



BSC 401 01E Research Literature and Seminar

COURSE SYLLABUS: Fall 2026
STC 122 – MWF 1:00 - 1:50 pm

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Bjorn Schmidt
Office Location: STC 212
Office Hours: MWF 11am - 12pm or by appointment
Office Phone: 903-886-5938
University Email Address: bjorn.schmidt@etamu.edu
Preferred Form of Communication: **email**
Communication Response Time: **24 hours (except holidays and weekends)**

COURSE INFORMATION

MATERIALS – TEXTBOOKS, READINGS, SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS

Textbook(s) Required – none

Software Required – machine capable of accessing d2l (learning management system)

Optional Texts and/or Materials:

A Short Guide to Writing About Biology. 2024. Pechenik. Waveland Press.
ISBN-13: 978-1478653271

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides students with the fundamentals of scientific thinking and scientific writing. The course starts with a brief overview of the history and philosophy of science as it pertains to biology. Students will learn about each step in the scientific process including empiricism, parsimony, and developing and testing hypotheses. Students will be taught how to write in scientific style, how to critically read and analyze scientific articles, how to avoid obfuscatory scrivenry, establishing flow, organizing a scientific document, how to present scientific data and statistics, how to cite figures and

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tables, how to cite scientific sources, how to avoid plagiarism, and concepts of bioethics. Discussions and presentations of issues of current interest in the biological sciences and of related career opportunities also will be covered.

Prerequisite: BSC 304, 305, 306, 307, concurrent enrollment in one or more of these courses, or permission of the instructor

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Practice and demonstrate scientific thinking and writing, specifically for conventions in Biology
2. Demonstrate proper use of scientific writing style
3. Recognize and compare types of scientific writing
4. Perform literature searches, organize citations, paraphrase sources and avoid plagiarism
5. Write specific sections of a lab report or scientific research paper using proper conventions, including abstract, introduction, hypothesis, methods, results, discussion, and references
6. Display knowledge and understanding of research ethics related to Biology
7. Demonstrate ability to prepare professional scientific presentations and understand and summarize Biological seminars
8. Display competency in development of career related skills in Biology, including how to produce a resume/cv, how to formulate a career plan, and how to navigate interviews

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

MINIMAL TECHNICAL SKILLS NEEDED

- ability to use software that can access and read pdfs and access d2l
- ability to use writing software (MS Word or able to export as a MS Word file (.doc or .docx))

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Instruction will be in-class lectures, activities, and discussions. Students will also attend our departmental seminar series for the semester where they will have different guest speakers present topics related to their research or position in the field of Biology. Seminar days will occur during the same time period as class and attendance to these seminars is mandatory. Note that there are no exams (including midterm or final) for the course, so we will not be meeting during finals week.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES OR TIPS FOR SUCCESS IN THE COURSE

You are expected to keep up with all of the course materials provided during the semester. The best tips for success are to schedule your time in order to not fall behind in the assignments and course work, as the majority of the assessments for the course are assignment based. Attendance during seminar days is also critical for success in the course.

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GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

A: 89.96-100%
B: 79.96-89.95%
C: 69.96-79.95%
D: 59.96-69.95%
F: <59.96%

Total points corresponding to the final letter grades

A = 396 - 440 Points
B = 352 - 395 Points
C = 308 - 351 Points
D = 264 - 307 Points
F = <264 Points

Weights of the assessments in the course:

Assignments (13) = 130 points - ~57%
Seminar summaries = 40 points - ~17%
Student presentation = 30 points - ~13%
Major Field Test = 10 points - ~4%
Attendance and Participation = 20 points - ~9%
TOTAL = 230 points - 100%

ASSESSMENTS

Assignments: There will be thirteen assignments in the course that cover scientific theory, scientific writing, and/or career development.

Seminar summaries: Students will be required to attend and provide a typed one page summary of the each guest speaker during the semester on seminar days.

Student presentations: Students will each give a 10 minute presentation during two weeks towards the end of the semester in our departmental seminar during scheduled class time (one Wednesday and two Fridays). Students can present their own research if this is available, summarize their paper written in class, or present a mini-review of a topic in Biology (arranged in advance with instructor). Further details will be provided later in the semester.

Major Field Test: Two class periods of the semester will be used for administration of the major field test in Biology which is a comprehensive test of accumulated knowledge in your undergraduate degree across different focus areas in Biology

General Makeup Policy: The student is responsible for requesting a new due date (extensions) for assignments within **1 day** after the original due date. Extensions requests will only be given for extenuating circumstances or university approved reasons and may need documentation. If the assessment is not made-up or turned in, the student will receive a zero for that item. Late work turned in without extensions will be subject to late penalties

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Course Outline/Calendar

Because of the seminar component and the major field test proctoring when available in the middle of the course (before Thanksgiving), the schedule will be fluid as presented in the syllabus, without dates. Exact schedules and due dates for assignments will be posted in d2l, and generally assignments will have one-week turnarounds before due dates.

Order of topics and assignments in the course:

1) History and Philosophy of Science

*Assignment 1: Hist. and Philosophy of Science online quiz

2) Scientific Writing Style, Types of Writing, Components of a Research Paper

3) Working with Scientific Literature – Search, Reading, Avoiding plagiarism, Citations

*Assignment 2: Literature search/paraphrasing

*Assignment 3: Citations

4) Working with Scientific Names

*Assignment 4: Biological Classification Quiz

5) Writing a Hypothesis

*Assignment 5: Write a hypothesis/research objectives for project

6) Writing an Introduction

*Assignment 6: Write an introduction

7) Writing a Methods Section

*Assignment 7: Write a Methods section

8) Writing a Results Section

*Assignment 8: Write a Results section (including figures and tables)

9) Writing a Discussion

*Assignment 9: Write a Discussion section for project

10) Writing an Abstract; Common Mistakes in Writing and Editing

*Assignment 10: Abstract and Literature Cited; Compile Lab report

*Assignment 11: Peer review editing

11) Making Oral and Poster Presentations

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12) Bioethics and Ethics in Research Assignment

*Assignment 12: Ethics

13) Choosing a Career Path in Biology

14) Constructing a Resume/CV

15) Interview Advice

*Assignment 13: Statement of career path/plan and resume/cv

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (LMS)

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online (D2L Brightspace) LMS. Below are the technical requirements:

- [LMS Requirements](#)
- [LMS Browser Support](#)
- [Zoom Video Conferencing Tool](#)

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@etamu.edu.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778 or view [other support options](#).

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE COURSE

CWID AND PASSWORD

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@etamu.edu.

TECHNOLOGY-RELATED ISSUES

Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all coursework in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs a backup method to handle these inevitable problems. These methods might include having a backup PC at home or work, temporarily

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using a computer at a friend's home, at the local library, at office service companies, at Starbucks, or at an ETAMU campus open computer lab.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS AND SUPPORT

MINIMAL TECHNICAL SKILLS NEEDED

Students will need a reliable computer and internet access for this course. Students must be able to use myLeo email, myLeo Online (D2L Brightspace), and Microsoft Office effectively.

LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (LMS) – D2L Brightspace

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are the technical requirements:

- View the [Learning Management System Requirements Webpage](#).
- Learn more on the [LMS Browser Support Webpage](#).

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found on the [Brightspace Support Webpage](#).

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

INTERACTION WITH INSTRUCTOR STATEMENT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your instructor. Correspondence will always be through university email (your “myLeo” mail), and announcements will be posted in myLeo online (D2L Brightspace). You will not RECEIVE email through Brightspace, so be sure to check your ETAMU email for communication. Students are encouraged to check their university email daily.

INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING IN EMAILS WITH INSTRUCTOR:

- Course name and subject in the subject line
- Salutation (Good afternoon, Dr. Jackson)
- Proper email etiquette (no “text” emails – use proper grammar and punctuation)

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- Student name and CWID after the body of the email (possibly add to student signature on email)

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may necessitate the instructor's modification of the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

STUDENT CONDUCT

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The [Code of Student Conduct](#) is described in detail online in the [Student Guidebook](#).

Students should also consult the [Rules of Netiquette Webpage](#) for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum.

ETAMU ATTENDANCE

For more information about the attendance policy, please view the [Attendance Webpage](#) and the [Class Attendance Policy](#).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students at East Texas A&M University are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty, see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.10](#)

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

East Texas A&M University acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that have the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

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Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided, the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES-- ADA STATEMENT

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodations for their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

East Texas A&M University

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Services](#)

NONDISCRIMINATION NOTICE

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom and in online courses with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

CAMPUS CONCEALED CARRY STATEMENT

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and ETAMU Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

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Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M University campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

EAST TEXAS A&M SUPPORTS STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH – COUNSELING SERVICES

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M University, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connections to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit the [Counseling Center website](#).

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to Telus Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code or [download the app](#) and explore the resources available to you for guidance and support whenever you need it.



ACCREDITING INFORMATION AND MISSION STATEMENT:

East Texas A&M is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award baccalaureate, master's and doctoral degrees. Academic programs in the Department of Biological and Environmental Science operate under this institutional accreditation.

College of Science and Engineering Mission Statement:

We transform lives by providing an accessible education in an environment where faculty and staff care and are dedicated to the success of all our students throughout their academic career. We empower our students, faculty and staff to become the best version of themselves by supporting their continuous development and growth. Fueled by our resilience, tenacity, and talents, we strengthen the rural and urban communities we serve. Innovation is the heartbeat of East Texas A&M University, with career preparedness as a cornerstone of our educational mission. We are committed to ensuring our graduates are well-prepared for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Through robust career

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exploration, internships, industry partnerships, and skill development initiatives, we bridge the gap between academia and the workplace.

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