

BIOL897 Seminars in Biology (2025-25)

Calendar Description: Attending a diverse array of seminars is an essential component in the development of a student, especially in a department as diverse as biology. The aim of this course is to develop skills in listening, synthesizing and critical thinking, as well as fostering the development of important oral and written communication skills. Students will be required to attend at least 30 department or specialized research seminars, as well as present a seminar based upon their graduate thesis research. Enrolment is extended over six terms and is limited to new graduate students in Biology.

NOTE: Enrollment is extended over 6 terms (2 years) to enable students to attend 30 seminars.

Teaching team:

Dr. Brian Cumming (Course coordinator), cummingb@queensu.ca, 613-533-6153, Biosci 3102

Please direct questions on this course to: Brian Cumming, or better yet please stop by during my regular office hours on Friday between 9 and 10 am (rm. 3102)

Dr. Vicki Friesen, vlf@queensu.ca, 613-533-6156, Biosci 4443 - please note, during the 2024-25 academic year, Vicki is on sabbatical, but will be a coordinator in 2025-26. However, Vicki will still be serving as the Graduate Co-ordinator, so you will likely run into her.

General aim: Develop skills in listening, synthesizing and critical thinking, as well as fostering the development of important oral and written communication skills, and broadening knowledge base.

Learning outcomes:

- Understand objectives, methodologies, and significance of research in a variety of biological fields.
- Learn effective methods for the delivery of scientific research.
- Synthesize your research in the Graduate Student Seminar Series

Course Components:

This course has two components:

a) Students will attend and write a brief critique of each of at least 30 seminars chosen from our department seminar series, special series, and/or relevant seminars from other units on campus or elsewhere, but most should be from the Biology Seminar Series. The seminars attended must be research seminars and 40 to 50 minutes in duration (e.g., MSc exit seminars do not count). At the end of the 30 seminars, the student will write a brief (1 to 2 page) synopsis tied to the learning outcomes using the BIOL897 excel spreadsheet. This spreadsheet was developed as a convenient and easy to use format to record the seminars that you attend, and to answer questions related to the learning outcomes of the course. Presentation techniques used in these seminars can be used when you are developing your presentation on your research.

b) Students will present a 20-25 min seminar based on their research either (i) as part of the departmental graduate student seminar series, or (iii) at some other venue in consultation with the course coordinator. Students must coordinate their seminar with their research supervisor and one additional faculty member (e.g. a committee member). The research supervisor and one

additional faculty member (chosen by the student and supervisor) must attend and grade the student research seminar. The research seminar must be advertised with a “poster” type notification (complete with brief abstract). This seminar can serve as a student’s MSc exit seminar, and ideally (but not necessarily) includes final research results. Students are responsible for gathering and submitting the evaluation forms to OnQ.

Learning Hours: 30 hours seminar attendance; 10 hours summarizing the content of the seminar; ~30-40 hours preparing and delivering research seminar.

Course Material: Course materials will be available on the course OnQ site. Summaries/critiques of the attended seminars (using the course excel spreadsheet) and supervisory grades will be submitted via the course OnQ site.

Assessment:

a) Summaries/critique of 30 seminars that you attended/summarized using the excel spreadsheet (25%) provided.

b) Average of the grades provided by two faculty members on your seminar.

Components will be graded using numerical percentage marks. Your course average will then be converted to a final letter grade according to Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale ([Official GPA Grading Scale | Queen's University \(queensu.ca\)](#)).

a) *Attending and summarizing seminars (25% of your grade)* - There are normally two seminars/week in the Department of Biology each week in the fall and winter terms. Attending as many seminars as possible will allow you to gain an appreciation of the diversity of research that is ongoing in our department. As part of this course, you will need to fill out information on 30 seminars in a course spreadsheet that will be provided on the OnQ site. Once complete, please submit this spreadsheet along with the general synopsis, using the OnQ site for this course.

b) *Research seminar (75% of your grade)* - Your research seminar will summarize your graduate research. The average of these two numerical grades will account for 75% of your grade. You need to provide the marking sheets to your two graders prior to your seminar and ask them to e-mail their summaries to you. Please upload these forms to the OnQ site as a PDF file. In this course, most or all components will be graded using numerical percentage marks.

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 (see <https://www.academicintegrity.org/>) 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:

Honesty Academic communities of integrity advance the quest for truth and knowledge through intellectual and personal honesty in learning, teaching, research, and service.

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.

Fairness Academic communities of integrity establish clear and transparent expectations, standards, and practices to support fairness in the interactions of students, faculty, and administrators.

Respect Academic communities of integrity value the interactive, cooperative, participatory nature of learning. They honor, value, and consider diverse opinions and ideas.

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.

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 regulations concerning academic integrity. General information on academic integrity is available at [Academic Integrity @ Queen's University](#), 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.

The BIOL897 teaching team are committed to fully pursuing investigations of breaches of academic integrity. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Extenuating Circumstances: This is a very flexible course. However, if you run into any unforeseen circumstances we are committed to being understanding and sensitive, but also responsible and firm in assessing requests for academic considerations.

Copyright: 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.

Accommodation of 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 *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 Exam's 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>