

Seminar in Cell/Molecular Biology
BIOL 4102_001_202610-1credit
Texas A&M University San Antonio
Department of Natural Sciences
Fall 2025 Syllabus

Course Outcome and Expectations:

Students will strengthen their ability to locate, read, interpret, discuss, and critically evaluate primary scientific literature through oral presentations and written work.

This course immerses students directly in the scientific research literature and maximizes opportunities to develop core scientific skills through discussion and writing. As a student-driven class, students will select, analyze, present, and summarize primary research articles in Cell and Molecular Biology. My role as instructor is to guide and support your active engagement. The central goal is to foster critical evaluation of scientific papers. **Therefore, you are expected to read each assigned article thoroughly before class and participate actively in discussions. Participation is required and constitutes a substantial portion of your grade.** Training workshops will provide tools for selecting and critiquing articles, **and meaningful involvement in both workshops and class discussions is essential to your success in the course.**

Course Instructor: Dr. Thiya Mukherjee

Contact: Email: tmukherjee@tamusa.edu
Phone: 210-784-2192
Office: SciTech/STEM 311N
Lab: SciTech/STEM 366

Class Location, Day and Time: Hall 209, Fridays (F): 12.30-1.20 PM

Do not message me on Blackboard. All communications must be by email. Responses may be delayed after 5 pm on weekdays and throughout weekends.

Required Textbook and Course Material: No required textbook. All materials for course administration and assessment will be provided in the learning platform **Blackboard**.

Training Workshops: Training workshops will include how to search for primary research articles, how to find two most recent articles and how to summarize the findings of the articles.

Critical Evaluation of articles: Each student will lead the discussion for two primary research articles selected from the class list. As discussion leader, you will present key data that highlight the significance of each study and facilitate an engaging discussion of the paper with your classmates.

Responsibility of the discussion leader:

- Must submit the journal articles to be discussed as a **.pdf** file **one week** prior to schedule discussion. **There is no grace period and if you fail to submit on time, you forfeit your right to lead the discussion and all points associated with it.**
- Time allocated for discussion will be given to you during the first week of the course period.

Evaluation: (Total 200 points)

- **Attendance: 20 points**

Attendance is mandatory; only one absence will be excused. Missing class without prior approval from Dr. Mukherjee will result in an automatic deduction of both attendance and active participation points. If you have a **documented** University-excused absence (beyond your one free absence), you will not be penalized those points.

- **Active class participation: 40 points**

This will include participation in discussion. If you are not participating in more than one session you lose 40 points. No excuses. I will keep track of your participation.

- **Oral presentation: 60 points**

This will include leading the significant findings from the two research articles and fostering peer discussion.

- **Written critiques: 80 points**

This will include submitting a two-page report summarizing the key findings of both research articles and evaluating what could have been improved, including any important approaches the studies may have overlooked.

Grading Scale: (in percentage)

- 90-100% = A
- 80-89% = B
- 70-79% = C
- 60-69% = D
- <60% = F

Course policies:

- **Student conduct expectations:** Students are expected to uphold personal and academic integrity, remain open to new ideas, and contribute to a community that values diversity and mutual growth. At all times, individuals from various backgrounds and cultures should support one another's intellectual, social, and personal development. While the faculty and staff at TAMUSA are dedicated to assisting students, each student is ultimately responsible for their own learning. Students should aim for academic excellence, demonstrate responsibility and respect, and contribute meaningfully to the university and broader communities. Above all, they are encouraged to cultivate a lifelong love of learning and a commitment to emotional and physical well-being.
- **Active participation:** This is a key expectation for all students in this course. As student learning can be diverse, the course will incorporate various teaching strategies, such as discussions, reading, writing, and individual reflection. Students are encouraged to engage in multiple forms of active learning, pushing beyond their preferred methods and comfort zones. Thoughtful contributions, including questions and comments are **absolute necessary** for being successful at this course.
- **Policy on oral and written assignments:** Clear communication both oral and written are pre-requisite in science. No points for grammar will be deducted, however, clear expression of ideas is necessary in both oral and written assignments to **NOT** lose points.

- Policy on grade appeal: If you believe an error was made in grading, please do not hesitate to bring it to my attention as soon as possible. If you struggle with this course, please let me know and do not wait till the end of the semester. **For an assignment, you are welcome to inquire why points were deducted, but all grades will solely be based on the work submitted at the time of assignment. No verbal clarification of answers will be taken into consideration at a later time point.**
- Policy on make-up or late assignments: **All assignments are due on the schedule date unless discussed with Dr. Mukherjee ahead of time.**
- Broader Use of Generative AI Permitted with Guidelines: No use of Generative AI permitted

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. 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, 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

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 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, 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; 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, based on 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>).

Course Schedule

Month	Day	Activity and Assignment due
August	29	Syllabus/expectation
September	5	Workshop 1: Searching for scholarly article
September	12	Workshop 2: How to find, present and critique a journal article
September	19	Discussion Discussion
September	26	Discussion Discussion
October	3	Discussion Discussion
October	10	Discussion Discussion
October	17	Discussion Discussion
October	24	Discussion Discussion
October	31	Discussion Discussion
November	7	Discussion Discussion
November	14	Discussion Discussion
November	21	Discussion Discussion

Sign-up sheet

Topic	Discussion leader	Discussion leader
Gene Expression and Regulation		
DNA replication and repair		
RNA biology		
Protein trafficking		
Membrane dynamics and transport		
Signal transduction		
Cell cycle and apoptosis		
Cell reprogramming & genetic manipulation		
Synthetic Biology		
Evolution of cells		