

**BIOL 4106: Seminar in Health (1.0 Credit Hours)**  
**Texas A&M University—San Antonio**  
**Spring 2025**

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**Contact Information**

**Instructor:** Chris Mares

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**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 132. Please refer to the Blackboard site for course instructions and updates. The course will run from January 21, 2025 to May13, 2025.

**Required Text**

There is no required textbook for BIOL 4106.

**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 4106, 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	13	Individual	5	65
Discussion Contributions	13	Individual	5	65
Discussion leading	1	Individual	90	90
Critiques	1	Individual	150	150
			<b>Total =</b>	<b>400</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:** We all make errors, and I'm no different. 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.\*\*\***

## **Biology Program & University Policies**

**Disability Services and The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** The 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 for reasonable accommodation of their disability. If you believe you have a disability that may require accommodations, please contact *Disability Support Services (DSS)* for the coordination of services. DSS is located at the Main Campus on the 2nd floor of the Central Academic Building in room 210. The phone number for DSS is 210-784-1335 and the email is [dsupport@tamusa.edu](mailto:dsupport@tamusa.edu).

**Academic Dishonesty** is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- Plagiarism
- Cheating
- Lying
- Bribery

As a member in an academic community, students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students who are unwilling to abide by these basic expectations will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Students are expected to share in the responsibility and authority with faculty and staff to challenge and make known acts that violate the Texas A&M University-San Antonio Code of Conduct. Texas A&M University- San Antonio faculty have the discretion to impose grade penalties as deemed necessary and are obliged to report any form of academic dishonesty to the Office of Student Engagement and Success. For more

information, please refer to the Texas A&M University-San Antonio Handbook. Academic Dishonesty falls under Acts of Dishonesty in the Student Handbook's Code of Conduct (Page 37).

<http://www.tamusa.edu/studentengagementsuccess/TexasA&MSanAntonioStudenthandbook.pdf>

All student term papers and other written assignments are subject to analysis by anti-plagiarism software.

**Laboratory Attendance Policy:** Laboratory courses provide you with hands-on opportunities to learn techniques and develop critical thinking skills that are prerequisites to practicing science. For these reasons, we have a strict attendance policy:

- Attendance is mandatory
- If you miss more than 3 labs for whatever reason (excused or not) the maximum score you can earn for the laboratory portion of the course is 50%.

If you miss a lab section for a university excused absence, you may attempt to make up the lab in another lab section if the following criteria are met: (a) the absence is determined to be a university excused absence by your primary instructor, (b) you contact your instructor and the instructor of the section you would like to attend via email, and (c) you receive written confirmation from both of these individuals that you are permitted to makeup the lab. Note that if you do not receive written confirmation, you will not be allowed to make up the lab.

**Veterans and active duty military personnel** are welcomed and encouraged to communicate, in advance if possible, special circumstances (*e.g.*, upcoming deployment, drill requirements, disability accommodations) that they are experiencing. Military connected students are also encouraged to visit the Patriots' Casa in person, or to contact the *Office of Military Affairs* with any questions at 210-784-1174.

**Jaguar Writing Center:** The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing assistance to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Students can make individual or group appointments with a writing tutor. The Writing Center is located in Central Academic Building, Suite 208 and can be reached by emailing [tutoring@tamusa.edu](mailto:tutoring@tamusa.edu) or calling 210-784-1332. Appointments can also be made through JagWire using TutorTrac, which is found under the services tab.

**University Email Policy and Course Communications:** All correspondence between professors and students must occur via University email accounts. You must have your Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at [sahelp@tamus.edu](mailto:sahelp@tamus.edu) or at 210-784-HELP (4357). If you don't hear back within 48 hours, contact the help desk again. They have a lot of requests during the first part of the semester, so you may need to follow up with them.

**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.

**Tentative Dates:**

<b>1/22</b>	<b>Intro to course/Review vs. Primary Research/Searching for articles</b>	
<b>1/29</b>	<b>Annotations/Rubric for pres.</b>	<b>Workshop #1 due</b>
<b>2/5</b>	<b>Presentation # 0</b>	
<b>2/12</b>	<b>Presentation #1/2</b>	<b>Annotation #1/2 due</b>
<b>2/19</b>	<b>Presentation #3/4</b>	<b>Annotation #3/4 due</b>
<b>2/26</b>	<b>Presentation #5/6</b>	<b>Annotation #5/6 due</b>
<b>3/5</b>	<b>Presentation #7/8</b>	<b>Annotation #7/8 due</b>
<b>3/12</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>	
<b>3/19</b>	<b>Presentation #9/10</b>	<b>Annotation #9/10 due</b>
<b>3/26</b>	<b>Presentation #11/12</b>	<b>Annotation #11/12 due</b>
<b>4/2</b>	<b>Presentation #13/14</b>	<b>Annotation #13/14 due</b>
<b>4/9</b>	<b>Pres. #15/Workshop-Paraphrasing/Critique/Works Cited/Rubric</b>	
<b>4/16</b>	<b>First Draft due/Peer review</b>	
<b>4/23</b>	<b>Refine draft</b>	
<b>4/30</b>	<b>Final Draft Due</b>	