

BIOLOGY 400 – History of Biology

Summer 2023

Department of Biology, University of Victoria

A. Basic Course Information

Course Description

The historical development of the major techniques and ideas of biology, including the significance of the important contributors to biology. The treatment will be part chronological, part topical.

Meetings

A01 – Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 12:30 – 2:20 PM, David Turpin A120.
We will be taking a 10-minute break every class, from approximately 1:20-1:30.

Instructor

Dr. Greg Beaulieu

Office: 006 Petch

Email: gregoryb@uvic.ca. If you send an email, please put "Biology 400" in the message line.

Phone: 721-7140

Office hours: Thursdays, 2:30 – 3:30, or by appointment.

Prerequisite

Third year standing.

Readings

I will post pdfs of selected readings on the Brightspace site when they become relevant as we progress through the course. There is no text or course pack to buy.

Brightspace website

Biology 400 has a Brightspace website. As a registered student in this course, you will automatically be enrolled in this site.

On the site you will find course business notices, lecture PowerPoints and pdfs, test results and so on. Please check the site before each class.

Course Topics (tentative)

- Introduction
- The roots of biology
- Biology in the ancient world
- The Islamic world and medieval Europe
- Hidden and mythical organisms
- The human body: the Scientific Revolution and after
- The early days of microscopy
- Biology and the emerging physical sciences: chemistry
- Describing and arranging organisms
- Biology and the emerging physical sciences: geology
- Evolution before Darwin
- Darwin
- Cells, the units of life
- Heredity
- Evolution and genetics come together
- The hereditary material
- TD Lysenko and Soviet biology

B. Evaluation

Components of your course grade

Packback participation	25% (See C below)
Midterm exam (Thursday, June 8; in class)	30%
Final Exam (Thursday, June 29; in class)	45%
	<hr/>
	100%

Writing the final exam and passing Packback participation are both essential components of the course. If you do not do both, you will receive a grade of N.

Midterm exam

Thursday, June 8; in class, in person.

Format: multiple choice.

Final exam

Thursday, June 29; in class, in person.

Format: multiple choice + written essay

Part 1 – There will be a noncumulative multiple choice section worth half of the exam points; these questions will be concerned with material we have covered since the midterm.

Part 2 – The exam will also have an essay question that will require a written answer of 500 – 600 words or so; you will be asked to integrate various parts of the entire course in your answer to this question. This essay will be worth the other half of the final exam points.

Exam Policy

No electronic devices will be permitted during the midterm or final exam.

If you must miss the midterm for a valid reason (illness, accident, personal or family affliction, participation in an important cultural, community or sporting event), your final mark will be calculated on the basis of the other components of the course, and you will not incur any penalty. If you expect to miss the midterm for any of the above reasons, please notify mw as soon as possible (gregoryb@uvic.ca). You will not need supporting documentation if you miss the midterm for a medical reason.

The final exam can be missed and deferred for the same reasons listed above for missing the midterm (illness, accident, personal or family affliction, participation in an important cultural, community or sporting event).

- If you expect to miss the final exam, please notify me as soon as possible (gregoryb@uvic.ca).
- To make your deferred status official in the eyes of the university, you must fill out a Request for Academic Concession (RAC) form, available from Undergraduate Admissions and Records in the University Center or online. The link below gives information on types of concessions and accommodations available to UVic students. For a link to the RAC form, scroll down to where it says “Able to complete the coursework . . .” and click on “After the end of term”.
<https://www.uvic.ca/registrar/students/appeals/acad-concession/index.php>
- A writing of the deferred final exam will be offered to you on Thursday, July 6, at a time and in a room to be announced later. If you cannot make this date, contact me and we will arrange an alternative date.

Grading Policy

At the University of Victoria, grades are submitted by instructors as percentages. These will be converted to letter grades by the Registrar, according to this grading scale:

A+	90 – 100%	B+	77 – 79%	C+	65 – 69%
A	85 – 89%	B	73 – 76	C	60 – 64%
A-	80 – 84%	B-	70 – 72%	D	50 – 59%

The only circumstances under which I change a submitted course grade is if I have made a calculation error, or if a student has deferred the final exam, received an N, and then written a deferred final. **Please do not ask me to raise your percent grade in order to qualify you for a higher letter grade.** I turn down all such requests.

You will receive an F in the course if your aggregate grade is less than 50% (rounded to the nearest whole number). It is not necessary to pass the midterm exam or the final exam in order to pass the course.

You will receive an N in the course if you miss the final exam in June and do not write a deferred final exam; or if you do not pass on Packback participation (50% or better).

No supplemental final exam (second-chance final exam) will be given in this course, although, as described above, you may defer the final exam for any of the reasons given.

C. Packback

What is it?

Packback is an online platform for discussion among students. You will have been contacted already by the company about signing up, or you will be soon.

Since Biology 400 has only third-year standing as a prereq, there are students from many different academic backgrounds registered here. That has always been one of the strengths of the course and one of its pleasures to me. I hope that Packback will be able to bring together students with different knowledge, ideas, viewpoints and values.

How it works, what you will do, and how you will be assessed

The idea behind the platform is that you will post one discussion question per week, related to the course material in some way, and respond to three questions from other students per week.

Each question and response is worth 3 points, or 12 points per week total. You don't have to respond only to questions posted that week; it's fine if you respond to earlier questions. Your response will be time-stamped, and will count toward the current week's participation mark.

You should try to participate every week. You can't let the first week slide and then post 2 questions and 6 responses in the next week.

The questions will be assessed for their quality by the platform's AI. Questions that pertain to specific, easily-lookuppable matters get low marks; more open-ended questions score higher. The score a post gets is called its "Curiosity Score". I have set the minimum curiosity score at 60. After the AI tells you what it thinks of your question or response, you may edit and improve it. It is only your edited post that will count, or your original post if you choose not to edit.

If the AI thinks your final post deserves a score of 60 or more, you get 3 points for the post. If your post goes below this 60 minimum, you will get 1.5 points. If you do not post at all that week, you get 0 points. And again, remember that you cannot make up missing weeks later.

Although I have to allot marks for your Packback participation, you should not worry about marks the way you might worry before a test. The important thing is to enjoy participating in the discussions.

Your participation in Packback will be worth 25% of your course grade. The platform determines your grade, not me. Therefore I will not mark you up or down depending on what I read.

When you log in to Packback, there will be a button to click ("Packback Tutorial") to get you started.

Packback Deadlines

The deadline for your one question and three responses each week is Saturday at 11:59 PM, PDT. The full list of deadlines:

Saturday, May 20, 11:59 PM (PDT)
Saturday, May 27, 11:59 PM (PDT)
Saturday, June 3, 11:59 PM (PDT)
Saturday, June 10, 11:59 PM (PDT)
Saturday, June 17, 11:59 PM (PDT)
Saturday, June 24, 11:59 PM (PDT)

Coupla more notes

I will not be looking at all your posts and replies, but I will be reading some of the posts every week. This is for my own interest. I will not interfere with the system's grading.

When you post either a question or a reply, please try to bear in mind and practice the valuable academic habit of respectful, impersonal discourse.

- Don't use foul language.
- Don't insult any person or any group of people. It's alright to disagree with a person or a group of people; disagreement is not insult. But don't call people names.
- You're not right about everything. Nobody is. Maybe the point at issue is one of the things you are wrong about.
- Don't attribute someone's statements or values to group membership and dismiss them for that reason ("You're just saying that because you are an X.") This is bad for two reasons.

One, it is stereotyping and assumes the person to be no more than a mindless member of a group, rather than a thinking individual.

And two, it commits a logical fallacy, the Genetic Fallacy (evaluating the truth value of a statement according to who says it, or their motive for saying it, instead of the evidence for or against it).

D. University Statements and Policies

Cheating and Plagiarism

The University and the Biology Department deal with cheating and plagiarism as a serious matter, since ignoring it could be interpreted as endorsing dishonest practice in one's later professional career. To claim ignorance of the University's policy on academic integrity is, therefore, not excused. Please read the policy carefully to avoid unpleasant misunderstandings. The policy can be found on the online UVic calendar:

<https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2022-01/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html>

The University of Victoria Department of Biology reserves the right to use plagiarism detection software or other platforms to assess the integrity of student work.

UVic official territorial acknowledgement

“We acknowledge and respect the ləkʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.”

E. Important Dates

On the UVic website you will find a fuller list of important dates, but the dates listed below are the ones that will matter to students in Biology 400.

Monday, May 15	First day of Biology 400
Saturday, May 20	Packback posts due (1 question, 3 responses) 11:59 PM (PST)
Saturday, May 27	Packback posts due (1 question, 3 responses) 11:59 PM (PST)
Saturday, June 3	Packback posts due (1 question, 3 responses) 11:59 PM (PST)
Thursday, June 8	Midterm exam, in class
Saturday, June 10	Packback posts due (1 question, 3 responses) 11:59 PM (PST)
Saturday, June 17	Packback posts due (1 question, 3 responses) 11:59 PM (PST)
Saturday, June 24	Packback posts due (1 question, 3 responses) 11:59 PM (PST)
Thursday, June 29	Final exam, in class