

Course Information

General Course Information

Course: BIOL360

Course title: Biotechnology and Society

Pre-requisites: BIOL205 or BCHM218

Semester and year: Fall 2026

Number of credits: 3.0

Learning hours: 120 (36 Lecture, 12 Tutorial, 72 Private Study)

Delivery Mode: in-person lecture and tutorial

Calendar Description

The contributions and effects of biotechnology on humanity will be explored from the perspective of their impacts on society, including moral and ethical issues. Biotechnological contributions to society to be explored will include those in medicine, industry, and agriculture.

Course Overview

Biotechnology applies biological knowledge to address problems in areas such as agriculture, food, the environment, industry, medicine, and forensics. These applications can provide significant benefits while also raising questions about evidence, risk, regulation, ethics, access, and societal impact.

This course examines how biotechnology is developed, evaluated, and used in society. Students will consider not only what biotechnology can do, but also what the evidence tells us, what remains uncertain, who may be affected, and how decisions about biotechnology should be made.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain and interpret the biological principles underlying selected biotechnological applications and the regulations governing their use.
2. Evaluate scientific evidence concerning the effectiveness, benefits, risks, limitations, and uncertainties associated with biotechnology.
3. Analyze the ethical, social, and societal implications of biotechnology and use these considerations, together with scientific evidence, to develop evidence-based recommendations concerning its use.

Topics / Schedule

Module I: Foundations of Biotechnology

- **Weeks 1–3:** Topics may include: biotechnology, biological foundations, genetic engineering, genome editing, evidence, risk, regulation, ethics, and biotechnology in society.
- **Tutorial 1:** Biotechnology: From Problem to Solution

Module II: Biotechnology in Agriculture, Food and Industry

- **Weeks 4–6:** Topics may include: agricultural, food, and industrial biotechnology, including conventional and modern approaches, biotechnology-based production, sustainability, and societal considerations.
- **Tutorial 2:** Evaluating Agricultural Biotechnology

- **Tutorial 3:** Biotechnology in Food and Industry

Module III: Environmental Biotechnology

- **Weeks 7–9** - Topics may include: environmental applications of biotechnology, biodiversity, conservation, environmental monitoring and restoration, population-level applications, environmental change, and ecological risks.
- **Tutorial 4:** Environmental Biotechnology: Detecting & Remediating
- **Tutorial 5:** Biotechnology for Conservation
- **Tutorial 6:** Biotechnology for a Changing Planet

Module IV: Biotechnology, Medicine and Society

- **Weeks 10–12:** Topics may include: medical biotechnology, genetics and identity, forensic applications, emerging biotechnology, ethics, regulation, and the future of biotechnology.
- **Tutorial 7:** Evaluating Medical Biotechnology
- **Tutorial 8:** Interpreting Genetic and Forensic Evidence

Important University Dates

Please visit the [Faculty of Arts and Sciences Sessional Dates website](#) for all academic deadlines.

Course Materials and Technologies

Course Materials

No textbook is required for this course.

Lecture materials, tutorial materials, and other required course resources will be provided through onQ. Supplemental readings may be assigned throughout the course to support lecture topics, tutorial activities, and assessments. Students will be notified of required readings and other course resources through onQ announcements, in lecture, or during tutorial.

Educational Technologies, Help, Privacy, and Accessibility

This course makes use of the following website(s), program(s), and/or application(s) for specific educational use/purposes.

Privacy: Be aware that your independent use of the website(s), programs, and/or application(s) used in this course, *beyond what is required*, is subject to their terms of use and privacy policy. You are encouraged to review the applicable privacy statements before using the site. Please see below.

Accessibility: Queen's University is committed to developing courses that are accessible. For further information on accessibility compliance of the website(s), program(s) application(s) used in the course, please consult the links below.

Software	Use	Support	Privacy	Accessibility
onQ	Online learning	Queen's IT	Queen's IT	Queen's IT
Microsoft Teams	Collaborative learning	Queen's IT	Queen's IT	Queen's IT
FeedbackFruits	Peer learning	Queen's IT	Queen's IT	Queen's IT

Copyright of Course Material

Course materials created by the course instructor, including all slides, presentations, handouts, tests, exams, and other similar course materials, are the intellectual property of the instructor. 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 instructor's 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.

Assessments

Weighting and Alignment with Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Assessment	Alignment with CLOs	Weighting	Due Dates
Tutorial Participation & Activities (best 7 of 8)	1-3	20%	**
Biotechnology Evidence Investigation #1	1-3	10%	Oct 2
Biotechnology Evidence Investigation #2	1-3	10%	Dec 4
Biotechnology Impact & Stewardship Briefing:	1-3		
Part 1: Topic & Project Checkpoint		3%	Oct 23
Part 2: Group Analysis & Recommendation		19%	Nov 13
Part 3: Individual Evidence & Judgement		3%	Nov 20
Final Exam	1-3	35%	TBA

**See "Descriptions of Assessment" for due dates

Descriptions of Assessments

Tutorial Participation & Activities (20%)

There are eight scheduled tutorials during the course. Attendance and active participation in the tutorial are required, as is completion of the associated tutorial activities. Tutorial activities are designed to provide opportunities to apply course concepts through discussion, analysis, and problem-solving.

Each tutorial activity contributes equally to the tutorial grade. To receive credit for a tutorial, students must attend the tutorial, actively participate in the tutorial activities, and complete the associated activity. Your seven (7) highest tutorial scores out of eight (8) will be used to calculate your Tutorial Participation & Activities grade, which is worth 20% of the final course grade.

Tutorial activities are due by the end of the scheduled tutorial. A two-hour grace period is provided for submitting the activity without penalty. The onQ submission Dropbox will close after the two-hour grace period.

Tutorial activities are completed during the scheduled tutorial and are available for credit only to students who attend the tutorial. Students who do not attend a tutorial cannot submit the associated activity for credit. Students who are unable to attend a tutorial or complete the associated activity because of circumstances covered by Academic Consideration or an approved academic accommodation should follow the appropriate course policies (see below).

Tutorial Dates:

- Tutorial 1 — Sep 24: Biotechnology: From Problem to Solution
- Tutorial 2 — Oct 1: Evaluating Agricultural Biotechnology
- Tutorial 3 — Oct 8: Biotechnology in Food and Industry
- Tutorial 4 — Oct 29: Environmental Biotechnology: Detecting & Remediating
- Tutorial 5 — Nov 5: Biotechnology for Conservation
- Tutorial 6 — Nov 12: Biotechnology for a Changing Planet

- Tutorial 7 — Nov 19: Evaluating Medical Biotechnology
- Tutorial 8 — Nov 26: Interpreting Genetic and Forensic Evidence

Biotechnology Evidence Investigations (20%)

Students will complete two individual investigations of biotechnology claims. Students will evaluate each claim, consider limitations and uncertainty, and develop an evidence-based conclusion. Students will use generative AI in both investigations to explore the claim and critically evaluate the resulting AI-generated response against peer-reviewed scientific sources. The AI prompt(s) and complete AI-generated response will be submitted with each investigation.

- Evidence Investigation #1 (10%)
- Evidence Investigation #2 (10%)

Biotechnology Impact & Stewardship Briefing (25%)

Working in groups, students will select a biotechnology application and develop a focused question about the use, development, regulation, or societal impact of the biotechnology. Groups will investigate their question and use scientific evidence and course concepts to develop an evidence-based recommendation.

The final product will be a visually engaging, professional Biotechnology Impact & Stewardship Briefing designed to communicate the group's analysis and recommendation to an educated audience. The briefing should synthesize scientific evidence and relevant societal considerations to explain what should be done and why.

Part 1: Topic & Project Checkpoint (3%)

Groups will submit their proposed biotechnology application and focused question for approval before proceeding with the project.

Part 2: Group Analysis & Recommendation (19%)

Groups will communicate their investigation and evidence-based recommendation through a Biotechnology Impact & Stewardship Briefing.

Part 3: Individual Evidence & Judgment (3%)

Each student will independently evaluate scientific evidence used in the group's recommendation and explain how limitations or uncertainty affect the strength of that recommendation.

Final Examination (35%)

The cumulative final examination will assess students' ability to apply biological knowledge, evaluate scientific evidence, and use course concepts to analyze biotechnology-related questions and scenarios. Questions may require students to apply their knowledge and reasoning to biotechnology applications and scenarios.

Proctored Exams

Timing of Final Examinations

Once the exam schedule has been finalized, the exam date will be posted on your SOLUS account. The exam dates for each term are listed on the Faculty of Arts and Science webpage under "[Important Dates](#)." Student exam schedules for the Fall Term are posted on SOLUS immediately prior to Thanksgiving and on the Friday before Reading Week for the Winter Term. **Students should delay finalizing any travel plans until after the examination schedule has been posted. Exams will not be moved or deferred to accommodate employment, travel/holiday plans or flight reservations. For information regarding what is considered extenuating circumstances and qualifications for Academic Consideration, please visit the [Faculty of Arts and Science's Academic Consideration webpage](#).**

Inclusion

Land Acknowledgement

Let us acknowledge that Queen's University occupies traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territory. To acknowledge this traditional territory is to recognize its longer history, one predating the establishment of the earliest European colonies. It is also to acknowledge this territory's significance for the Indigenous Peoples who lived, and continue to live, upon it and whose practices and spiritualities are tied to the land and continue to develop in relationship to the territory and its other inhabitants today. Indigenous communities in Kingston/Katarokwi continue to reflect the area's Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee roots. There is also a significant Métis community and First Peoples from other Nations across Turtle Island present here today. To read more about the history of the land, see the [Queen's Encyclopedia](#) and to learn more about land acknowledgements, see the [Office of Indigenous Initiatives](#).

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Statement

Queen's University recognizes that the values of equity and diversity are vital to and in harmony with its educational mission and standards of excellence. It acknowledges that direct, indirect, and systemic discrimination exists within our institutional structures, policies, and practices and in our community. These take many forms and work to differentially advantage and disadvantage persons across social identities such as race, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, faith, and socioeconomic status, among other examples. In this class, I will work to promote an anti-discriminatory, anti-racist and accountable environment where everyone feels welcome. Every member of this class is asked to show respect for every other member.

Building a Classroom Community

University is a place to share, question, and challenge ideas. Each student brings a different set of lived experiences. You can help to create a safer, more respectful classroom community for learners by following these guidelines:

- Make a personal commitment to learn about, understand, and support your peers.
- Assume the best of others and expect the best of them.
- Recognize and value the experiences, abilities, and knowledge each person brings to the course.
- Acknowledge the impact of oppression on other people's lives and make sure your words and tone are respectful and inclusive.
- Encourage others to develop and share their ideas.
- Pay close attention to what your peers say/write before you respond. Think through and re-read what you have written before you post online or send your comments to others.
- Be open to having your ideas challenged and challenge others with the intent of facilitating growth.
- Look for opportunities to agree with one another, building on and intentionally referencing peers' thoughts and ideas; disagree with ideas without making personal attacks, demeaning, or embarrassing others.

Fostering Accessibility

All of us have a shared responsibility for fostering accessibility and promoting meaningful inclusion of those with disabilities. The [Accessibility Hub](#) at Queen's University's Human Rights & Equity Office offer a host of [tutorials](#) that provide us all with practical tips for:

- creating accessible documents, e.g., to submit to your teaching team or share with peers in peer feedback activities/in a presentation,
- emails, e.g., while communicating with group members or your teaching team, and
- meeting practices (e.g., in tutorials/labs/seminars or virtual meetings).

Name/Pronoun

If you wish to change how your name appears in onQ and/or on class lists, please follow these steps. You may also use this process to add your pronouns to the appearance of your name.

1. Log into SOLUS.

2. Click on Personal Information tab.
3. Click on the Names tab
4. Click on the Add New Name tab
5. Choose Preferred from the Name Type drop-down menu
6. Enter the name you would like to appear in onQ and/or on class lists.
7. Click Save.

Please allow 24 to 48 hours for your name to be registered within the system. If you have further questions or concerns, please contact ITS at Queen's University.

Communication

Questions about the Course and Contacting the Teaching Team

Course announcements, instructions, and other important information will be communicated through onQ. Students are responsible for regularly checking the course site and their Queen's email. Please see the onQ course site for information about contacting the teaching team.

Queen's Email

The university communicates with students via Queen's email. Please check your email regularly to ensure you do not miss important information related to your course.

Course Feedback

At various points during the course, you may be asked to take part in a variety of feedback activities, such as surveys and questionnaires. This feedback enables the teaching team to improve the course. Feedback activities will be anonymous unless otherwise indicated and will be directly related to course activities, assessments, and other course material.

Course Policies

Tutorial Attendance

Attendance at tutorials is required. Tutorials are an essential component of BIOL360 and provide opportunities to apply course concepts through in-class activities and discussion. Tutorial activities are completed during the scheduled tutorial session and cannot be completed outside of the tutorial. Make-up tutorials and alternative assignments are not provided for missed tutorial activities. The seven (7) highest tutorial activity grades are used to calculate the Tutorial Participation & Activities grade. This provides flexibility for one missed tutorial during the course.

Students with approved academic accommodations that affect tutorial attendance or participation should contact the instructor at the beginning of the term to discuss how their approved accommodations will be implemented in this course. Any arrangements will be made in accordance with the student's approved accommodation and the essential requirements of the course.

Students who require additional flexibility beyond the one dropped tutorial because of circumstances requiring academic consideration must obtain approved Academic Consideration.

Repeated absences from tutorials may affect a student's ability to meet the learning outcomes and requirements of the course. Students who anticipate that circumstances may result in repeated absences should contact the instructor as early as possible and follow the appropriate University procedures.

Written Submissions

Written submissions have a built-in three-day grace period to provide flexibility for short-term circumstances that may affect a student's ability to meet a deadline. The grace period is automatically available and does not require students to apply for Academic Consideration.

Written submissions submitted within three days after the original deadline will be graded without penalty. The grace period is the maximum extension available under this course policy. The onQ submission dropbox will close at the end of the three-day grace period.

The three-day grace period does not replace or limit a student's ability to request Academic Consideration when circumstances warrant it. If you require more than three days of additional time because of circumstances affecting your ability to complete an assessment, you should submit a request for long-term Academic Consideration through the Academic Consideration Portal in accordance with University procedures.

Lecture Attendance

Your presence and participation in lecture contribute to the knowledge and skills that you will develop throughout this course. We expect that you attend class regularly and participate in class conversations and learning activities. These activities provide opportunities for active engagement, promote a deeper understanding of course content, and contribute to your success in the course. Lectures will not be recorded.

Policy Review of Graded Work

Requests for assessment regrading may be made no earlier than 48 hours after you have received the marked assessment and no later than 10 days after receiving it. This 48-hour period is intended to give you time to review the feedback and rubric carefully before requesting a review.

To request that your assessment be reviewed, you must include the following in your request and submit it to the appropriate Regrade Request Dropbox on onQ:

- Your name and student number
- Your reason for the request:
 - The specific aspects of your assessment that you believe were not sufficiently awarded, referring to the categories of the rubric.
 - Why you believe that your assessment meets the criteria for a higher mark for each of the categories of the rubric that you identified above. Please make explicit reference to the detailed descriptions of each category provided in the rubric.
- A copy of the original assessment

All regrade requests must follow these instructions. Requests that do not include the required documentation or information will not be eligible for review.

A regrade is a review of whether the assessment was marked accurately according to the stated assessment criteria and rubric; it is not an opportunity for a second interpretation of the rubric. A grade will be changed only when there is evidence of an error in marking or calculation. An error may result in either an increase or a decrease in the grade.

A difference in interpretation between the original grader and the reviewer, without evidence of an error in applying the assessment criteria or rubric, will not result in a grade change.

Final Exam

Academic Consideration:

If you cannot write the final exam and have approved academic consideration for the day of the exam, you must contact the Teaching Team to discuss your eligibility to write a deferred final exam. Once your eligibility is confirmed, the deferred exam will be scheduled on a date determined by the Exams Office in mid-January.

Academic Accommodations:

Accommodations will be applied on an individual basis for students who have registered their accommodations for this course via Ventus at least 2 weeks in advance of the exam. If an ongoing documented condition prevents you from writing the final exam as scheduled, you must email the Teaching Team as soon as possible to discuss your eligibility to write a deferred final exam. In this email, you must copy (cc) your QSAS advisor. With the verification of your QSAS advisor, you may be approved to write a deferred final exam on a date to be determined by the Exams Office in mid-January.

Academic Accommodations and Considerations

Academic Support

All undergraduate students face new learning and writing challenges as they progress through university: essays and reports become more complex; effectively incorporating research into writing becomes more important; the types of assignments become more diverse; managing your time and developing the skills you need to read and think critically gets more challenging. I encourage students to contact Student Academic Success Services (SASS). SASS offers many different ways to receive support:

- Free online or in-person appointments to get personalized support on writing and academic skills from expert staff and trained peers.
- Workshops and drop-in programs. SASS' Events Calendar lists events coming soon.
- Online resources that provide strategies for academic skills and writing development at university.
- If English is not your first language, SASS has specific resources for English as Additional Language students, including weekly programs and EAL academic skills appointments. You can meet on an ongoing basis with an EAL consultant to work on your academic writing, speaking, listening, and reading skills.

Accommodations for Disabilities

Queen's University is committed to working with students with disabilities to remove barriers to their academic goals. Queen's Student Accessibility Services (QSAS), students with disabilities, instructors, and faculty staff work together to provide and implement academic accommodations designed to allow students with disabilities equitable access to all course material (including in-class as well as exams). If you are a student currently experiencing barriers to your academics due to disability related reasons, and you would like to understand whether academic accommodations could support the removal of those barriers, please visit the QSAS website to learn more about academic accommodations or start the registration process with QSAS by clicking the **Access Ventus** button at **Ventus | Accessibility Services | Queen's (queensu.ca)**.

VENTUS is an online portal that connects students, instructors, Queen's Student Accessibility Services, the Exams Office and other support services in the process to request, assess, and implement academic accommodations.

To learn more, go to: <https://www.queensu.ca/ventus-support/students/visual-guide-ventus-students>

Academic Consideration for Students in Extenuating Circumstances

Academic Consideration is a process for the University community to provide a compassionate response to assist students experiencing unforeseen, short-term extenuating circumstances that may impact or impede a student's ability to complete their academics. This may include but is not limited to,

- Short-term Physical or Mental Illness or Injury (stomach flu, anxiety/depression, mononucleosis, concussion, broken bones, surgery, medical treatments, etc.)
- Traumatic Event/Confidential (Bereavement, serious injury, illness or required treatment for a significant other/family member or a traumatic event such as divorce, sexual assault, social injustice, etc.)
- Requirements by Law or Public Health Authorities (court dates, jury duty, requirements to isolate, etc.)
- Significant Event (varsity athletic event, distinguished event, serving in the Reserve Forces, etc.)

Queen's University is committed to providing academic consideration to students experiencing extenuating circumstances. For more information, please see the [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 students facing extenuating circumstances. For more information, undergraduate students in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences should consult the Faculty's webpage on [Academic Consideration in Extenuating Circumstances](#) and submit a request via the [Academic Consideration Request Portal](#). Students in other Faculties and Schools who are enrolled in this course should refer to the protocol for their home Faculty.

Students are encouraged to submit requests as soon as the need becomes apparent and to contact their instructor and/or course coordinator as soon as possible once academic consideration has been granted. Any delay in contact may limit the options available for academic consideration.

For more information on the Academic Consideration process, what is and is not an extenuating circumstance, and to submit an Academic Consideration request, please see the Faculty of Arts and Science's [Academic Consideration website](#).

Please see the Teaching Team page for contact information for your instructor and TA(s), where relevant.

Queen's Policy Statement on Academic Integrity

Queen's University is dedicated to creating a scholarly community free to explore a range of ideas, to build and advance knowledge, and to share the ideas and knowledge that emerge from a range of intellectual pursuits. Queen's students, faculty, administrators and staff therefore all have responsibilities for supporting and upholding the fundamental values of academic integrity. Academic integrity is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility and by the quality of courage. These values and qualities 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.

The following statements from "The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity" (2nd edition), developed by the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI), contextualize these values and qualities:

1. **Honesty:** Academic communities of integrity advance the quest for truth and knowledge through intellectual and personal honesty in learning, teaching, research, and service.
2. **Trust:** Academic communities of integrity both foster and rely upon climates of mutual trust. Climates of trust encourage and support the free exchange of ideas which in turn allows scholarly inquiry to reach its fullest potential.
3. **Fairness:** Academic communities of integrity establish clear and transparent expectations, standards, and practices to support fairness in the interactions of students, faculty, and administrators.
4. **Respect:** Academic communities of integrity value the interactive, cooperative, participatory nature of learning. They honour, value, and consider diverse opinions and ideas.

5. **Responsibility:** Academic communities of integrity rest upon foundations of personal accountability coupled with the willingness of individuals and groups to lead by example, uphold mutually agreed-upon standards, and take action when they encounter wrongdoing.
6. **Courage:** To develop and sustain communities of integrity, it takes more than simply believing in the fundamental values. Translating the values from talking points into action -- standing up for them in the face of pressure and adversity — requires determination, commitment, and courage.

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with and adhering to the Senate regulations concerning academic integrity, along with Faculty or School specific information. Departures from academic integrity include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification. Actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning, to loss of grades on an assignment, to failure of a course, to requirement to withdraw from the university.

Syllabus statements for Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

Students are responsible for ensuring that submitted work represents their own understanding and complies with Queen's University academic integrity requirements.

Students will use generative AI as part of the Biotechnology Evidence Investigations. However, students remain responsible for evaluating the accuracy, limitations, and appropriateness of AI-generated information and for demonstrating their own understanding and reasoning in these assessments. Where AI use is required, students must submit their AI interactions as specified in the assessment instructions. AI-generated content is not considered a substitute for scientific evidence. Specific instructions regarding the use of generative AI will be provided with each assessment.

The use of generative AI is not permitted for other assessments in this course, including tutorial activities, the Biotechnology Impact & Stewardship Briefing, and the final examination. Using generative AI for these assessments constitutes a Departure from Academic Integrity. Students are expected to complete individual work independently and to complete group work in accordance with the assessment instructions.

Queen's Student Academic Success Services (SASS) offers a self-directed, online academic integrity module which we encourage all students to take, which will help with:

- Understanding the nature of the academic integrity departure
- Understanding the expectations of and role of sources in scholarly writing
- Integrating sources into your writing (paraphrasing, quoting, summarizing)
- Understanding when and how to cite your sources
- Managing your time effectively to avoid the need for shortcuts
- Taking effective notes to ensure accuracy of source material and correct attribution

Turnitin Statement

This course makes use of 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 for the purpose of detecting plagiarized text in this course. Data from submissions is also collected and analyzed by Turnitin for detecting Artificial Intelligence (AI)-generated text. These results are not reported to your instructor at this time but could be in the future.

Turnitin is a suite of tools that provide instructors with information about the authenticity of submitted work and facilitates the process of grading. The similarity report generated after an assignment file is submitted produces a similarity score for each assignment. A similarity score is the percentage of writing that is similar to content found on the internet or the Turnitin extensive database of content. Turnitin does not determine if an instance of plagiarism has

occurred. Instead, it gives instructors the information they need to determine the authenticity of work as a part of a larger process.

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