Online Journal Club Syllabus and Guidelines  
MCB7922 – Section 24H8  
Spring 2016  

Course Description for Journal Club: This is an online forum to gain practice reading primary scientific literature, writing scientific blogs, and asking analytical questions.

Instructor:  
Dr. Jamie Foster, Associate Professor, Microbiology and Cell Science

Course Website:  
Login available through Canvas (http://lss.at.ufl.edu/).

Contact Information:  
I am located off-campus at the UF Space Life Sciences Lab, Kennedy Space Center  
My contact information is: Tel: 321-525-1047; Email: jfoster@ufl.edu; Skype: jamief94086.

Prerequisites: No prerequisites are required  
Required Texts: No texts are required

Synopsis: How will this online journal club work?  
Each week a different student (or group) will write a scientific blog about a current research paper for the class to discuss in the discussion board of the UF course management system Canvas. The blog will discuss the major findings and potential contributions of the paper to the advancement of the scientific field. Every student will have an opportunity to write a blog over the course of the semester.

In addition to the blog, the presenters must include two discussion threads (or questions for the rest of the class) to discuss over the course of the week and respond to questions from fellow classmates about your blog and selected paper.

The rest of the class will be required to read the paper and respond to the bloggers questions and discussion threads. The rest of the class has the opportunity to respond with their own questions regarding assigned paper.

Every Monday a new research paper and blog will be presented. The discussion window for that paper will continue until the Saturday of that week. So students have the entire week to contribute to the discussion about the blog.

How do I select a research paper for the journal club?  
You will be required to select a primary literature paper from pubmed or google.scholar.com that is related to the field of Meta-Omics. This is a very wide subject matter and can be related to human health (e.g. the human microbiome) or to environmental issues (e.g., biofuels, antibiotic resistance). It must use some technique such as, but not limited to, metagenomics, metatranscriptomics, proteomics, metabolomics.

The university library has access to the majority of medical and scientific journals that you will come across in pubmed or google scholar. Use the find function on the health library
website to find the article you need. If you do not know how to use the UF library system please ask your instructor for help.

http://library.health.ufl.edu.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/find/

**Grading:**

1. **Watching the Podcast on “How does this online journal club work?” and taking the associated quiz. (10 points; 10% of final grade).** Under the assignment section of the Canvas course page there is a short podcast on how this online journal club will work. Please watch the podcast and take Quiz 1. It will be an open book quiz that will ask you about key features of the course to make sure you understand how the online journal club will work.

2. **Selecting the primary literature article (5 points; 5% of grade).** In the first week of the semester you will be asked to select a paper that you will present in the journal club. There are several ways to look for a paper but the most common ways to look for articles are from pubmed or google.scholar.com. Be sure that the paper is related to the field of Host Microbe Interactions. This is a very wide subject matter and can be related to human health (e.g. the human microbiome) or to environmental associations (e.g. animal symbioses).

**Suggestion:** try to pick cutting edge papers that are of interest to you and related to your future career in science.

**You must receive instructor approval of the paper before it is your turn to present the material!!**

3. **Primary Literature Online Blog (25% of final grade)**

Each student (or group if more than 15 students in course) will be required to write a scientific blog about the research article they have picked.

A blog is not a dry scientific abstract (that's already in the paper). It's a concise way for scientists to write about an exciting new field or research study and potentially increase their profile within the scientific community. It needs to be engaging (humor is okay) and convey to the reader how this research is relevant to their lives (or future scientific careers) or why it is just plain-old cool research.

The blog should between **500 – 1000 words** long and try to think about the following points when writing your blog:

**A. Make the research accessible to your fellow classmates.** Typically science blogs writers target a high-school level audience. Here, however, please do not over simplify the blog, as your target audience in this class are all future science professionals. So it's okay to keep some complexity of the study in your blog, but you have to clearly explain yourself and ideas.

**B. Be professional in your blog.** Do not insult the authors of the study. If there are flaws with the study point them out and use them as a theme in the discussion thread.
C. Make sure you understand the material! If you don’t understand something then look it up on google scholar. Don’t just rely on Wikipedia!

D. Convey why this research is of interest to you. Don’t just regurgitate the paper and present it exactly as the authors wrote it. Synthesize the paper in your mind and blog. Tell the readers why this work is important, and what the big picture of the work is and how does the research move the field forward.

E. Explain your jargon. If you were writing a blog for the general public it would be very important not to gloss over scientific terms. Help your readers out and explain any acronyms that you use (except things like DNA, RNA ect.). Remember explain what you are talking about and don’t assume you fellow classmates know the same things you do.

F. Provide additional reading material or references if you used outside images for your blog. Please provide citations of the articles or images use used beyond the primary article.

For some examples of science blogs: http://blogs.plos.org/everyone/

2. Discussion participation (60% of your final grade) – Post, Post, Post....
As you will only be writing a blog once per semester it is very important to participate when you are not the blogger of the week. So your grade for this section of the course will be assessed based on whether you are posting to the discussion board with relevant threads or questions about that weeks material.

I will be moderating the week's discussions and will be keeping track of who has and who has not participated.

I am looking for quality over quantity. I would rather see one or two insightful posts, questions or comments about the blog than a slew of non-informative contributions.

Each week your posts will be assessed and points will be assigned. It will be roughly 6 -10 points per week. Note: everyone will be allowed a bi-week, where they get a free pass and don’t have to post. So choose your bi-week carefully.

Total Points: 100 points
Grading: Straight Scale

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Academic Honesty, Software Use, UF Counseling Services, Services for Students with Disabilities: In 1995 the UF student body enacted a new honor code and voluntarily committed itself to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. When students enroll at the university, they commit themselves to the standard drafted and enacted by students.

In adopting this honor code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the university community. Students who enroll at the university commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the honor code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the honor code is bound by honor to take corrective action. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon community acceptance and enforcement of the honor code.

The Honor Code: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

On all work submitted for credit by students at the university, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”

The university requires all members of its community to be honest in all endeavors. A fundamental principle is that the whole process of learning and pursuit of knowledge is diminished by cheating, plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty. In addition, every dishonest act in the academic environment affects other students adversely, from the skewing of the grading curve to giving unfair advantage for honors or for professional or graduate school admission. Therefore, the university will take severe action against dishonest students. Similarly, measures will be taken against faculty, staff and administrators who practice dishonest or demeaning behavior.

Students should report any condition that facilitates dishonesty to the instructor, department chair, college dean or Student Honor Court.
(Source: 2007-2008 Undergraduate Catalog)

It is assumed all work will be completed independently unless the assignment is defined as a group project, in writing by the instructor.

This policy will be vigorously upheld at all times in this course.

Software Use:
All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

Campus Helping Resources:
Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university’s counseling resources. Both the Counseling Center and Student Mental Health Services provide confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance. The Counseling Center is located at 301 Peabody Hall (next to Criser Hall). Student Mental Health Services is located on the second floor of the Student Health Care Center in the Infirmary.

- University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, [www.counsel.ufl.edu](http://www.counsel.ufl.edu)
- Career Resource Center, CR-100 JWRU, 392-1602, [www.crc.ufl.edu/](http://www.crc.ufl.edu/)
- Student Mental Health Services, Rm. 245 Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, [www.shcc.ufl.edu/smhs/](http://www.shcc.ufl.edu/smhs/)

Alcohol and Substance Abuse Program (ASAP)  
Center for Sexual Assault / Abuse Recovery & Education (CARE)  
Eating Disorders Program  
Employee Assistance Program  
Suicide Prevention Program

**Students with Disabilities:**  
The Disability Resource Center coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services and mediating faculty-student disability related issues.

0001 Reid Hall, 392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)