

ANATCELL/BIOCHEM/MICROIMM

4986Y: Beyond the Bench: Building Skills for Scientific and Professional Success

Course Outline for Fall 2026/Winter 2027

This course takes place at Western University, which is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee and the Lūnaapéewak, on lands connected with the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum between the Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee and the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796.

Students who are in emotional and/or mental distress should refer to <https://www.uwo.ca/health/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

1. Technical Requirements:



Stable internet connection



Laptop or computer

2. Important Dates:

Classes Begin	Reading Week	Classes End	Study day(s)	Exam Period
September 9	October 10-18	December 9	December 10	December 11–22

September 30, 2026: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation; non-instructional day

September 17, 2026: Last day to add or drop a Fall/Winter 24-week course

Classes Begin	Reading Week	Classes End	Study day(s)	Exam Period
January 4	February 13–21	April 9	April 10, 11	April 12–30

February 1, 2027: Last day to withdraw from a Fall/Winter 24-week course without academic penalty

3. Contact Information

Primary Course Coordinator	Contact Information
Dr. Stephanie Zukowski (she/her), Microbiology and Immunology	Email: szukows@uwo.ca

Co-Coordinators	Contact Information
Dr. Brian Dempsey (he/him) Biochemistry	Email: brian.dempsey@uwo.ca
Dr. Michele Barbeau (she/her) Anatomy and Cell Biology	Email: mbarbeau@uwo.ca

Teaching Assistants	Contact Information
Agetha Mahendran	Please direct all queries to the Primary Course Coordinator.
Jashanjot Gill	
Mohammed Al-Youzbaki	

4. Course Description and Design

Delivery Mode: in-person

Success in biomedical research requires more than technical expertise – it demands strong ethical foundations, effective communication, and resilience in the face of challenges. This course equips students with essential skills for thriving in academic and professional research environments.

Requisites: Access to ANATCELL/BIOCHEM/MICROIMM 4986Y is restricted to students enrolled in one of the Honours Specialization modules offered by the participating departments. Each module has its own requisites and requirements. The eligibility of each student is therefore determined prior to enrolment. Meeting the requisites and requirements of this course remains the responsibility of the student and can be found in the academic calendar for each course as follows:

- [Anatomy and Cell Biology 4986Y](#)
- [Biochemistry 4986Y](#)
- [Microbiology and Immunology 4986Y](#)

Extra Information: 2 lecture hours per week.

Course Weight: 0.50

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Timetabled Sessions

Component	Semester	Date(s)	Time
Lecture	Fall	Wednesdays*	12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. ET
Lecture	Winter	Fridays*	1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. ET

* See full schedule for details and exceptions

☒ Attendance at sessions is required

All course material will be posted to OWL Brightspace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/login>. Any changes will be indicated on the OWL Brightspace site and discussed with the class.

If students need assistance, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#). Alternatively, they can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#). They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Current versions of all popular browsers (e.g., Safari, Chrome, Edge, Firefox) are supported with OWL Brightspace; what is most important is that you update your browser frequently to ensure it is current. All JavaScript and cookies should be enabled.

5. Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- identify and apply ethical principles in research, including human and animal ethics, data integrity, and responsible authorship;
- implement effective time management strategies to plan, prioritize, and execute research tasks efficiently;
- construct clear and concise scientific writing for research proposals, reports, and manuscripts, incorporating feedback to enhance clarity and communication;
- critique and revise scientific work by applying peer review feedback to improve research communication and writing quality;
- design and deliver engaging presentations tailored to both academic and non-academic audiences, organizing content effectively and adapting communication style for impact;
- evaluate and provide constructive feedback on research proposals, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and assessing quality and feasibility;
- create professional documents, including a CV and cover letter, to highlight relevant skills and experiences and prepare for various career pathways in biomedical research; and
- analyze challenges in research, propose strategies to overcome setbacks, including failure, and manage stress in academic settings.

6. Course Content and Schedule

Lecture #	Date	Topic	Instructor(s)
1	Wednesday, September 9, 2026	Orientation	Dr. Stephanie Zukowski
2	Wednesday, September 16, 2026	Academic Profiles	David Feeney
3	Wednesday, September 23, 2026	How to Read Primary Scientific Articles	Dr. Brian Dempsey
4	Wednesday, October 7, 2026	How to Deliver a Research Presentation	Dr. Brian Dempsey
FALL READING WEEK (OCT 10 – 18)			
5	Wednesday, October 21, 2026	Research Data and Integrity	Dr. Greg Gloor
6	Wednesday, October 28, 2026	How to Write a Research Proposal	Dr. Rodney DeKoter
7	Wednesday, November 4, 2026	Giving, Receiving, and Responding to Feedback	Dr. John McCormick
8	Wednesday, November 18, 2026	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Research	Dr. Stephanie Zukowski
9	Friday, December 4, 2026	Review Panel (in-class)	Course Coordinators
10	Friday, January 8, 2027	Scientific Writing	Dr. Dale Laird
11	Friday, January 15, 2027	Scientific Writing Activity (in-class)	Course Coordinators
12	Friday, January 22, 2027	How to Create a Thesis Outline	Dr. Derek McLachlin
13	Friday, January 29, 2027	3MT (in-class)	Course Coordinators

7. Participation and Engagement

- ☒ Students are expected to participate and engage with content as much as possible

8. Assessment and Evaluation

Below is the evaluation breakdown for the course. Any deviations will be communicated.

Assessment	Format	Weight	Due Date	Flexibility
Academic Profile • Application Materials • Mock Interview • Post-Interview Reflection	Mixed • Written • Oral (Zoom) • Written	8%	Application Materials: Friday, September 25, 2026 Mock Interview: Friday, October 2, 2026, 1:30–3:30 p.m. Reflection: Friday, October 2, 2026, 11:59 p.m.	72-hour no-penalty period for Application Materials and Reflection. Approved academic consideration is required for a missed Mock Interview.
Research Proposal	Written	25%	Friday, November 6, 2026 Optional resubmission: Monday, December 7, 2026	72-hour no-penalty period applies separately to the original submission and optional resubmission.
Peer Feedback	Written	10%	Friday, November 20, 2026	72-hour no-penalty period.
Review Panel	Mixed	5%	Friday, December 4, 2026 In-class: 1:30–3:30 p.m. Team Panel Report: 11:59 p.m.	Designated in-class assessment. 72-hour no-penalty period applies to the Team Panel Report.
Response Letter	Written	10%	Monday, December 7, 2026	72-hour no-penalty period.
Annotated Articles	Written 3 annotated PDFs	12% (3 × 4%)	Friday, January 8, 2027 11:59 p.m. ET	72-hour no-penalty period.
Scientific Writing Assessment	Written Team-based, in-class	5%	Friday, January 15, 2027 1:30–3:30 p.m.	In-class assessment. Approved academic consideration is required for a make-up.
Three Minute Thesis (3MT) Presentation	Oral Individual	15%	Friday, January 29, 2027 Slide due: 12:00 p.m. Presentation: 1:30–3:30 p.m.	In-class assessment. Approved academic consideration is required for a make-up.
Seminar Attendance and Reflections	Mixed Attendance + written reflections	10% (4 × 2.5%)	Ongoing: 4 approved seminars between September and March. Each reflection is due the same day by 11:59 p.m. ET.	72-hour no-penalty period for each reflection.

Designated Assessment: Instructors are permitted to designate one assessment per course per term as requiring supporting documentation to receive academic consideration. See below for information on academic consideration policy and missed course work. For this course, the following assessment has been designated as requiring supporting documentation:

- Review Panel; Friday, December 4, 2026

Information about flexibility in assessment

- ☒ Flexibility in assessment has been applied to this course; therefore, academic consideration requests may be denied on the assessments where flexibility is included
- ☒ **Assessment Flexibility:** Students are expected to submit assignments by the deadlines listed. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit assignments (as indicated in the table in section 8) up to 72 hours past the deadline without a late penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 72 hours past the deadline, a **grade of zero** will be assigned. Requests for academic consideration supported by documentation must be submitted within 48 hours of the original deadline. The instructor reserves the right to deny such academic considerations, given the deadline flexibility provided. If you have a long-term academic consideration or an accommodation for disability that allows greater flexibility than provided here, please reach out to your instructor at least one week prior to the posted deadline.

General information about assessments

- ☒ All assignments are due at 11:59 p.m. ET unless otherwise specified
- ☒ Students are responsible for ensuring that the correct file version is uploaded; incorrect submissions including corrupt files could be subject to late penalties (see below) or a 0
- ☒ Written assignments will be submitted to Turnitin (statement in policies below)
- ☒ Students will have unlimited submissions to Turnitin
- ☒ Rubrics will be used to evaluate assessments and will be posted with the instructions
- ☒ A student might not receive the same grade as their group members if it is determined that the distribution of work was not equal
- ☒ After an assessment is returned, students should wait 24 hours to digest feedback before contacting their evaluator; to ensure a timely response, reach out within 7 days
- ☒ Assessment re-grading could result in the mark increasing, decreasing, or remaining the same. The grade assigned after the re-grade is final; students cannot keep their original grade or take an average of the two grades.
- ☒ Prior to submitting a written request for relief, students are expected to make reasonable efforts to resolve concerns regarding a mark or grade through informal consultation with the instructor. Such consultation must occur within a timeframe that allows for the possibility of resolution prior to the expiry of the three (3) week deadline for filing with the Department Chair. If the matter is not resolved, or if the instructor does not provide a decision, the student may submit a written request for relief to the Department Chair within three (3) weeks from the date on which the mark was issued.

The table below outlines the University-wide grade descriptors.

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

Information about late or missed assessments:

- ☒ Assessments submitted after the 72 hour no late penalty period will receive a grade of zero
- ☒ An assessment cannot be submitted after it has been returned to the class; an alternate assessment will be assigned OR the weight will be transferred to another course assessment at the discretion of the Course Coordinator

- ☒ All course components must be completed to pass the course. If a student has been approved by the Academic Advising Office (in consultation with the instructor/department) to complete term work at a later date, an INC will be assigned, which could impact program progression or graduation.

INC (Incomplete Standing): If a student has been approved by the Academic Advising Office (in consultation with the instructor/department) to complete term work at a later date, an INC will be assigned, which could impact program progression. Students with INC will have their course load in subsequent terms reduced to allow them to complete outstanding course work. Students may request permission from Academic Advising to carry a full course load for the term the incomplete course work is scheduled.

SPC (Special examination): If a student has been approved by the Academic Advising Office to write a Special Examination and the final exam is the only outstanding course component, an SPC will be assigned. If the class has a makeup exam, the student is expected to write the makeup exam. If the class doesn't have a makeup for the final exam, the student will write the exam the next time the course is offered, which could impact program progression. Outstanding SPCs will reduce the course load for the term the exam is deferred as outlined in [Definitions of Types of Examinations](#) policy. If a student misses an SPC exam and is approved for academic consideration, they will be withdrawn from the course without academic penalty. If a student misses an SPC exam and is not approved for academic consideration, they will receive a grade of zero on the exam.

9. Communication

- ☒ Students should check the OWL Brightspace site every 24–48 hours
- ☒ Emails to the Course Coordinator will be monitored daily; students will receive a response in 24–48 hours
- ☒ This course will use OWL Brightspace for Discussion Forums
- ☒ Students should post all course-related queries on the discussion forum so that everyone can access the questions and responses

10. Office Hours

- ☒ Office hours will only be scheduled if requested—please contact the Course Coordinator via email if you are interested

11. Course Materials

- ☒ All resources will be posted on OWL Brightspace

12. Professionalism & Privacy

Western students are expected to follow the [Student Code of Conduct](#). Additionally, the following expectations and professional conduct apply to this course:

- ☒ All course materials created by the instructor(s) are copyrighted and cannot be sold/shared/upload (e.g., Must Knows Facebook group, Course Hero, Chegg, ChatGPT, etc.)
- ☒ Recordings are not permitted (audio or video) without explicit permission
- ☒ Permitted recordings are not to be distributed
- ☒ Students will be expected to take an academic integrity pledge before some assessments

Western is committed to providing a learning and working environment that is free of harassment and discrimination. All **students**, staff, and faculty have a role in this commitment and have a responsibility to ensure and promote a safe and respectful learning and working environment. Relevant policies include Western's [Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy](#) (M.A.P.P. 1.35) and [Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy – Administrative Procedures](#) (M.A.P.P. 1.35). Any **student**, staff, or faculty member who

experiences or witnesses' behaviour that may be harassment or discrimination **must report the behaviour** to the Western's [Human Rights Office](#). Harassment and discrimination can be human rights-based, which is also known as EDI-based, (sexism, racism, transphobia, homophobia, islamophobia, xenophobia, antisemitism, and ableism) or non-human rights-based (personal harassment or workplace harassment).

13. How to Be Successful in this Class

Students enrolled in this class should understand the level of autonomy and self-discipline required to be successful.

1. Invest in a planner or application to keep track of your courses. Populate all your deadlines at the start of the term and schedule your time throughout the course.
2. Make it a daily habit to log onto OWL Brightspace to ensure you have seen everything posted to help you succeed in this class.
3. Follow checklists created on OWL Brightspace or create your own to help you stay on track.
4. Take notes as you go through the lesson material. Keeping handwritten notes or even notes on a regular Word document will help you learn more effectively than just reading or watching the videos.
5. Connect with others. Try forming an online study group and try meeting on a weekly basis for study and peer support.
6. Do not be afraid to ask questions. If you are struggling with a topic, check the online discussion boards or contact your instructor(s) and or teaching assistant(s).
7. Reward yourself for successes. It seems easier to motivate ourselves knowing that there is something waiting for us at the end of the task.

14. Western Academic Policies/Procedures and Statements

A. Absence from Course Commitments

Medical, Compassionate, or Extenuating Circumstances

Students missing course work for medical, compassionate, or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the [Student Absence Portal](#). Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term **without** supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g., December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests (typically scheduled during the last week of the term).

Students should also note that the instructor may **designate** one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described elsewhere in this document. Academic consideration requests may be denied when flexibility in assessment has already been included. Examples of flexibility in assessment include when there are assessments not required for calculation of the final grade (e.g. 8 out of 10 quizzes) or there is flexibility in the submission timeframe (e.g. 72 hour no late penalty period).

Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor of this course, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course syllabus. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the Student Medical Certificate or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Policy: [Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

Procedures: [Student Medical Certificate](#)

Religious Holidays

Students should review the policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays (Appendix 1). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Policy: [Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#)

Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates.

Policy: [Definitions of Types of Examinations](#)

B. Academic Appeals and Scholastic Offenses

Students can file a **request for relief from academic decisions** if the request is based on one or more grounds listed in the policy. Requests for relief generally fall into three categories, which are also listed in the policy. All requests for relief must be supported by evidence. A request for relief from academic decisions process was formally referred to as an appeal. Refer to the policy and procedures about further details and timelines.

Policy: [Requests for Relief from Academic Decisions](#)

Procedures: [Undergraduate Student Academic Requests for Relief](#)

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a scholastic offence.

Policy: [Scholastic Offences](#)

Procedures: [Undergraduate Scholastic Offences](#)

Students may **appeal** some academic and scholastic disciplinary decisions by a Dean or their designate, to the Senate Review Board Academic (SRBA).

Policy: [Senate Review Board Academic Appeals](#)

Procedures: [Senate Review Board Academic Appeals](#)

C. Accessibility Statement

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Accessible Education (AE) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

Policy: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#)

D. Correspondence Statement

The centrally administered **e-mail account** provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at his/her official university address is attended to in a timely manner.

E. Discovery Credit Statement

Students are permitted to designate up to 1.0 Discovery Credit course (or equivalent) for pass/fail grading that can be counted toward the overall course credits required for their degree program.

Policy: [Undergraduate Course Credit](#)

Procedures: [Discovery Credits](#)

F. Statement on the Use of Electronic Devices

Not applicable.

G. Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Within this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. However, it is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploration, with students expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding plagiarism. Assignments and/or lab reports should reflect the students' own thoughts and independent written work. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and ethical learning environment that promotes critical thinking, independent inquiry and allows them to produce original written contributions.

H. Turnitin and other similarity review software

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between Western University and [Turnitin.com](https://turnitin.com).

15. BMSUE Academic Policies and Statements

A. Cell Phone and Electronic Device Policy (for in-person tests and exams)

The Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry is committed to ensuring that testing and evaluation are undertaken fairly across all our departments and programs. For all tests and exams, it is the policy of the School that any electronic devices, e.g., cell phones, tablets, cameras, smart glasses, smart watch or iPod are strictly prohibited. These devices **MUST** be left either at home or with the student's bag/jacket at the front of the room and **MUST NOT** be at the test/exam desk or in the individual's pocket. Any student found with one of these prohibited devices will receive a grade of zero on the test or exam and this will be documented as a Scholastic Offence. Non-programmable calculators are only allowed when indicated by the instructor. The program is not responsible for stolen/lost or broken devices.

B. Copyright and Audio/Video Recording Statement

Course materials produced by faculty are copyrighted and to reproduce this material for any purposes other than your own educational use contravenes Canadian Copyright Laws. You must always ask permission to record another individual and you should never share or distribute recordings.

C. Rounding of Marks Statement

Across the Basic Medical Sciences Undergraduate Education programs, we strive to maintain high standards that reflect the effort that both students and faculty put into the teaching and learning experience during this course. All students will be treated equally and evaluated based only on their actual achievement. **Final grades** in this course are rounded to the nearest whole number based on the first decimal place. For example, a grade of 74.49 or lower will be rounded to 74, whereas 74.50 or higher will be rounded to 75.

Marks WILL NOT be arbitrarily increased to the next grade or GPA, e.g., a 79 will NOT be increased to an 80, and 84 WILL NOT be increased to an 85, etc. The mark attained is the mark you achieved, and the mark assigned; requests for arbitrary mark increasing will be denied. Marks will be assigned based on assessments in the syllabus and no extra work or tasks will be assigned to increase a mark.

Course grade rounding provisions, as described above, differ from cumulative and term averages. Cumulative and term averages will be calculated to two decimal places and rounded to the nearest whole number with .45 rounded up, for the purposes of admission to and progression in modules, scholarship retention, and Dean's Honour List.

Policy: [Marks/Grades; Definitions of Grades; Grading Scale for Undergraduate Students](#)

16. Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @Western <https://www.uwo.ca/health/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Other important links:

- [Academic Advising \(Science and Basic Medical Sciences\)](#)
- [Learning Development and Success](#)
- [Office of the Registrar](#)
- [Wellness & Wellbeing](#)
- [Western USC Services](#)

Appendix 1: Western University Academic Policies and Procedures

The policies and procedures listed in this syllabus are outlined in the table below. In some cases, a policy does not include an accompanied procedures document.

Academic Policy	Name of Policy/Procedure	Links
General Policy	Marks/Grades; Definitions of Grades; Grading Scale for Undergraduate Students	Policy
General Policy	Structure of the Academic Year	Policy
Registration, Progression, Graduation	Course Numbering Policy, Essay Courses, and Hours of Instruction	Policy
Registration, Progression, Graduation	Undergraduate Course Credit	Policy • Procedures
Examinations	Definitions of Types of Examinations	Policy
Examinations	Evaluation of Academic Performance	Policy
Examinations	Examination Conflicts	Policy
Rights and Responsibilities	Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities	Policy
Rights and Responsibilities	Accommodation for Religious Holidays	Policy
Rights and Responsibilities	Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs	Policy • Procedures
Rights and Responsibilities	Requests for Relief from Academic Decisions (Undergraduate)	Policy • Procedures
Rights and Responsibilities	Requests for Relief from Academic Decisions (Graduate)	Policy • Procedures
Rights and Responsibilities	Scholastic Offences (Undergraduate)	Policy • Procedures
Rights and Responsibilities	Senate Review Board Academic Appeals	Policy • Procedures