**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**Biol 824 “Gateway to Graduate Studies in Biology” Fall 2025**

**Course Instructors: Dr. Bruce Tufts** Department of Biology

Contact a: [tuftsb@queensu.ca](mailto:tuftsb@queensu.ca)

**Dr. Diane Orihel**

Department of Biology and School of Environmental Studies

Contactb: via OnQ Forum

a *Dr. Tufts requests that students enter “BIOL824” in subject line of emails*

b *Dr. Orihel requests that students communicate with her about this course via the OnQ Forum.*

**Technology/Locations of Course Components:**

Classes are on **Tuesdays** and **Thursdays** from **2:30 PM to 4:00 PM** in **The EEB Lounge Biosci 4338**.

**Note** – classes will begin in Week 3, on Sept. 16th with Dr. Diane Orihel. A full schedule for the course will be posted in onQ.

**OnQ Learning Management System:** The site for this course should be visible to enrolled students on

OnQ which is accessed through MyQueensU. Course announcements will be posted in onQ so please ensure that you have opted-in to notifications to your email or SMS.

**Table of Contents:**

1. Intended Student Learning Outcomes............................................................................................................ 2
2. Course Structure................................................................................................................................................. 2
3. Assessment of Learning Outcomes ............................................................................................................... 2
4. Grading Scheme and Grading Method ..................................................................................................... 3
5. Time Commitment and Important Dates........................................................................................................ 4
6. Statement on Academic Integrity .................................................................................................................. 4
7. Calculator Policy ............................................................................................................................................. 5
8. Technology ....................................................................................................................................................... 5
9. Turnitin Statement.............................................................................................................................................. 5
10. Copyright of Course Materials....................................................................................................................... 6
11. Acknowledgement of Territory...................................................................................................................... 6
12. Accommodation for Disabilities..................................................................................................................... 6
13. Academic Consideration for Students with Extenuating Circumstances .................................................. 7
14. Discussion Guidelines ......................................................................................................................................... 7

***1. Intended Student Learning Outcomes***

The **overall aim** of this course is to provide a strong foundation of fundamental knowledge and skills for new MSc and PhD students in the Department of Biology to succeed in their graduate programs.

**The specific objectives of this course are:**

1. To familiarize new students with procedures and protocols for (a) **navigating their graduate program** and (b) **conducting research in the field of biology**.

2. To guide new students in developing a **strong proposal** for their thesis research. This iterative process will involve conversations with the student’s supervisor and instructors in this course.

3. To provide opportunities for new students to interact and forge **professional relationships** with fellow students and faculty members in the Department of Biology.

***2. Course Structure***

This course consists of two streams:

**Stream 1: Foundations of Communication and Proposal Writing (D. Orihel)**

Dr. Orihel will guide students through four workshops, which take place one week per month. For each workshop, students will be invited to read a paper beforehand and complete an associated assignment either in class, or within one week after the workshop.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Workshop** | **Topic** |
| 1 | Introduction to Science Communication |
| 2 | Literature Reviews & Evidence Syntheses |
| 3 | Proposal Writing & Editing |
| 4 | Proposal Evaluation |

**Stream 2: Development of Professional Skills (B. Tufts)**

Dr. Tufts (and other guest faculty from Biology) will lead students through a series of lectures and group discussions focusing on several important facets of the professional and interpersonal side of growing and succeeding as a graduate student and researcher. The end of term will be dedicated to having each student present their thesis work as a short, in-class oral seminar.

***3. Assessment of Learning Outcomes***

**Learning outcomes** for this course will be assessed through three different types of evaluations:

(i) Iterative versions of a research proposal building up to a final version

(ii) Self-reflections on topics covered in course modules; and

(iii) Group discussions that will hone interpersonal and communication skills.

(iv) Oral presentations to practice speaking skills with a group of your peers.

Detailed instructions for graded components and associated deadlines will be communicated in weekly folders on the course OnQ site.

***4. Grading Scheme and Grading Method***

Stream 1 and 2 are equally weighed (50% of final grade).

The graded components of Stream 1 are:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Workshop** | **Topic** | **Assignment** | **Mark (%)** |
| 1 | Introduction to Science Communication | Assignment C1: Elevator Pitch | 5 |
| 2 | Literature Reviews & Evidence Syntheses | Assignment C2: Literature Review | 10 |
| 3 | Proposal Writing & Editing | Assignment C3: Draft Proposal | 10 |
| 4 | Proposal Evaluation | Assignment C4: Peer Evaluation | 5 |
|  |  | Assignment C5: Final Proposal | 20 |

The graded components of Stream 2 are:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Deliverable** | **Topic** | **Due Date** | **Mark (%)** |
| 1 | Media Assignment | Nov 23 | 10 |
| 2 | Research Oral Presentation | In class – weeks 8, 10, 11 | 30 |
| 3 | Group Discussion - Participation | Throughout Term | 10 |

Grading Method

All components of this course will receive numerical percentage marks. The final grade you receive for

the course will be derived by converting your numerical course average to a letter grade according to

Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Numerical Course Average (Range)** |
| A+ | 90-100 |
| A | 85-89 |
| A- | 80-84 |
| B+ | 77-79 |
| B | 73-76 |
| B- | 70-72 |
| C+ | 67-69 |
| C | 63-66 |
| C- | 60-62 |
| D+ | 57-59 |
| D | 53-56 |
| D- | 50-52 |
| F | 49 and below |

***5. Time Commitment and Important Dates***

The **time commitment for this course** is 110 hours for the term:

10 weeks x 3 hours per week in class

12 weeks x ~ 6-7 hours per week of private study/writing

The important dates for Stream 1 are:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Workshop** | **Dates** | **Assignment** | **Due Date** |
| 1 | Sep 16 and 18 | Assignment C1: Elevator Pitch | 25-Sep-25 |
| 2 | Oct 21 and 23 | Assignment C2: Literature Review | 30-Oct-25 |
| 3 | Nov 4 and 6 | Assignment C3: Draft Proposal | 13-Nov-25 |
| 4 | Nov 25 and 27 | Assignment C4: Peer Evaluation | In Workshop |
|  |  | Assignment C5: Final Proposal | 4-Dec-25 |

The important dates for Stream 2 are:

**Note:** there will be no lectures in weeks 1 and 2, lecture schedule for stream 2 will be posted in onQ:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Dates** | **Assignment** | **Due Date** |
| Oct 28, 30 | Proposal Oral Presentations | In Class |
| Nov 11, 13 | Proposal Oral Presentations | In Class |
| Nov 18, 20 | Proposal Oral Presentation | In Class |
|  | Media Assignment | 23-Nov |

***6. Statement on Academic Integrity***

Queen’s students, faculty, administrators and staff all have responsibilities for upholding the fundamental values of academic integrity; honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage (see www.academicintegrity.org). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the "freedom of inquiry and exchange of

ideas" essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities). Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments and their behaviour conform to the principles of academic

integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts and Science Calendar (see Academic

Regulation 1), on an Arts and Science website page on academic integrity, and from the instructors of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

Plagiarism*.* Regardless of how and where you retrieve information, the principles of academic integrity apply. Please visit these helpful websites to help you make sure that you are able to write things in your own words:

*https://*[*www.queensu.ca/academicintegrity/students/avoiding-plagiarismcheating*](http://www.queensu.ca/academicintegrity/students/avoiding-plagiarismcheating%20) *https://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/academic-writing/avoiding-plagiarism-paraphrasing* [*http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA\_paraphrase.html*](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_paraphrase.html)

***7. Calculator Policy***

This course does not require a calculator.

***8. Technology***

This course uses Queen’s OnQ Learning Management System for course management. The site for this course should be visible to enrolled students through Queen’s OnQ.

Web Browsers. OnQ performs best when using the most recent version of the web browsers. Chrome and

Firefox are the recommended browsers for using OnQ.

Internet Speed. While wired internet connection is encouraged, we recognize that students may be relying on a wireless connection. A minimum download speed of 10 Mbps and up to 20 Mbps for multimedia is recommended. To test your internet speed, https:[//www.](http://www.speedtest.net/)sp[eedtest.net/](http://www.speedtest.net/)

For technology support ranging from setting up your device, issues with onQ to installing software, contact ITS Support Centre: https:[//www.](http://www.queensu.ca/its/itsc)q[ueensu.](http://www.queensu.ca/its/itsc)c[a/its/itsc](http://www.queensu.ca/its/itsc)

***9. Turnitin Statement***

This course uses Turnitin, a third-party application that helps maintain standards of excellence in academic integrity. Normally, students will be required to submit their course assignments through onQ to Turnitin. In doing so, students' work will be included as source documents in the Turnitin reference database, where they will be used solely to detect plagiarism.

Turnitin is a suite of tools that provide instructors with information about the authenticity of submitted work and facilitates the process of grading. Turnitin compares submitted files against its extensive database

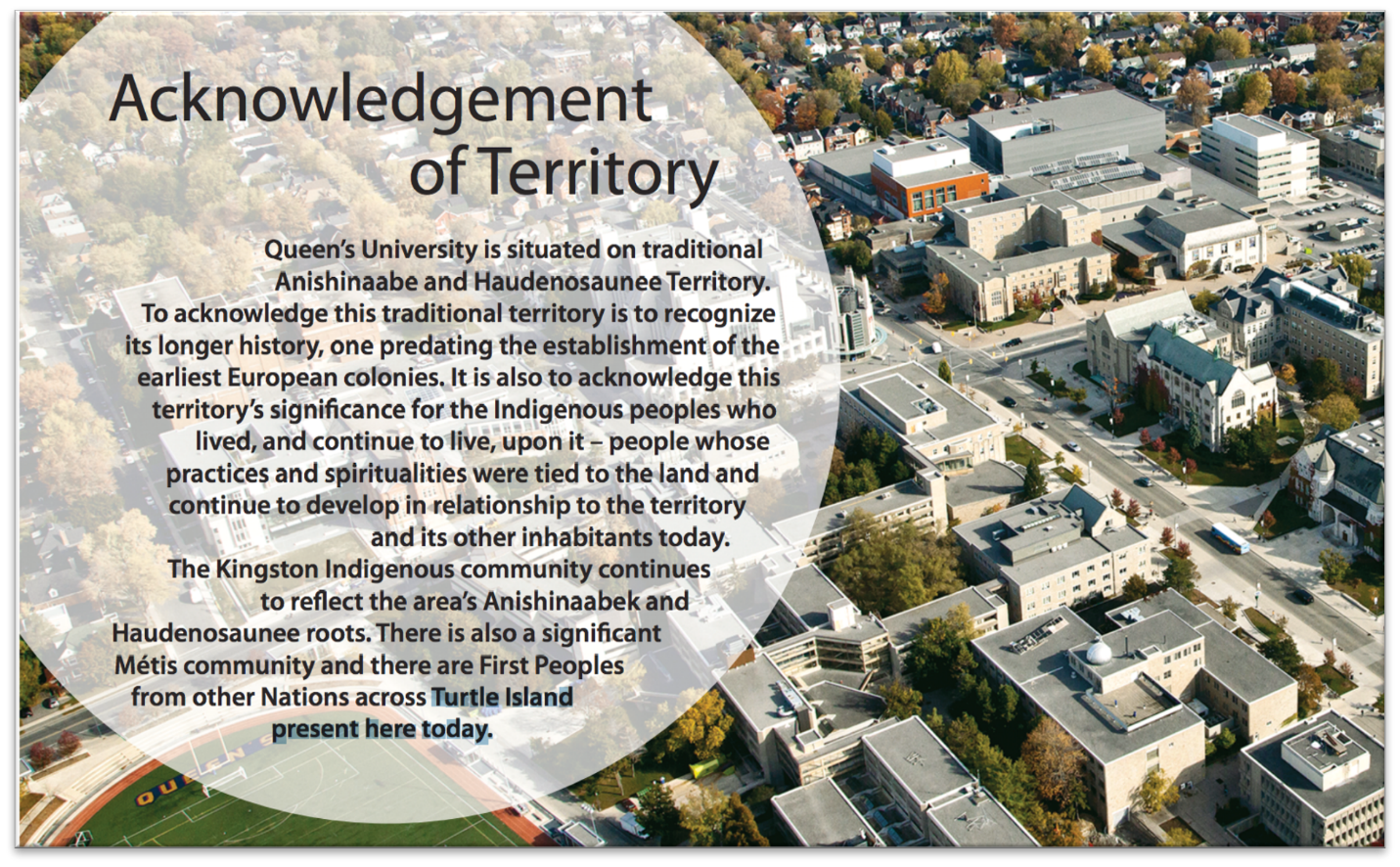
of content and produces a similarity report and a similarity score for each assignment. A similarity score is the percentage of a document that is similar to content held within the database. Turnitin does not determine if an instance of plagiarism has occurred. Instead, it gives instructors the information they need to select the authenticity of work as a part of a larger process.

Please read Turnitin’s Privacy Pledge, Privacy Policy, and Terms of Service, which govern users' relationship with Turnitin. Also, please note that Turnitin uses cookies and other tracking technologies; however, in its service contract with Queen's, Turnitin has agreed that neither Turnitin nor its third-party partners will use data collected through cookies or other tracking technologies for marketing or advertising purposes. For further information about how you can exercise control over cookies, see Turnitin’s Privacy Policy

Turnitin may provide other services that are not connected to the purpose for which Queen’s University has engaged Turnitin. Your independent use of Turnitin’s other services is subject solely to Turnitin’s Terms of Service and Privacy Policy, and Queen’s University has no liability for any independent interaction you choose to have with Turnitin.

***10. Copyright of Course Materials***

Course materials created by the course instructors, including all slides, presentations, handouts, assignments, and other course materials, are the intellectual property of the instructors. It is a departure from academic integrity to distribute, publicly post, sell or otherwise disseminate an instructor’s course materials or to provide an instructor’s course materials to anyone else for distribution, posting, sale or other means of dissemination, without the instructors’ express consent. A student who engages in such conduct may be subject to penalty for a departure from academic integrity and may also face adverse legal consequences for infringement of intellectual property rights.

***11. Acknowledgement of Territory***

*Credit:* Queen's University Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre

***12. Accommodations for Disabilities***

Queen's University is committed to achieving full accessibility for people with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all their academic activities. The Senate Policy for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities was approved at Senate in November 2016. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need academic accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact the **Queen's Student Accessibility Services (QSAS)** and register as early as possible.  For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the QSAS website.

***13. Academic Consideration for Students with Extenuating Circumstances***

Queen’s University is committed to providing academic consideration to students experiencing extenuating circumstances that are beyond their control and are interfering with their ability to complete academic requirements related to a course for a short period of time. The University has a Senate Policy on Academic Consideration for Students in Extenuating Circumstances. Each Faculty has developed a protocol to provide a consistent and equitable approach in dealing with requests for academic consideration for stu- dents facing extenuating circumstances. The Faculty of Arts and Science protocol and the portal where a request can be submitted is: [http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/accommodations.](http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/accommodations) For guidance on **submitting requests**, please see refer to the Resource Guides available on the Academic Consideration website under “Apply- ing for Academic Consideration.” Students are encouraged to submit requests as soon as the need becomes apparent and to contact their Professors/Course Coordinators as soon as possible once Consideration has been verified. Any delay in contact may limit the Consideration options available.

***14. Discussion Guidelines***

University is a place to share, question and challenge ideas. Each student brings a different lived experience from which to draw upon. To help one another learn the most we can from this experience please consider the following guidelines:

• Make a personal commitment to learn about, understand, and support your peers.

• Assume the best of others and expect the best of them.

• Acknowledge the impact of oppression on the lives of other people and make sure your writing is respectful and inclusive.

• Recognize and value the experiences, abilities, and knowledge each person brings.

• Pay close attention to what your peers write before you respond. Think through and re-read your writings before you post or send them to others.

• It’s ok to disagree with ideas, but do not make personal attacks.

• Be open to being challenged or confronted on your ideas and to challenging others with the intent of facilitating growth. Do not demean or embarrass others.

• Encourage others to develop and share their ideas.