questions regarding accommodations, you may also wish to contact Accessible Education at

http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

Learning-skills counsellors at Learning Development and Success (<https://learning.uwo.ca>) are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.