



# **BINF\*6890 Topics in Bioinformatics**

Fall 2020

Section(s): C01

College of Biological Science

Credit Weight: 0.50

Version 1.00 - September 09, 2020

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## **1 Course Details**

### **1.1 Calendar Description**

Selected topics in bioinformatics will be covered. The course might focus on biological or informatics topics, or upon a mixture of both.

**Restrictions:** Restricted to students in Bioinformatics programs.

### **1.2 Timetable**

Lectures will be held on Wednesday mornings in a synchronous, remote-learning fashion. Links for attending lectures will be available through CourseLink.

Sept. 16 -Dec. 2: Wednesdays 10:00-12:50 - online

### **1.3 Final Exam**

This course does not have a final exam.

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## **2 Instructional Support**

### **2.1 Instructional Support Team**

**Instructor:** Nicole Ricker, Department of Pathobiology, OVC  
**Email:** nricker@uoguelph.ca  
**Telephone:** +1-519-824-4120 x54625  
**Office:** PAHL 4839

**Instructor:** Mehrdad Hajibabaei, Department of Integrative Biology, CBS  
**Email:** mhajibab@uoguelph.ca  
**Telephone:** +1-519-824-4120 x52487

**Office:** CBG 108  
**Instructor:** Stefan C. Kremer, School of Computer Science, CEPS  
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**Telephone:** +1-519-824-4120 x58913  
**Office:** REY 3309

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## 3 Learning Resources

### 3.1 Required Resources

#### Required readings (Article)

At the beginning of each module, the instructors will post several key papers relating to that theme of the module. There may also be lecture videos or other course material that will be assigned throughout the course in order to supplement the synchronous lectures.

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## 4 Learning Outcomes

### 4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Go beyond correctly describing works to clearly articulating their relevance as well as shortcomings.
  2. Evaluate methods described in studies to collect, analyze, and interpret biological data.
  3. Appreciate systematic and high-quality scientific investigation and use inductive and deductive reasoning to understand scientific research.
  4. Communicate in visual and oral format and work collaboratively with diverse team members.
  5. Communicate in written format and improve on the quality of writing through instructor feedback.
  6. Appreciate the depth and breadth of bioinformatics and learn to think independently about bioinformatics tools and research. The course will expose the student to both well-established and cutting-edge material.
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## 5 Teaching and Learning Activities

### 5.1 Lecture

#### Weeks 1-4

##### Topics:

**DR. NICOLE RICKER, DEPARTMENT OF PATHOBIOLOGY, OVC**

- Microbial genome sequencing, assembly and annotation
- Amplicon based microbial community analysis
- Shotgun metagenomics and metabolic pathway analysis in prokaryotes

#### Weeks 5-8

##### Topics:

**DR. MEHRDAD HAJIBABAEI, DEPARTMENT OF INTEGRATIVE BIOLOGY, CBS**

- Molecular phylogenetics and DNA barcoding
- Metagenomics, Metabarcoding, Environmental DNA (eDNA)
- Transcriptomics and environmental genomics

#### Weeks 9-12

##### Topics:

**DR. STEFAN C. KREMER, SCHOOL OF COMPUTER SCIENCE, CEPS**

#### **Introduction to machine learning**

1. the nature of learning,
2. generalization, regularization and bias,
3. parameterized models,
4. computational/representational capacity,
5. error measures
6. learning algorithms,
7. specific models: HMMs, Neural Networks, Deep Learning.

## Case studies

- examples of specific applications of ML to Bioinformatics

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# 6 Assessments

This class is divided into three modules. Average marks in the three modules will be similar, but note that we expect the quality of work to earn a certain mark will increase during the course. Considering feedback and improving professional skills (writing, presenting, discussing) over the course of the three modules is an important component of this course.

## 6.1 Marking Schemes & Distributions

Written assignments:  $3 \times 20\% = 60\%$

Oral presentations:  $3 \times 10\% = 30\%$

Participation: 10%

Total: 100%

## 6.2 Assessment Details

### Writing Assignments (60%)

**Due:** October 14, November 11 and December 9 at 10 am

**Learning Outcome:** 1, 2, 3, 5, 6

At the beginning of each module, the instructors will post several key papers relating to that theme of the module. Everyone should read all of these papers and select 1 for a detailed critique, which is your written assignment. Your critique will be graded on how well it addresses the following points if they are appropriate to a paper.

- Explains the objective of the work.
- Explains either the biological hypothesis of the work or the computational objective.
- Summarizes and explains the experiments performed and/or the algorithmic

innovations presented in the paper.

- Critiques the conclusions of the paper. Do they support the biological claims made in the paper? If the paper is about a tool, is it clear how to use the tool and what it does?
- What additional work would improve the paper?
- What is the role of the work presented in the paper in the larger context of biological and bioinformatic research?

Critiques should be no more than 4 pages in length (double-spaced, 12-point font, 2.54 cm standard margins) and contain a reference list (usually 8+). We encourage to go beyond the assigned readings to assess the significance of your chosen paper. You are also encouraged to include your own figures or tables (such as a figure demonstrating a concept or short summary table comparing studies or expectations). If you include a published figure this must be clearly cited. Note that the reference list and any figures or tables are not included in the 4 page-limit.

Grading will be performed considering the following criteria: level of understanding of the paper, clarity of explanations, quality and correctness of the prose, and synthesis (e.g., placing the work in context and interpreting the broader significance of the work as well as outstanding research questions).

Written assignments are individual and must be your own work and prose. Quotations should be used sparingly, if at all (i.e., only for profound quotes or definitions). All submissions will be assessed using Turnitin®. We encourage peer review (by your classmates) and commenting prior to submission.

### **Oral Presentations (30%)**

**Date:** Oct 7, Nov 4, Dec 2 during assigned lecture time, In-class (remote)

**Learning Outcome:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 6

Each student will deliver 3 oral presentations during this course (one for each of the three themes) as part of a project team. Presentations will be held during the last class for each theme. Presentations will be delivered in groups of 3 in the same remote format used for class lectures. The presentation must be submitted to the Dropbox no later than 10 am on the day **prior to** the presentation.

Students must choose a different team for each presentation. Presentations should be 15 minutes in length, with an additional 5 min expected for questions. Active listening and participating through asking questions and discussing are also important.

Presentations will be on a given topic, not a specific paper. It is expected that results from several core papers will be incorporated into the presentations. It would be most effective for this to be in the form of synthesis of subject matter, rather than just listing a series of papers (i.e., not Smith studied X; Jones studied Y, etc.).

As a guideline, presentations may address the following questions:

- Why is this topic important scientifically and to society?
- What are some of the key recent developments in this topic?
- What are the key outstanding questions and areas of active research?
- How has bioinformatics contributed to advancing the topic?

The instructors will provide several example topics for each theme. These are intended to serve as a guide regarding suitable topics and scope. Students will sign up for a theme at the end of the first class in each of the three themes. Proposing a different topic is welcome, but you must obtain approval from the instructor first.

### **Participation (10%)**

**Date:** Through the course., In-class

High attendance rates are assumed, and this component of the grade is for participation beyond attendance. Students are expected to come to class prepared, having already read the required readings for that unit. Active listening during peer presentations is important, followed by asking questions and participating in discussions. Class participation includes in-class problem solving, leading and participating in class discussions and tutorials, and actively listening and asking questions following the lectures and presentations of peers.

## **6.3 Late Policy**

All late assignments will receive a 10% deduction per day, providing the student has contacted the instructor to document extenuating circumstances that have interfered with their ability to complete the assignment on time. Consideration of extenuating circumstances will be decided on a case-by-case basis. Students are encouraged to consult the University policy below for further guidance.

[https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/sec\\_d0e2221.shtml](https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/sec_d0e2221.shtml)

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## 7 College of Biological Science Statements

### 7.1 Wellness

If you are struggling with personal or health issues:

- Counselling Services offers individualized appointments to help students work through personal struggles that may be impacting their academic performance.
- Student Health Services is located on campus and is available to provide medical attention.
- For support related to stress and anxiety, besides Health Services and Counselling Services, Kathy Somers runs training workshops and one-on-one sessions related to stress management and high performance situations.

<http://www.selfregulationskills.ca/>

### 7.2 Personal information

Personal information is collected under the authority of the University of Guelph Act (1964), and in accordance with Ontario's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) <http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/index.html>. This information is used by University officials in order to carry out their authorized academic and administrative responsibilities and also to establish a relationship for alumni and development purposes.

For more information regarding the Collection, Use and Disclosure of Personal Information policies please see the Undergraduate Calendar.

(<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/intro/index.shtml>)

## 8 University Statements

### 8.1 Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

### 8.2 When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. The grounds for Academic Consideration are detailed in the Undergraduate and Graduate Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Consideration and Appeals

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Grounds for Academic Consideration

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Academic Consideration, Appeals and Petitions  
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/index.shtml>

### 8.3 Drop Date

Students will have until the last day of classes to drop courses without academic penalty. The deadline to drop two-semester courses will be the last day of classes in the second semester. This applies to all students (undergraduate, graduate and diploma) except for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Associate Diploma in Veterinary Technology (conventional and alternative delivery) students. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in their respective Academic Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses  
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Registration Changes  
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg-regchg.shtml>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Dropping Courses  
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

### 8.4 Copies of Out-of-class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

### 8.5 Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required; however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability.

Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to book their exams at least 7 days in advance and not later than the 40th Class Day.

For Guelph students, information can be found on the SAS website  
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/sas>

For Ridgetown students, information can be found on the Ridgetown SAS website  
<https://www.ridgetownc.com/services/accessibilityservices.cfm>



## 8.6 Academic Integrity

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community-faculty, staff, and students-to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff, and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that encourages academic integrity. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

## 8.7 Recording of Materials

Presentations that are made in relation to course work - including lectures - cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a student, or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

## 8.8 Resources

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies, and regulations that apply to undergraduate, graduate, and diploma programs.

Academic Calendars

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/academics/calendars>

## 8.9 Disclaimer

Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via CourseLink and/or class email. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the COVID-19 website (<https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/>) and circulated by email.

## **8.10 Illness**

The University will not normally require verification of illness (doctor's notes) for fall 2020 or winter 2021 semester courses. However, requests for Academic Consideration may still require medical documentation as appropriate.

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