

Biology 4920G Course Outline

1. Course Information

Course Information

Biology 4920G

Winter 2026, 3-hour tutorial per week. No formal lectures.

Tuesday, 2:30 pm to 5:30 pm, See Westerns time table

Forty percent of your grade is focused on work associated with Western's Community-Engaged Learning (CEL)

List of Prerequisites

Restricted to Year 4th Honours Specialization in Biology and Scholars' Electives.

If we enter another lockdown, Zoom and OWL will be the primary interfaces, and the video recordings will be used for assessments.

2. Instructor Information

Instructors	Email	Office	Phone	Office Hours
Dr. G. Taylor (instructor)	gtaylor8@uwo.ca	BG2066	81467	Thurs, 9am-10am & 3pm - 4pm
Dr. Katie Oates CEL Coordinator	koates2@uwo.ca	Careers & Experience	81081	appointment

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

Office hours are by appointment. I prefer in-person meetings, but I am also comfortable with Zoom if necessary.

3. Course Syllabus, Schedule, Delivery Mode

Course objectives and learning outcomes: This course's primary focus is to develop further the skills necessary to search, understand, synthesize, discuss, and present (both written and oral) current biology topics. After completing this course, you should be able to speak more spontaneously, instinctively, and directly with an audience and learn how to adapt the presentation's complexity for different audiences. We will also apply our skills to our community; this will be a core component of the course, facilitated by *Community Engaged Learning (CEL)* at Western (<http://experience.uwo.ca/index.html>).

Course website: An OWL Brightspace website will be established for this course. Items posted to this website include required readings, videos, announcements, grades, valid URLs, and assignment instructions.

Classes begin: January 6th, 2026

Winter Reading Week: February 17th

Classes end: April 9th,

Exam period: April 12th to the 30th, ***no exam for this class***

Date	Scheduled Topics	Assignment Due	Assig. value
Jan 6	Introductions & CEL		
Jan 13	Presentations	CEL partner assigned	
Jan 20	Presentations		
Jan 27	Reflections on talk-style		
Feb 3	Presentations with PP		
Feb 10	Presentations with PP	Research Paper ALL	20%
Feb 17	<i>Reading break</i>		
Feb 24	CEL review of projects	Participation	10%
Mar 3	Graded Research Presentations (GRP)	Research talks	20%
Mar 10	GRP	Research talk	
Mar 17	GRP	Research talk	
Mar 24			
Mar 31	CEL presentations & submissions		40%
Apr 1 & 7	CEL presentations & submissions	Participation	10%

4. Course Materials

There is no required textbook or software. Course material will be posted to OWL:

<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>. Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>). It's imperative to come to class with news and updates, which will be provided at this time. Seminar time 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.

Technical Requirements

On the chance that courses go online a stable internet connection and computer with working microphone and/or webcam.

5. Methods of Evaluation

Grading Scheme and Assessment Dates (see schedule for dates)

20% - participation and leadership

20% - 2000-word essay (research paper on a non-human topic)

20% - a 15-minute research presentation based on your paper

40% - *CEL partner's evaluation, deliverables, reflective essay, group-based exit talk

****all final grades based on interviews with your instructor****

Grading scale for undergraduates as determined by the Senate: University-wide grade descriptors: **A+** 90-100, and one could scarcely expect better from a student at this level. An **A** 80-89 Superior work, which is clearly above average. **B** 70-79 Good work, meeting all requirements. **C** 60-69 Competent work, meeting requirements **D** 50-59 Fair work, minimally acceptable. **F** below 50 Fail

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://www.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:

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.

Evaluation Scheme for Missed Assessments

Your assignment is due on the specified day, ending at 10 pm. Submit your video recording (if needed) to a shared folder on Western OneDrive. Your writing, in addition to a hard copy, both in WORD and as a PDF, for this assignment will be forwarded to an OWL portal, and it will be checked for plagiarism using Turnitin and for the detection of AI plagiarism. If a high AI score (above 30%) from Grammarly is detected, your instructor has the right to evaluate your knowledge and writing skills in person during office hours. Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day, and the cutoff date is a week after the assignment was due; in such cases, the work receives a grade of zero. All work must be completed, and assignment grades cannot be reweighted to another assignment. There are 14 days of class, and all will be counted towards your participation and leadership. Each class will count, and missing a class will require you to do more work, thereby increasing your engagement in other class time periods. If you miss a second class, the instructor will not reweight your participation grade.

6. Additional Statements

Religious Accommodation

When conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request an accommodation for their absence in writing to the course instructor and/or the Academic Advising office of their Faculty of Registration. This notice should be made as early as possible but not later than two weeks prior to the writing or the examination (or one week prior to the writing of the test).

Please visit the Diversity Calendars posted on our university's EDID website for the recognized religious holidays:

<https://www.edi.uwo.ca>.

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

Academic Policies

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

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 e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at their official university address is attended to in a timely manner.

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:

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

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>).

Support Services

Please visit the Science & Basic Medical Sciences Academic Advising webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, 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 and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (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. You may also wish to contact Accessible Education at

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

if you have any questions regarding accommodations.

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.

Western University is committed to a thriving campus as we deliver our courses in the mixed model of both virtual and face-to-face formats. We encourage you to check out the Digital Student Experience website to manage your academics and well-being: <https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/>.

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