



Thesis I: Proposal – BIOL 5306-A

Instructor: Davida Smyth

M-F: SciTech 342

Meeting Times: Variable

Course Description and Prerequisites:

This course enables dedicated hours for proposal writing and research activities, including written and oral communication, research design, field and/or lab work and data analyses, that will lead to a written thesis proposal, meeting with the student's thesis committee and completing the proposal defense.

Prerequisites: BIOL 5310 or BIOL 5312; co-enrollment permitted.

Required: Instructor Approval.

Learning Objectives

- Conduct literature review to establish foundational knowledge of a research topic
- Design research project that demonstrates critical thinking and use of knowledge and skills for biological data analyses, interpretation, and communication.
- Draft and finalize the research plan including: background, data collection and analytical methods, research objectives, questions and/or hypotheses and establish a timeline for project completion.
- Establish a Research Thesis Committee
- Defend the thesis proposal for approval by the Research Thesis Committee.

Required Textbook and Course Material:

There are no required textbooks. Materials and guidelines will be posted on the learning management system Blackboard for course administration and assessment.

Attendance Policy:

Weekly or bi-weekly meetings will be held to discuss progress and review submitted documents with Faculty Mentor.

COURSE POLICIES

Expectations: Personal and academic integrity, to be open to new ideas, and to share in a community where individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures help one another grow intellectually, socially, and personally is always expected throughout the course. TAMUSA faculty and are here to help; however, students must take responsibility for their own learning. Students should strive for a high level of academic performance and to be responsible, respectful, contributing citizens within the university and in outside communities. Above all, students should develop a love of learning that will last a lifetime, along with a life-long interest in maintaining emotional and physical wellness.

Active Participation: Students are expected to work with a high level of self-motivation. Successful students exercise initiative and exhibit strong communication skills in working with their advisors and committee members. This course requires individual effort that is overseen by the Faculty Mentor/Committee Chair. The thesis proposal should be written and revised iteratively between the student and Faculty Mentor until the document(s) is/are ready for submission to the Thesis Committee. If the Thesis Committee agrees, then research activities should commence and/or continue.

Assessment: There are no formal assignments in this course. In consultation with Faculty Mentor, students develop a personal work schedule with specified deliverables. Weekly or bi-weekly individual meetings will be held to discuss submitted deliverables and revise the work plan if needed. Completion of this course is determined when the Thesis Committee approves the proposal. After proposal defense, the Thesis Proposal Approval form(s) will signed after successful completion of an oral proposal defense.

Grading:

A passing grade in this course presents as *Credit*, *No Credit*, or *In Progress*.

- *Credit* indicates that all course requirements were met, including completion of thesis proposal, proposal defense and proposal approval.
- *No Credit* indicates that course requirements were not met, including failing to complete any of the course requirements
- *In Progress* indicates that one or more of the requirements were not met, but a completion plan is in place for the following semester. An *In Progress* designation indicates that the course will be repeated for a maximum of one additional semester.

Blackboard and Course Communication:

Students must login regularly to both the Blackboard site and to their TAMUSA email account to keep updated on information or changes related to the class. Each student MUST have an active TAMUSA e-mail account. This will be the e-mail address that is used for any communication between you and your instructor. Students who e-mail the instructor Monday-Thursday ordinarily can expect a response within 24 hours. Students who e-mail Friday-Sunday ordinarily can expect a response by Monday morning. The preferred method of communication will always be e-mail or making an appointment (in person or virtually).

Course Schedule:

In consultation with the Faculty Mentor, the student will develop a work schedule for the course. There are three timeline options to follow in this course.

Date	Tasks
Week 1	Meet with advisor and prepare writing and work schedule.
Week 2–9	Write full thesis proposal draft via iterative sections submission to advisor for review. Collect preliminary data, if applicable.
Week 10	Prepare final revision of the thesis proposal draft.
Week 11	Submit proposal draft to committee.
Week 12-13	Proposal Defense.
Week 14	Final Revision and Thesis Proposal Approval Form signed.
Week 15–16	Submit Thesis Approval Form and Thesis Proposal to the Graduate Coordinator (eborda@tamusa.edu) and Graduate Studies Office (graduate.studies@tamusa.edu).