
These are 0.5 Essay Courses, either in the fall or the winter term.

Each one of these courses gives 0.5 credits so that they can be easily combined/replaced with other courses in need of changes.

Must be registered in an honor's specialization in Biology Department (Animal Behaviour, Biology, Genetics, Biodiversity and Conservation).

Research-based course, ultimate goal is to produce a final research report.

We are hoping that the coming year will allow for wet lab and field experiments.

And we except projects.

Faculty in the Department of Biology.

Adjunct and cross-appointed faculty in the Department of Biology.

How do I know the status of a potential supervisor?

Form for project approval, supervisor signature and abstract submission are available online.

Identify an appropriate individual(s) who does research you are interested in

A Professor from a class you enjoyed?

Biology Website: describes all faculty in the Department and their research interests.

A topic you are interested in?

Hearsay?... Not always the most advisable way...

Check the List posted on the Biol4999 website or check the faculty webpage.

Don't be afraid to ask Profs for advice.

You are not bound to this topic for life.

It is a two way street – both you and the supervisor have to agree to work with each other.

Start making appo/MCID fe.

Professional email.

Enthusiasm, investment, involvement.

Will you be part of a lab, or on your own?

Are there appropriate resources for a 4999E student? Does the supervisor have the time resource for this?

What are their expectations of a student performing an independent research study?

Can you talk to their existing honours or graduate students? Can you visit their lab and/or lab meeting?

Will they be supervising you directly and/or involve a PhD student or PDF (and can you meet them)?

Remember not only is every supervisor different – so are students Try to find the right combo for you.

Faculty who have a primary appointment outside of Western (for example an adjunct), or have not previously supervised a 4999E student and require a co-supervisor.

As co-supervisor can serve:

Regular or cross-appointed faculty from Department of Biology.

They need to attend meetings and contribute to progress evaluations.

Must be arranged at time of application to program ().

One PhD student or postdoc who is closely involved in the student's work.

Attends meetings, but does not contribute formally to evaluation.

Can be added in .

This needs to be arranged by September – not right now.

Two members, evaluate proposal, progress report, and thesis.

At least one must be a regular or cross-appointed faculty member of Department of Biology.

The other can be regular/adjunct/cross-appointed faculty.

OR a PhDs student or Postdoc from Department of Biology .

not from your lab group; list of potentially available students will be provided in September.

Committee composition needs to be discussed with your supervisor.

Committee compositions needs to submitted early in

Form is available online:

Needs signature from your supervisor (and co-



Is it a question/topic/organism that interests you?

Don't get hung up on labels:

...a genetics project can be done in a physiology lab...


...a biochemistry project can be done with plants, animals, microorganism...

Will you use and develop skills relevant to you?

E.g. lab vs. field; data analysis, microscopy, molecular biology, computer programs etc.

If you have any personal ethical or other concerns about it you should discuss this with your supervisor.

Remember there are many aspects in biology you have never encountered but they could be the coolest topic you can discover.



If your only opportunity to gather data (i.e. fieldwork) is in the summer, then it can be possible to begin in the summer.

You can not begin in the summer simply to get the bulk of the work out of the way before term starts.

Frodo will be working on nesting tree swallows, and needs to do fieldwork in the summer.

Must assemble a committee and write and defend proposal before the start of fieldwork.

Indicate that you are planning to do field work and contact Dr. Kohalmi ASAP.

Galadriel has the summer off. She plans to have all her Western Blots done and data analysis complete before starting her research project in September. This should make the year pretty straightforward.

Not OK.

Pippin will be doing a project on gene expression in wheat plants. He will start growing the plants in the greenhouse in July so they are at the appropriate developmental stage for him to begin his experiments in the Fall.

OK: summer will be spent developing the material, but not doing the experiments.

Sauron will be working on gene expression in overwintering slugs. Over the summer, he plans to develop the extraction protocols and test all his primers so he knows that his project will work in the Fall.

OK: summer spent developing tools, but actual experiments will be done during the term.

But also can be part of the project itself

Merry plans to spend the summer on the beach but takes a pile of papers to read so he will understand the background and technical approaches of his project by September.

More than OK. He can hit the ground running and writing the proposal will be far easier.

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If you are doing paid research in the lab over the summer (e.g. as a USRA or summer student), then you can use this time to develop tools and techniques, but you cannot use the time to work on your project.

If you have permission to begin your project (e.g. in the field) in the summer, but are also being paid to work as a field assistant, your paid field assistant activities must differ from your project.

If you are paid to work in the lab in term time (e.g. as a work study student), your paid duties cannot include your research.

i.e. if you are washing dishes, they have to be lab dishes, not just the things you generate from your own work!

Yes, for example at AAFC.

Be aware of distances when timing experiments in between classes.

Yes, if doing fieldwork (in summer or during term) at nearby sites (e.g. Long Point, ESW) with a London-based lab and supervisor.

This will be the case for many students in this course.


This course will allow to be exposed to new experiences and lab work.

This course allows you to learn.

This course will show you if you like this kind of work.

Your mark is not only based on how much data you produce but also on how much you learn.

This course will expose you to team work and the expose you to the experience to work with others.







~12 mandatory classes during term (Monday evenings).

Discuss mechanics of the course.

Discuss skills and processes.

Professional and career development.

Goal is to keep everybody on the same page.



Part of Proposal and Progression meetings.

Written as a scientific manuscript

~25 pages





Yes, but it's a challenging course. Usually 5-6 people have a mark of 90% or higher (which is in line with our expectations for other 4th year courses).

You can't get out what you don't put in...

In contrast to other courses this one will not succeed without self motivation and commitment.

And time management!





For more information go to www.uwo.ca/biology
Undergraduate > Course Information > All courses
(and scroll to the bottom); links to forms are available on this site
