



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY  
**SAN ANTONIO**

**BIOL 4101: Integrative Biology Seminar (1.0 Credit Hours)**  
**Texas A&M University—San Antonio**  
**Fall 2024**

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**Contact Information**

**Instructor:** Chris Mares  
**Office:** S&T 311 F  
**Phone:** 210-784-2265  
**E-mail:** Chris.Mares@tamusa.edu

**Preferred Contact Method:** If you need to leave me a message, please use my e-mail.

**Office Hours:** I will not hold regular on campus hours. Please email me to schedule a meeting.

**General Information**

**Lecture Time & Place:** Lectures and presentations will occur Sci. Tech. room 141. Please refer to the Blackboard site for course instructions and updates. The course will run from August 26, 2024 to December 5, 2024.

**Required Text**

There is no required textbook for BIOL 4101.

**Description & General Goals of the Course:** This course is designed to give students an opportunity to improve their ability to read, comprehend and assess the primary scientific literature. Many sessions will be student-led and my primary role will be that of a facilitator. During the course of BIOL 4101, students will lead discussions on journal articles, give oral presentations of journal articles, write formal critiques of journal articles, and practice some of the initial stages of grant writing.

**Specific Objectives:**

1. Students will develop/improve their abilities to search, read, and comprehend the primary life sciences literature
2. Students will develop/improve their ability to communicate technical, scientific information in oral and written formats
3. Students will develop/improve their ability to critique technical, scientific information in oral and written formats

## Evaluation & Course Structure

### Grading Scale:

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F < 60

### Grade Components:

#### Grading:

Category	Number of Assignments	Individual Work	Points per Assignment	Point Subtotal
Workshop Assignments	2	Individual	15	30
Paper Annotations	22	Individual	10	220
Discussion Contributions	22	Individual	10	220
Discussion leading	1	Individual	100	100
Critique	1	Individual	130	130
			<b>Total =</b>	<b>700</b>

Grades will be assigned at the end of the term based on the percentage of points earned, where 90% = A, 80% = B, 70% = C, and 60% = D.

## Course Policies

**Policy on Assignments Involving Written Communication:** The ability to write clearly is a fundamental skill that all educated people, including scientists, should have. While I will not deduct points for grammar and spelling per se, if your writing is muddled to the point that the content of your answer is unclear, you will lose points. While you are always free to ask why points were deducted (via online discussion or phone conference), subsequent clarification of your answer via verbal conversation will not result in the restoration of deducted points to your grade, as grades must be based upon the answer that was turned in at the time that the assignment was due.

**Policy on Grade Appeals:** If you feel that I am in error upon receiving a grade for an assignment, let me know as soon as possible. If your concern warrants further consideration, I may ask you for a written explanation of why you think your answer is correct and/or why my grading is overly harsh. Please note that a request for you to elaborate verbally or in writing does not guarantee that points will be restored to your grade.

**Policy on Making up Assignments:** Please turn in assignments on the dates that are scheduled. Should extenuating circumstances arise that prevent you from doing this, I may ask you for verifiable documentation of the circumstances. Failure to produce such documentation may result in denial of a makeup and a grade of '0' for the missed assignment/exam. Whenever possible, let me know ahead of time if you are going to have difficulty meeting a deadline.

**Policy on Late Assignments and Receiving an 'Incomplete':** If extenuating circumstances occur that prevent you from turning in an assignment on time, a verifiable excuse may be required in order for late assignments to be accepted. In other cases, a penalty of 10% per day late may be applied to unexcused late work. If you are ill or otherwise unable to attend class for an extended period, please let me know what is going on as soon as possible, so that we can develop a plan that will enable you to complete the course. Students with extended absences who have not contacted me by the end of the semester will receive a grade of '0' for all incomplete/missing work.

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance and participation are an explicit component of your grade and will be based on your ability to meet the presentation and other assignment deadlines. You are expected to watch and review each lecture and to participate in exercises and discussions that take place in this forum.

**\*\*\*If I am confusing or unclear, let me know. You should not hesitate to ask questions. If a concept is unclear to you, odds are other students in the class are struggling with the concept as well.\*\*\***

### **IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES**

**Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities:** Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is located in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us <https://www.tamusa.edu/Disability-Support-Services/index.html> or email us at [dss@tamusa.edu](mailto:dss@tamusa.edu). Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability-related needs with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

**Academic Learning Center:** The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the *Tools* section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing [tutoring@tamusa.edu](mailto:tutoring@tamusa.edu), calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202.

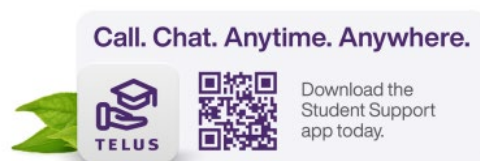
**Counseling/Mental Health Resources:** As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If

you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information on SCC services visit [tamusa.edu/studentcounseling](https://tamusa.edu/studentcounseling)

*Crisis support is available 24/7 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 (after-hours select option '2').*

Additionally, the TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to including support for in the moment distress, an anonymous peer to peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.



**Emergency Preparedness:** JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>.

More information about Emergency Operations Plan and the Emergency Action Plan can be found here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/about-us/emergency-management/>.

Download the SafeZone App (<https://safezoneapp.com/>) for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non-Emergency (210) 784-1900.

**Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance:** According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended the first week of class. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend the first week of class will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

**Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center:** The Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center supports graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as

well as faculty and staff. Tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as eportfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. Students can schedule appointments through JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on “Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center” to make your appointment. The Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at <https://www.tamusa.edu/academics/>.

**Meeting Basic Needs:** Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to submit a CARE referral (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities/file-a-report.html>) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources.

**Military Affairs:** Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots’ Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at [military.va@tamusa.edu](mailto:military.va@tamusa.edu) or (210)784-1397.

**Religious Observances:** Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or course work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

**The Six-Drop Rule:** Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student’s GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as “F” grades and will impact the student’s GPA.

**Statement of Harassment and Discrimination:** Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality and the uniqueness of the individual within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees should be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender

identity, gender expression, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the appropriate offices within their respective units.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex- or gender-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio's Title IX Coordinator can support those impacted by such conduct in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the Title IX Coordinator. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator ([titleix@tamusa.edu](mailto:titleix@tamusa.edu), 210-784-2061, CAB 439K). If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.

Pregnant/Parenting Students: Texas A&M-San Antonio does not require a pregnant or parenting student, solely because of that status or issues related to that status, to (1) take a leave of absence or withdraw from their degree or certificate program; (2) limit the student's studies; (3) participate in an alternative program; (4) change the student's major, degree, or certificate program; or (5) refrain from joining or cease participating in any course, activity, or program at the University. The university will provide such reasonable accommodations to pregnant students as would be provided to a student with a temporary medical condition that are related to the health and safety of the student and the student's unborn child. These could include maintaining a safe distance from substances, areas, and activities known to be hazardous to pregnant individuals and their unborn child; excused absences because of illness or medical appointments; modified due dates for assignments; rescheduled tests/exams; taking a leave of absence; and being provided access to instructional materials and video recordings of lectures for excused absences, if these would be provided to any other student with an excused absence. Pregnant/parenting students are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator with any questions or concerns related to their status ([titleix@tamusa.edu](mailto:titleix@tamusa.edu); 210-784-2061; CAB 439K).

Texas A&M-San Antonio has also designated the Title IX Coordinator as the liaison officer for current or incoming students who are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18 years of age. The Title IX Coordinator can provide students with information regarding support services and other resources.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities: The following statement of students' rights and responsibilities is intended to reflect the philosophical base upon which University Student Rules are built. This philosophy acknowledges the existence of both rights and

responsibilities, which is inherent to an individual not only as a student at Texas A&M University-San Antonio but also as a citizen of this country.

#### *Students' Rights*

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no University rule or administrative rule that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the University, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and pregnancy/parenting or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

#### *Students' Responsibilities*

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty, and administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, [Student Code of Conduct](#), on our website, and University Catalog, and to comply with them, as well as with federal, state, and local laws.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notifications.

We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation, or disability. Conduct that infringes on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more

information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the Student Code of Conduct (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/documents/Student-Handbook-2022-23.pdf>) or visit the resources available in the OSRR website (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/academic-integrity.html>).

### **Option 1 - No Use of Generative AI Permitted**

BIOL 4401 assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT. Use of any AI-generated content in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.



**Important Dates:**

August 26	First day of class
September 2	Labor Day Holiday
November 11	Last day to drop with an automatic "W"
November 19	Last day to drop a course or withdraw from the University
November 27	Study Day – No classes
November 28-30	Thanksgiving Holiday – No classes
December 5	Last day of classes
December 6	Study Day – No classes
December 7-13	Final exams

*The complete academic calendar is available online:*

<https://www.tamusa.edu/academics/academic-calendar/index.html>

**Tentative Dates:**

**8/27 - Intro to course**

**9/03 - Workshop #1 and #2 Presentation #0; General Questions**

**9/10 - Presentation #1; Presentation #2**

**Annotation #1 and #2 due**

**9/17- Presentation #3; Presentation #4**

**Annotation #3 and #4 due**

**9/24 - Presentation #5; Presentation #6**

**Annotation #5 and #6 due**

**10/01 - Presentation #7; Presentation #8**

**Annotation #7 and #8 due**

**10/08 - Presentation #9; Presentation #10**

**Annotation #9 and #10 due**

**10/15 - Presentation #11; Presentation #12**

**Annotation #11 and #12 due**

**10/22 - Presentation #13; Presentation #14**

**Annotation #13 and #14 due**

**10/29 - Presentation #15; Presentation #16**

**Annotation #15 and #16 due**

**11/05 - Presentation #17; Presentation #18**

**Annotation #17 and #18 due**

**11/12 - Presentation #19; Presentation #20**

**Annotation #19 and #20 due**

**11/19 - Presentation #21; Presentation #22**

**Annotation #21 and #22 due**

**11/26 – Writing workshop\*\* Rough draft is due/peer review**

**12/03-Final paper due**