

Syllabus for BIOL 290 & Guidelines for BIOL 390

What is Seminar? The Seminar courses provide students with the opportunity to present the research they have done, fulfilling their research requirement for graduation. This research may have been done in the capstone research course (BIOL 400/BCHM 400), in a faculty research lab during the summer or as directed research (BIOL 395) during the academic year, or in an off-campus research program. Additionally, Seminar may include alumni or other guest speakers discussing their research or careers, or presentations from NCC faculty. Biology and Biochemistry majors take three seminar courses total. Biochemistry majors may choose to take the Biology sequence (BIOL 290-390-490) or the Chemistry sequence (CHEM 391-392-493).

What is my role in Seminar? In BIOL 290 and 390, your role is to be a participant and evaluator: you don't present anything, but you critique the student presenters, helping them to improve their presentation skills. In the process, you start to learn how to give a good presentation. You will also be exposed to many possible areas of research that may interest you and have an opportunity to interact with speakers in different career areas. You can also make connections with faculty, fellow students, alumni, and others.

What are the expectations for Seminar?

- **Attend the seminars.** You are allowed to miss one seminar, to account for unexpected schedule conflicts, athletic events, unmovable appointments, illness or whatever. If you miss more than one, your grade will be reduced by one letter grade (e.g., if you miss two seminars, your grade goes from an A to a B). If you have an athletic event or other "excused" absence, that will count as your one miss. If you choose to take a "personal" day and then need to miss a seminar later, the second miss will lower your grade. If you are an athlete and will miss multiple days, be sure to discuss this with your instructor in advance; the best time is early in the semester when you get your athletic schedule.
- **Listen attentively.** Be a good audience member and give the speaker your full attention. No phone or laptop use during the seminar!
- **Evaluate the student presentations.** For every student presentation, fill out an [evaluation sheet](#). Your comments will be read by the seminar coordinator (but not by the student presenter) and will contribute to the feedback letter.
- **Be an active participant by asking good questions.** A scientific presentation is a dialogue, not a speech! It should help the presenter refine his/her ideas as well as disseminating them. Therefore, we expect that you will **ask at least one substantive question** during the term, either to clarify something you didn't understand (hold the presenter responsible for clear explanations!), suggest an improvement such as a new experiment, or express a concern about some aspect of the data or analysis. Failure to ask at least one substantive question during the term will lower your grade from A to A-, B+ to B, etc.
- **When you ask a question**, please stand up and state your name. This makes it easier for all to hear your question clearly and for the seminar coordinator to identify you.

What about BIOL 390? BIOL 390, Careers in Biological Sciences, is a little different from 290 and 490, because there is an additional one-hour classroom component each week. This course meets the College-wide Career Readiness – Preparation requirement and includes additional guest speakers, as well as working on résumés and cover letters, discovering aptitudes, discussing strategies for employment or further education, etc. BIOL 390 students attend the regular Monday seminars *with the same expectations as above*. However, BIOL 390 instructors will provide a separate syllabus that explains all of the requirements of the course and how the seminar component fits in.

How do I register? BIOL 290 is offered every semester. Register as you would for any class. Remember that BIOL 290 is for participants (non-presenters) and BIOL 490 is for presenters.

What course policies should I know?

- **Recording attendance:** The seminar coordinator will circulate an attendance sheet and will also indicate who has asked questions. Please pay attention to how the attendance sheet is moving through the class and help it circulate in a rational way (e.g., all the way up one side and down the other).

If the attendance sheet does not get to you, it is your responsibility to record your attendance at the end of class. If the seminar coordinator misses a question, it is your responsibility to remind him or her (“Last week, I asked about the statistical analysis...”).

- **Respect:** Seminar presenters have worked hard to develop and present their work and deserve your respect. Please be attentive and respectful during seminars. Don’t “pack up” until the seminar *and* questions are over, as this is noisy and communicates disrespect to the presenter. If some truly unavoidable circumstance requires you to come late or leave early, do so as discretely as possible.
- **Electronic devices:** Using laptops, tablets, or phones during seminar for personal business or entertainment during a seminar is also disrespectful to the speaker. Please keep electronic devices silenced (preferably powered off) and out of sight during seminar.
- **Video and audio recording:** Only students with specific accommodations are permitted to record seminars. Such recordings may not be posted to the Web, social media sites, file-sharing sites, etc. No one else, *including friends or family members who may attend your seminar*, should make video or audio recordings of any kind. Research data are the intellectual property of the laboratory where they were created and are not to be shared without explicit permission.