Biology 16, Introduction to Biology for Non-Majors

Section 6304 - Course Syllabus

You can find a pdf of this syllabus here: Spring 2026 Bio 16 syllabus

Welcome!

Welcome to Biology 16! I am so excited to work with you this semester, and hopefully help you accomplish goals beyond this course. I hope that you are just as excited to get to know and work with each other and to learn more about the natural world.

We will be learning and growing as Biology students (myself included!) together this semester. We all have our own valuable talents, skills, experiences, and perspectives to bring to the table, and we all have things to learn from one another.

In this classroom, you have the right to determine your own identity. You have the right to be called by your correct name, and for that name to be pronounced correctly. You have the right to be referred to by your correct pronouns. If the name or pronouns you go by need to be changed, you can do that at any point in your education. You are your own person, and you are not expected to or believed to speak for a whole group just because they may share some identity with you.

If you find that there are aspects of course instruction, subject matter, or classroom environment that are barriers to your inclusion, please talk with me. My goal is to help you access information and skills, and students are always teaching me how to do that better.

Course Description

An introduction for non-majors to the core concepts of biology by studying current issues in modern biology with an emphasis on the scientific method and scientific literacy.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Apply the scientific method to investigating and evaluating biological phenomena.
2. Explain the application of the core concepts of biology to current issues.
3. Evaluate the scientific background of and debate on current biological issues.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of laboratory and field biology techniques, including microscopy.

Objectives

During the course students will:
1. Explain the scientific method and assess information about current scientific issues using this methodology
2. Compare and contrast science and pseudoscience
3. Assess the role of science in society

4. Demonstrate knowledge of each of the following core concepts: evolution, structure and function, flow of information, flow of matter, systems biology
5. Apply core concepts to specific current issues in modern biology
6. Analyze and critically evaluate a current issue in biology and current events using the principles of the scientific method
7. Apply the steps in the scientific method for problem solving and biological investigation
8. Apply laboratory techniques, including proper microscope use, to observing and experimenting with biological phenomena

Instructor Contact

Dr. Riva Bruenn

Please call me Riva (pronounced REE-vah, rhymes with Diva) and use she/her pronouns for me.

If you are uncomfortable using my first name you are free to call me Dr. B. I am most comfortable being called by my first name, but other instructors may ask you to call them by their titles. There are many reasons for this! Curious? Check out this article: Why do I have to call you Dr.?

How to contact me outside of class

I respond to Canvas Inbox message within 24 work hours (work hours are 9-5 M-F)

I prefer Canvas messages (I will see those first), but you may also email me at rbruenn@santarosa.edu I will respond to emails within 48 work hours.

If you ask me for something in class that requires scheduling, I will likely ask you to send me a canvas message. This makes sure we both have a record of any agreement we make, and also helps me stay organized!

Student hours (also called Office Hours)

In my office 662, in the office suite across the hall from our lecture room.

Walk-in help, no appointment necessary, other students may be there as well

1/13-1/22, and 5/12-5/14 (weeks we have no lab)

- 2:30-3:30pm Monday, Wednesday
- 12-1pm Tuesday, Thursday

1/27-5/7 (weeks we have lab)

- 9:30-10:30am Monday, Wednesday, Thursday

15 minute 1 on 1 appointments, or a study group can make an appointment together

To make an appointment for a private meeting, send me a Canvas message at least 48 hours before the appointment time (ex. by Monday at 9am for a Wednesday 9am appointment time).

- 9-9:30am Wednesday
- 3-4:30pm Thursday

What are student hours/office hours for?

Student walk-in hours are a time when I will be available to help any and all students who stop in. You don't have to make an appointment. There may be other students in the session.

I LOVE having students come to student hours - you are never a bother, always a joy.

Ideas for things to discuss during student hours:

- get help answering a study question, or another content question you have
- go over a practice quiz
- go over a graded exam
- go over an assignment before you submit it, or discuss feedback on a graded assignment
- get help navigating Canvas
- get help finding an SRJC or community resource (like writing help, mental health care, food, equipment loans, etc.)
- get help figuring out what to focus on to catch up, make a priority list and schedule, and set course goals together
- get advice or ask for help connecting with helpful people for your future academic or professional career
- ask random biology questions I may or may not be able to help you with
- work on an assignment quietly by yourself and ask me questions when they come up as you work
- come with your study group and study, asking me questions when they come up

If you have a sensitive matter to discuss, like an interpersonal problem with a classmate or an accommodations concern, I recommend making a 1 on 1 appointment.

Course Web Site

Students will use this Canvas course web site for instructional content, assignment instructions, submitting assignments, viewing classmate's work, sharing resources, and viewing grades.

Instructor Announcements and Q and A Forum

I will post announcements on the “Announcements” page in Canvas throughout the semester. Canvas notifies students according to their preferred Notification Preferences as soon as the instructor creates an Announcement. Make sure to set up your notifications so you get one when I post an announcement.

There are also two discussion boards you can use to post questions. I encourage students to answer each other's questions, but if no one has answered, I will respond within 48 hours.

Q and A about course and assignment details

Q and A about course content

Textbook

Concepts of Biology, OpenStax free online textbook

You can find our textbook for free online here: Concepts of Biology Introduction

You can also locate and order a paper copy of the textbook online via the SRJC Bookstore. Note that if you want to pick your books up in Petaluma, you need to order them from the Petaluma Bookstore website.

- OpenStax Concepts of Biology
- Fowler, Samantha and Roush, Rebecca and Wise, James
- ISBN for digital (free) version: ISBN-13: 978-1-947172-03-6
- ISBN for paperback (buy it if you want a paper copy) version: ISBN-13: 978-1-50669-653-9

Biology 10 Lab Manual

You can purchase the lab manual at the SRJC Bookstore. Note that if you want to pick your books up in Petaluma, you need to order them from the Petaluma Bookstore website. The book may also be available on amazon, just be careful which version you buy. The correct details are below.

- Arbor Crest Publishing, 2026
- The cover should have "SKU Bio10-C02" in the lower right corner
- The cover should have a picture of a mushroom on it (NOT a purple flower), as shown in the picture below.
- ISBN to be determined

Financial hardship

If it is difficult for you to pay for the required materials (lab manual) either speak with Riva or complete a self-referral with the basic needs team:

Basic needs website

Grading Policy

Visit the “Grades” page in Canvas course navigation to keep track of your grades. I grade and post grades and comments on the online Canvas gradebook. I will grade late work, exams, written projects, and discussions within 2 weeks of submission. I will grade all other assignments within 1 week of submission.

I encourage you to keep a close eye on your grades and feedback. For most assignments you can resubmit with corrections to earn more points. Keep your goals in mind to decide when this is worth your time, and come to student hours if you want my help strategizing. Student success coaches and tutors can also help with this.

Grades will be assigned as follows:

Letter grade percents and points		
A	90%	**900** points or more
B	80%	**800 to 899** points
C	70%	**700 to 799** points
D	60%	**600 to 699** points

Grades are transferred directly from Canvas into the final grade system, so what shows in Canvas is accurate. There will be no rounding.

You can use the What If? grade function in Canvas to set specific goals on assignments - it will show you how your grade will change given an assignment grade you enter. Here is a link to learn about this tool: What If Grades in Canvas

Points will come from the following assignments and assessments:

Breakdown of points for the semester

Assignment/assessment	Description	Points	% of your final grade
Scientific claims project (practice peer review 10pts, idea 4pts, primary source 6pts, annotated bibliography 15pts, CER outline 15pts, first draft 5pts, peer review 20pts, second draft 25pts, presentation 20pts, final 100pts)	An individual or group project evaluating a claim using database research and a graphical presentation of your findings.	220	22
best 23 of 26 labs (4pts each)	Lab activities usually completed during lab period. Occasionally some groups will need to finish for homework	92	9.2
2 case studies (4pts each)	Data analysis of real data relevant to class topics.	8	0.8
Best 18 of 22 quizzes each 10pts	closed note group multiple choice quizzes on lecture and lab material, taken in class, allowed to speak with classmates during the quiz	180	18
best 3 of 4 exams each 100pts	closed note multiple choice and short answer exam on lecture and lab material	300	30
Nature journal project (best 6 of 7 journal entries each worth 10pts)	We will practice making detailed drawings and written observations of living things. You will not be graded on how realistic your drawing looks.	60	6

Breakdown of points for the semester

Assignment/assessment	Description	Points	% of your final grade
3 Class discussions (6pts each)	contribute to class discussions about articles you will choose from, includes a reading quiz	18	1.8
3 self assessments each 5pts	Surveys taken after each unit about your study strategies and their effectiveness. Also an opportunity to give course feedback.	15	1.5
pre and post-semester surveys each 2.5pts	Surveys to help me (Riva) assess how I am doing on non-grade related metrics of student success and get to know students individually	5	0.5
2 success activities each 5pts *Points lost can be replaced in Unit 3 with 1 or 2 success activities.*	1 activity per Unit (for units 1 and 2) from a list of activities that typically help students succeed in college courses	10	1
3 Note taking each 4pts	You will be assigned as a note taker for 3 lectures over the semester. I'll scan your notes after class or you can scan and send them to me. One note-taking day may be replaced with 5 words defined in the class glossary if you miss class. If you have note taking accommodations you are excused from this assignment.	12	1.2
Best 20 of 28 Entrance tickets each 4pts	Short activity to hand in at the start of lectures. There will be 28 chances to turn in tickets. You must be present at the time tickets are collected to earn points.	80	8
totals:	----------	1000	100

See each assignment page for more details.

The course outline of record is the required organization of this course for any instructors that teach it. The % of your grade that comes from each category is part of the course outline of record. The following table illustrates which assignments and assessments fit into each required category.

See the course outline of record for more information: Bio 16 COR

Assignments in each COR category

Course Outline Category	Assignments & Assessments	% of your grade from that category
writing - response papers	scientific claims project	22
problem solving - analysis of case studies	labs and case studies	10
Exams lecture & lab	quizzes and exams	48
Other - oral report, participation	nature journal project, self assessments, surveys, success activities, notes, entrance/exit tickets, class discussions	20

Why I won't offer extra credit assignments

I will not be offering extra credit assignments, though some assessments have bonus questions and there are several revisions opportunities. I do not wish to penalize students with non-flexible schedules (ex. care giving, jobs, and other responsibilities) or further privilege students who have more time and resources to complete extra credit assignments. Instead of doing additional extra assignments for extra credit, in this course you can concentrate on correcting and resubmitting existing assignments. I've already put a lot of time and effort into creating assignments that help you learn the material.

Turning in assignments

In this course, most assignments will be submitted through the relevant assignment page on Canvas. I will not accept assignments through email or canvas message, because I grade anonymously using the Canvas grading system. Each assignment will have a due date (listed in the course schedule) and a close date (the Unit close date except for project assignments and surveys). Except for entrance tickets, scientific claims project assignments, surveys, and exams which take place on paper during class time, I will accept assignments for full credit up until the close date.

Some assignments will require file uploads. The acceptable file formats are: pdf, jpg, jpeg, tiff, png, doc, docx, xls. Never submit a .pages document or a live document (like google docs) except when directed to in the assignment directions (scientific claims project).

Each assignment page will have directions and upload help links. Make sure to start your upload at least 30min before the close time. Submit a day in advance if you might need help.

Exams and quizzes

There will be closed note in-person quizzes in which you may speak with classmates, as well as closed note in-person exams which you must take alone. The material comes from the textbook/readings, lectures, labs, and supplemental materials provided to you.

Exam return policy

I will not be passing back exams to keep, but you are free to look at them (no notes or pictures) at the start of the next class for which they are graded. I will also have them with me during student hours for the next 2 weeks after the exam takes place. During this time I will fix any grading mistakes you catch. After 2 weeks you are welcome to look at the exams if you ask me in advance to take it with me to lecture, lab or student

hours, but I will not be changing any grades. I will keep the exam papers up until the end of the first week of the following semester, after which I will shred the exams.

test anxiety

Many students experience exam anxiety. Some strategies that have worked for other students:

- Go over your notes after each class (after lecture, after lab). Some students reorganize notes by making tables, charts, diagrams, and word banks or by color coding. Keep a well organized study guide.
- Write down questions you need help with and plan to come to office hours at least once a week to get help.
- Schedule time to study. Turn off all devices during this time. When your scheduled study time is over, move on to something else.
- Take your first quiz attempt early, treat it as a practice test.
- After your first quiz attempt, come to office hours to go over what you missed before taking the second attempt.

Late Policy

This course is set up so that you can learn from your mistakes by correcting work, and practice time management skills without fear of failure. Learning takes practice and failure the first time is normal. We do not decide whether a driver deserves a license based on their first driving lesson, and your final grade should likewise not be determined by your first quiz score. You should plan on completing good work on time, but when your work does not meet the criteria, or when you fall behind, you will have the space to fix mistakes and catch up again.

All assignments are due **at 10am PST** on the due date. There is no need to ask for an extension: I will accept late work for full credit up unit the unit closes except for entrance tickets (to prepare you for that lecture) projects (that rely on all students finishing at the same time) and surveys (when I need the results promptly). To prevent any students from falling too far behind and to help me manage my own time, after a unit closes, I will not accept, give feedback on, or grade work from the closed unit.

If you are struggling to keep up with the course, I encourage you to come to student hours to strategize with me. We will talk about your grade goals and together as a team we will make a priority list and schedule to help you readjust. Tutors and success coaches can also help you with this.

Pass-No Pass (P/NP)

This class is a grade only class. P/NP is not an option for this course. See the course outline of record for more information: Bio 16 COR

Accommodations

Disabled students who need or may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disability Resources (527-4278), disabilityinfo@santarosa.edu as soon as possible to better ensure such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. You will need to provide the Authorization for Academic Accommodations (AAA letter) from the Disability Resources Department (DRD) to receive accommodations.

I want you to have what you need to succeed, so if you may be eligible, please seek all accommodations you are entitled to even if you have not done so in previous classes.

Additional resources for success

- Student Success Team – student coaches
- Tutorial Centers
- Library resources - Librarians are available online. Go to "online chat" or "zoom appointments." Libraries are open in person this semester (check website for hours)
- Need a Laptop or other equipment? Borrow from SRJC Library (look on the right side of the webpage)
- Need financial help? Explore types of aid
- Accessing Online Student Services
- Basic Needs – Student Resource Center supports meeting student needs for food, housing, transportation, and much more

My tips for success

SRJC estimates that students will spend 5-8 hours outside of class time per week for a 4 credit course like Bio 16. This page is some general advice about how to spend this time depending on what your grade goal is. The advice is based on what students report they are doing for the course, and what grades they earn. You'll need to try different things and learn what works best for YOU, because every person is unique. You may need to spend more or less time than your peers to earn the same grade.

Tips for success

How to prepare	If you're aiming for an A	If you're aiming for a B	If you're aiming to pass
Before each week starts	• Check the course schedule to see what's coming up in the next 2 weeks • Schedule time for reading, studying, and assignments due.	• Check the course schedule to see what's coming up in the next week. • Schedule time for assignments due.	• Check the course schedule to see what's due at the next lecture
Before each lecture	• Print or write out the study questions with room to write answers • Watch the videos or do the reading on that lecture's content page. Take notes on vocabulary and key concepts while you read or watch.	• Read the study questions • Watch the videos or do the reading on that lecture's content page	• Read the study questions • Read the 1-page chapter summary for that lecture's reading
Before each lab	• Read the lab if available, take notes on vocabulary	• Read the lab if available	• Read the title of the lab

Tips for success

How to prepare	If you're aiming for an A	If you're aiming for a B	If you're aiming to pass
	and key concepts or experiments		• Read the titles of all the exercises in the lab if available
After each week ends	• Complete all assignments on time • Check the assignment checklist and the module for that week to make sure you've completed everything • Answer the study questions • Reorganize your notes (ex. Color-coding, charts/tables, outlines, flashcards) • Attend tutoring, office hours, and/or a study group to go over your study guide questions, first quiz attempts, and/or any confusing topics. • Take a few minutes each week to review vocabulary (flashcards are great for this)	• Complete all assignments on time. • Check the assignment checklist and the module for that week to make sure you've completed everything • Answer as many of the study questions as you can • Attend tutoring, office hours, and/or a study group to go over 1st quiz attempts	• Complete as many assignments as possible. Prioritize either the easiest/fastest assignments or those worth the most points • Attend office hours, tutoring, and/or a study group to work on assignments. Ask questions when you get stuck. (this is more time efficient than working alone without help)
General practices	• Ask questions in class • Form a support network for the class • Put everything into your own short, easy to understand words • Attend every class	• Write down everything you can in your notes especially memorable examples or analogies that make sense to you • Get notes and help from classmates if you miss class	• Turn in *something* for every assignment, even if it's late. Finished is better than perfect! Some points are always better than none. • If you fall behind, focus on current stuff before past stuff

Advice from Fall 2025 students, in their own words

One Note: "Office hours" are also called "Student hours."

On the last self assessment I asked students to give advice to the next semester's students. This is what Fall 2025 students had to say to you, in their unedited words.

- Just keep up with the work and do the entrance tickets and look at the study guide the week before the exam.
- Some advice I would give to upcoming students is to stay caught up with what your doing. Not many classes give u assignments in the way that Riva does, shes very very very generous about it. Dont take advantage of that.
- You're only assigned to do one part of the practice exams, but you should do the whole thing. They resemble the actual exams quite well.
- Stay on track and if you ever need help make sure to ask questions because Riva will always guide you success in the class.
- try talking to those around you, you never know when you'll see them again, and how they can help you.
- Ask questions even if you think you understand, ask for further clarification.
- the class can feel fast paced at times but the material is manageable if you stay consistent and us the resources provided don't be afraid to as questions or seek clarification when needed
- Just make sure to study atleast a little bit for every exam using the stidy guide provided and you will get a good enough grade.
- Just have fun with it! Make sure to write notes that you can look back to. Study with everything Riva provides because she has lots of great resources for videos!
- Stay caught up with assignments and take time to study topics you are having trouble with. ASK FOR HELP WHEN NEEDED!!!! Trust in Riva's process (insert praying emoji).
- Study!!!! I really procrastinated a lot and studied at the last minute but it really ended up hurting my grade. I still passed with a C but my goal was to pass with a B. I think I could have managed that goal if I had studied for the exams more.
- Study A LOT for exams. Make sure you really understand the material
- Take it all in as much as you can, because it really is such and eye-opening course to learn about our world and what we could possibly do to help it.
- Take really good notes because they will help a lot for tests
- Pay attention in class and take detailed notes; also do the study guides.
- Study and take good notes
- Do the assignments!!! And don't fall behind! This class is very achievable as long as you are doing what you are supposed to.

Important Dates

Day Class Begins: Tues 1/13

Last Day to Add without instructor's approval: Sun 1/18

Last Day to Drop with a refund: Sun 1/25

Last Day to Add with instructor's approval and add code: Sun 2/1

Last Day to Drop without a 'W' symbol: Sun 2/1

Date midterm grades may appear in student portals: 3/23-4/19

Last Day to Drop with a 'W' symbol: Sun 4/19

Day Of Last Class Session: Thurs 5/14

Day of Cumulative Final Exam: Tues 5/19 (10am-12:45pm)

Attendance

I expect you to attend all class sessions and I will note attendance at every session. That said, I am aware that students may have unavoidable conflicts, mental and physical health issues, and emergencies. If for some reason you cannot attend a regular class session, you do not need to explain why you missed class but I do expect you to contact me as far in advance as possible (or as soon after the absence as possible in unforeseen circumstances) to get help catching up. You are still responsible for any work or material missed, but I am happy to help you! To set your expectations accurately, in my experience catching up after missing a class requires more time and effort than coming to the class.

You are responsible for your own enrollment - if you plan to withdraw make sure you do so by the posted deadlines. Do not rely on me to drop you from the course, but you can ask me for help and advice.

If you have a schedule conflict with an exam

If you notify me of unavoidable conflicts with an exam by 1/18 I will do my best to accommodate a makeup time for that exam. If this is possible, you will likely need to take a makeup exam before the scheduled exam date. The 1/18 deadline for letting me know about schedule conflicts is to ensure that it's not too late to add a different section of Bio 16 or Bio 10 in case I am not able to accommodate your schedule.

If you miss an exam

A makeup exam may be possible, but only in the event of documented unexpected emergencies, must take place within 1 week of the scheduled exam, and is dependent on my availability. If you miss an exam for a reason that is not a documented, unexpected emergency I will not schedule a makeup, but remember that 1 exam grade is dropped. This policy is to protect my time, as writing a makeup exam, and proctoring an exam takes hours away from my other work, which is difficult for me to do without advance notice and planning. I will work with the Disability Resources Department to ensure any accommodations requirements are met.

If you miss an entrance ticket

There are no makeups for entrance tickets because their purpose is to prepare for that lecture session, but 8 entrance tickets are dropped to make sure your life responsibilities don't prevent you from earning your goal grade. I advise you to complete every entrance ticket you can so that you have extras in case you need to be late or miss a lecture.

If you miss a lab

There are no makeups for labs, but 3 labs are dropped. I advise you to complete every lab you can so that you have extras in case you miss a lab or need to come to a lab late or leave early.

If you miss a nature journal entry

1 nature journal entry is dropped. There may be additional times you can make up nature journals instead of working on the scientific claims project during lab class time. Send Riva a canvas message if you have specific scheduling questions.

If you miss a quiz

4 quizzes are dropped. If you have already missed 4 quizzes and you miss a 5th, you may schedule a time to take the 5th missed quiz with me in person during student hours. Additional missed quizzes cannot be made up - this is to protect my time.

If you miss one of your assigned note-taking days

You can reschedule one missed note-taking day. Send me (Riva) a canvas message and I will add you to the schedule on another day. This cannot be done for the last scheduled class session.

Excessive absences

During the semester, if you miss 10 hours of class time (lectures are 1.5 hours, labs are 2 hours) I may drop you from the course.

Strategies to avoid falling behind in the case of absences:

Strategies to use ahead of time:

- work ahead of schedule to protect yourself from unforeseen events
- exchange contact information with lab group members or other classmates so you have someone to go to for notes and help on what you missed

Strategies to use after you miss a session:

- come to student hours/office hours after looking over the notes and materials for help with study questions
- read the posted notes
- post in the course Q & A boards for help with things you missed or help finding resources you need to catch up
- use the course schedule to make a list and schedule time in your own calendar for catching back up

No-show drop: if you miss the first one or two class sessions

If you do not attend the first lecture and I don't hear from you about your absence, I may drop you from the course. I do this to make space in the course for interested students. If you know you will miss the first lecture, communicate with me to avoid being dropped. If you do not attend the first 2 class sessions (first 2 lectures), I may drop you from the course regardless of communication.

Withdrawing and Excused Withdrawal (W and EW)

You might decide that this course doesn't fit into your life this semester. If you do, know that I am not judging you. I know that you have priorities outside of this class. Before you withdraw, I encourage you to

check in with me 1 on 1 to see if we can work together to help you prioritize your time in the course to succeed. I also encourage you to meet with a counselor to make sure withdrawing is the best option, and to discuss whether you are eligible for an excused withdrawal.

- A regular withdrawal will show up as a W on your transcript and will count towards your number of attempts in the course.
- An excused withdrawal will show up as an EW on your transcript and will not count towards your number of attempts in the course.

Here is a link for scheduling a counseling meeting: Meet with a counselor

I challenge you to present your own creative, original work

I trust you and believe that no student sets out to plagiarize (copy) the work of others. This can happen due to unbearable stress, mistake, or confusion about what counts as plagiarism.

Plagiarism is not just submitting someone else's paper as your own. It's taking sentences, even several-word phrases directly from another source or sources without proper attribution. You are a creative, intelligent, capable person and you can communicate in your own original way with your own words. If you're not doing original work, all the assigned work is really just busywork and is not a useful learning tool. Copy/paste is not worth your valuable time. I encourage students to share information and ideas, but not their work.

All work for this class must be original (in your own words) and completed individually (each student submits their own unique work) unless otherwise specified in the assignment details. Quotes, even if properly attributed, are not permitted in any assignment unless otherwise specified in the assignment details.

No credit will be earned for plagiarized assignments, quizzes, or exams.

My best advice for avoiding plagiarism is to always take notes in your own words, and never look at the original source while doing your work. If you're ever confused about whether you're writing in your own words or not, come to office hours or the writing center. We'd all love to help you!

To learn more, including specific examples, see these links on Plagiarism:

- Plagiarism: How to avoid it (video)
- U of Wisconsin's article on how to avoid plagiarism
- SRJC's policy on Academic Integrity

Artificial intelligence (AI) language models like ChatGPT

AI models can be very helpful when making outlines or organizing writing, especially for non-fluent English writers, and people with limited experience writing. Similar to how Wikipedia can be a reasonable place to START your research - to find useful sources that are more reputable, ChatGPT and other models can be a reasonable place for you to get ideas and outline your own writing.

All that said - your final product for any assignment in this class needs to be your own original work - this means your ideas, words, and phrasing must be your own. In addition, you are responsible for verifying and citing information used in AI generated text.

You will not earn credit for work that is AI generated.

Known issues with ChatGPT and other AI models

When students have used AI language generators for my course I have noticed the following issues:

- multiple students turning in assignments with identical wording and phrases
- incorrect information and misuse of vocabulary words
- failure to adequately address the prompt/question/other requirements for the assignment
- large sections of text that do not relate to the prompt/question/assignment requirements
- in my experience so far, AI models do not accurately summarize scientific literature and do not build adequate logical connections between statements and evidence

Substantial similarity in student work

If multiple students submit work that is substantially the same (for example identical assignments, long identical phrases, identical paragraph and idea structure with wording changed), I will notify the students. I will initially split the earned points between the students who submitted the work. If the students initiate a meeting with one another or myself to resolve the issue and/or any student(s) come to me to acknowledge fault I will assign the earned points to the original author. If the assignment is still open, any of the students may redo the assignment and resubmit it for a new grade.

Without student(s) coming forward to take responsibility, it is not typically possible for me to determine which student created the work (even if one student submitted it first). For example, the work might come from a 3rd party or AI language generated text which was copied by all involved students. The students may have worked together to create the work. One student may have copied the work from the other's notebook or digital device before it was submitted.

To protect yourself, do not share your work with other students. You are very welcome and encouraged to help one another, but not by sharing completed assignments. Submit your own original work rather than relying on other sources or AI generated text.

SRJC Standards of Conduct

Students who register in SRJC classes are required to abide by the SRJC Student Conduct Standards. Violation of the Standards is basis for referral to the Vice President of Student Services or dismissal from class or from the College. See the Student Code of Conduct page.

Netiquette, or Why Is It Harder to Be Polite Online?

Netiquette refers to using common courtesy in online communication.

In our first week of classes we will come up with shared classroom goals and values. In the meantime, please use these guidelines for discussions and communications through Canvas:

- Forward emails and other private messages only with a writer's permission.
- Be considerate of others' feelings and use language carefully.
- Cite all quotations, references, and sources (otherwise, it is plagiarism).

- Use humor carefully. It is hard to "read" tone; sometimes humor can be misread as criticism or personal attack. Feel free to use emoticons like :) for a smiley face to let others know you are being humorous.
- To ensure that others can understand you, use complete sentences to compose posts. Review work before submitting it.
    - Abbreviations, such as "ur" for "your" or "ru" for "are you" etc., is confusing for many people, so please use full words.
    - If you don't understand what someone else has said, try asking for clarification.
    - If you notice wording that is confusing in an assignment or from me (the instructor), ask for clarification so I can fix it for everyone.
- Focus on impact first, not intent. If something you communicate has a negative impact (hurts someone for example), try to understand the impact and change your behavior first, before communicating what your intent was. Curious about this idea? Read this Scientific American blog post.

Tentative course schedule

THIS PAGE WILL NOT BE UPDATED. FOR AN UP-TO-DATE SCHEDULE LOOK AT THIS PAGE: Tentative Course Schedule

Readings, topics, and due dates for the semester. If this schedule needs to change, I will send a course announcement.

All assignments will remain open without late penalties until the Unit exam **except for entrance tickets, surveys, and scientific claims project assignments**, which must be turned in on their due dates to earn any credit.

Except for lecture exam days and the first day of class, every lecture will have an entrance ticket. You can find the assignments in that week's module.

Course schedule

week	day	date	lecture topic	lab topic	assignments due on Tuesday at start of class in addition to any entrance tickets	Other in class assignments	Reading	Other SRJC events
1	Tu	1/13	Introductions, size exercise	none	getting started module		ch. 1.1, 2.3	

Course schedule

week	day	date	lecture topic	lab topic	assignments due on Tuesday at start of class in addition to any entrance tickets	Other in class assignments	Reading	Other SRJC events
	Th	1/15	Viruses vs. Cells	none		Quiz 1	ch. 1.1, 3.4, 17.1	notify Riva by canvas message of schedule conflicts with any exams by 1/18
2	Tu	1/20	how COVID-19 vaccines work	none	lab group survey 1	Quiz 2	ch. 1.2, 17.3, article	
	Th	1/22	case study: Moderna vaccine clinical trials	none		Quiz 3	none	
3	Tu	1/27	DNA and chromosomes	1: what is science?		Quiz 4	ch. 9.1, 9.2, 6.1	
	Th	1/29	how our cells replicate SARS-CoV-2	3: what are the properties of water?		Quiz 5	ch. 9.3, 9.4, 17.1	
4	Tu	2/3	Gene regulation	4: water properties continued	success activity 1	Quiz 6	ch. 9.5	
	Th	2/5	cell cycling, mutations, and cancer	2: How do you design an experiment?		Quiz 7	ch. 6.3	
5	Tu	2/10	cancer treatments	5: What is an enzyme?		Quiz 8	article	

Course schedule

week	day	date	lecture topic	lab topic	assignments due on Tuesday at start of class in addition to any entrance tickets	Other in class assignments	Reading	Other SRJC events
6	Tu	2/17	Class discussion: COVID-19 and Cancer	Evaluating sources	**lab group survey 2**	Quiz 9, and a reading quiz	Article	
	Th	2/19	Review session for Unit 1	6: Do environmental conditions affect enzymes?			none	
7	Tu	2/24	Unit 1 lecture exam	practice peer reviews	**practice peer reviews (by end of lab)**			
	Th	2/26	the carbon cycle	Library workshop			ch. 20.1	
8	Tu	3/3	evidence of human caused climate change	8: What is the relationship between cellular respiration and CO_2? Scientific claims meetings	**self assessment 1, Scientific claims ideas**	Quiz 10	ch. 21.2, article	
	Th	3/5	biodiversity and climate factors	7: What is the relationship between photosynthesis and CO_2? work on scientific claims		Quiz 11	ch. 20.3, 20.4, 21.3	

Course schedule

week	day	date	lecture topic	lab topic	assignments due on Tuesday at start of class in addition to any entrance tickets	Other in class assignments	Reading	Other SRJC events
9	Tu	3/10	CA ecosystems and fire	9: How do scientists observe the natural world? NJ 1	success activity 2, **Scientific claims primary source**	Quiz 12	article	
	Th	3/12	Climate solutions	10: How do I use the compound light microscope?		Quiz 13	article	
10	Tu	3/24	Class discussion: climate change	10: compound microscope continued NJ 2	**lab group survey 3**	Quiz 14, and a reading quiz	article	
	Th	3/26	Review of Unit 2	11: How do cells divide by mitosis? NJ 3			none	
11	Th	4/2	Unit 2 exam	Work on the scientific claims project in the library	**self assessment 2 (due at 1)** **scientific claims annotated bibliography (due at 11:59pm)**		none	
12	Tu	4/7	inheritance of traits	13: How does Mendelian inheritance work?	**scientific claims CER outline (due at 11:59pm)**		ch. 8.1-8.3	
	Th	4/9	ancestry testing	14: How does non-Mendelian inheritance work? scientific claims meetings	**sign up for oral presentations or student research conference**	Quiz 15	ch. 10.3, article	

Course schedule

week	day	date	lecture topic	lab topic	assignments due on Tuesday at start of class in addition to any entrance tickets	Other in class assignments	Reading	Other SRJC events
13	Tu	4/14	gene modification	pGLO 1	**scientific claims draft 1**	Quiz 16	ch. 9.5, 10.1, 10.2	
	Th	4/16	GMOs	15: How can we model natural selection?		Quiz 17	article	
14	Tu	4/21	GMO regulations	pGLO 2 and work on scientific claims	**scientific claims peer reviews**	Quiz 18	articles	
	Th	4/23	genetic testing for diseases	17: What are protists? NJ 4		Quiz 19	ch. 10.2, article	
15	Tu	4/28	case study: sickle cell disease	18: What are plants? NJ 5	**scientific claims draft 2**	Quiz 20	none	
	Th	4/30	gene therapy	19: What are the parts of the eye? NJ 6		Quiz 21	ch. 10.2, article	
16	Tu	5/5	Class discussion: DNA technology	Campus tour, NJ 7		Quiz 22, and a reading quiz	article	
	Th	5/7	Review of unit 3	scientific claims project oral presentation (in lab) or poster presentation (3-5pm)	**scientific claims final projects**		none	student research conference, 500 building 3-5pm 5/7
17	Tu	5/12	Unit 3 exam	none			none	

Course schedule

week	day	date	lecture topic	lab topic	assignments due on Tuesday at start of class in addition to any **entrance tickets**	Other in class assignments	Reading	Other SRJC events
	Th	5/14	Biology 16 championship games	none			none	
18	Tu	5/19	final exam (10am-12:45pm)		**post-semester survey, self assessment 3**		none	

You can look up the Spring 2026 final exam schedule for all your courses, by start day/time here: Spring 2026 final exam schedule