

**Medical Sciences**  
**3391A: Truth and Lies in Biomedical Big Data**

Course Outline for Fall 2025

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

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/tablet or other portable  
computing device

**2. Important Dates:**

Classes Begin	Reading Week	Classes End	Study day(s)	Exam Period
September 4	November 3–9	December 9	December 10	December 11–22

September 30, 2025: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation; non-instructional day

September 12, 2025: Last day to add or drop a Fall 12-week course

December 1, 2025: Last day to withdraw from a Fall 12-week course without academic penalty

**3. Contact Information**

Course Coordinator	Contact Information
Dr. Tallulah Andrews	<a href="mailto:tandrew6@uwo.ca">tandrew6@uwo.ca</a>

Instructor(s) or Teaching Assistant(s)	Contact Information
Dr. Greg Gloor	<a href="mailto:ggloor@uwo.ca">ggloor@uwo.ca</a>
Dr. Mike Hallett	<a href="mailto:michael.hallett@uwo.ca">michael.hallett@uwo.ca</a>
Dr. Vanessa Dumeaux	<a href="mailto:vdumeaux@uwo.ca">vdumeaux@uwo.ca</a>
Alfredo Vaerla Vega	<a href="mailto:avarelav@uwo.ca">avarelav@uwo.ca</a>
Boris Tchatchoua Ngassam	<a href="mailto:btchatch@uwo.ca">btchatch@uwo.ca</a>
Huilin Niu	<a href="mailto:hniu32@uwo.ca">hniu32@uwo.ca</a>
Sugitha Janarthanan	<a href="mailto:sjanath@uwo.ca">sjanath@uwo.ca</a>
Sunny Pang	<a href="mailto:spang58@uwo.ca">spang58@uwo.ca</a>
Wengi “Mavis” Yang	<a href="mailto:wyang335@uwo.ca">wyang335@uwo.ca</a>
Yubing Xia	<a href="mailto:yxia266@uwo.ca">yxia266@uwo.ca</a>



## 4. Course Description and Design

**Delivery Mode:** blended

**Course Description:** Design of high throughput experiments, analysis of the resulting large datasets, installation and use of standard bioinformatic programs, collection of clean datasets from private and public sources, execution of exploratory and analytical analyses. Critical thinking, open science, data-sharing and reproducible analysis, and acquisition of practical skills will be common themes.

**Antirequisite(s):** Medical Bioinformatics 3100A/B, Computer Science 4461A/B. Extra Information: Blended course, 1 lecture hour, 1 lab/tutorial hour, 1.5 hour online instruction.

**Prerequisite(s):** Biochemistry 2280A; Biology 2581A/B; either Biology 2244A/B or Statistical Sciences 2244A/B.

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	Date(s)	Time
Lecture	W	11:30am-12:30pm
Lab 002	F	10:30am-11:30am
Lab 003	F	11:30am-12:30pm
Lab 004	F	1:30pm-2:30pm
Lab 005	F	2:30pm-3:30pm

- ☒ Asynchronous pre-work must be completed prior to Lab sessions.
- ☒ Attendance at sessions is required
- ☒ Missed work should be completed (or have accommodation requested) within 24 hours

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:

- use the R programming language for data exploration
- construct and troubleshoot simple command-line scripts
- combine commands together to complete common tasks
- formulate reproducible notes in an Rmarkdown document for data/code sharing
- contrast different experimental designs and data collection approaches
- explain and justify the open science approach
- design and run statistical analyses to answer biomedical questions
- organize and use metadata appropriately
- distinguish statistical dependence vs causal relationships
- explain how to appropriately scale statistical testing to high throughput datasets
- use common machine learning approaches for analyses

## 6. Course Content and Schedule

Week	Dates	Topic	Instructor
1	Sept 4–7	Setting up Posit R Studio Cloud	NA
2	Sept 8–14	Introduction to R	Dr. Gloor
3	Sept 15–21	Graphing data for interpretability	Dr. Gloor
4	Sept 22–28	Introduction to 'omics data	Dr. Gloor
5	Sept 29–Oct 5	Accessing & managing biomedical data	Dr. Dumeaux
6	Oct 6–12	Experimental Designs	Dr. Dumeaux
7	Oct 13–19	Biases & Errors	Dr. Dumeaux
8	Oct 20–Oct 26	Challenges of Big Data	Dr. Andrews
9	Oct 27–Nov 2	Introduction to Regression	Dr. Andrews
10	Nov 3–9	Reading Week (starts November 3 <sup>rd</sup> 12:01 AM)	N/A
11	Nov 10–16	Advanced Regression	Dr. Andrews
12	Nov 17–23	Introduction to Machine Learning	Dr. Hallett
13	Nov 24–30	Life is not Linear	Dr. Hallett
14	Dec 1–7	Deep Learning	Dr. Hallett
15	Dec 8, 9	-	NA

## 7. Participation and Engagement

- ☒ Students are expected to participate and engage with content as much as possible
- ☒ Students can participate during Lecture sessions or discuss material during TA office hours
- ☒ Students are expected to participate by interacting in the forums with their peers and instructors

## 8. Assessment and Evaluation

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

Assessment	Format	Weighting	Due Date	Flexibility
Quizzes (12 total)	in-class programming exercises	100%	Weekly in Friday Lab sessions.	Drop lowest 2

**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 no assessment has been designated as requiring supporting documentation

### 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
- ☒ This course has 12 in-class quizzes only 10/12 will be counted towards your final grade. Academic consideration will not be granted for missed quizzes. Students will receive a grade of zero for any missed quizzes within the required 10 quizzes.

### General information about assessments

- ☒ All assignments are due at the end of each student's designated lab session 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. Regrading requests should be sent to the instructor for the respective session not to individual TAs.
- ☒ Prior to the filing of a written request for relief, students must attempt to resolve the concern regarding a mark or grade through informal consultation with the instructor. If the student is dissatisfied with the decision of the instructor or does not receive a decision from the instructor, a written request for relief must be submitted to the Department Chair within three (3) weeks from the date that the mark was issued.
- ☒ 15% of your course grade will be evaluated and returned 3 days prior to the drop deadline (see Evaluation of Academic Performance policy below).

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:

- ☒ Late assessments without academic consideration will be subject to a late penalty 20%/day
- ☒ An assessment cannot be submitted after it has been returned to the class; the weight will be transferred to the final grade.
- ☒ A make-up test will not be offered, and the weight of a missed test will be transferred to the final examination
- ☒ 8/12 quizzes must be completed to pass the course, failure to complete 8/12 quizzes will result in an INC and the student must complete it the next time course is offered.

**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 or the student misses the makeup for the final exam for reasons

approved by the Academic Advising Office, 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.

## 9. Communication

- ☒ Students should check the OWL Brightspace site every 24–48 hours
- ☒ Students should email their instructor(s) and teaching assistant(s) using their Western email.
- ☒ Emails will be monitored daily; students will receive a response in 24–48 hours
- ☒ This course will use discussions on Brightspace.
- ☒ 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 be held in-person, in DSB 3021.
- ☒ Office hours will be held on Thursdays, 1pm-2pm
- ☒ Office hours will be drop in, if a student is unable to attend office hours due to conflicting work they may request additional office hours on demand at least 48 hours ahead of time. Additional office hours are subject to TA availability.
- ☒ Office hours will be group

## 11. Course Materials

- ☒ All resources will be posted on OWL Brightspace
- ☒ Additional resources (required): Posit Cloud Student Account (\$5/month)

## 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 include an academic integrity pledge in each Quiz submission.

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.
8. Complete online learning components as early as possible.

## 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 [central academic consideration 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**

A computer / laptop is required for completion of online learning components and completion of in-class quizzes. During in-class quizzes the use of search engines, social media, or other online communication is prohibited. Students are expected to exclusively use the Posit RStudio Cloud during in-class quizzes.

Phones and other electronic devices are permitted during lectures but must be set to silent / vibrate.

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

*General Use:* The use of generative AI for the purpose of enhancing learning is permitted.

*Use in Labs / in-class assessments:* Generative AI is **strictly forbidden** during Lab sessions and in-class assessments.

*Use in written assignments:* The use of generative AI for written assignments outside of Lab sessions is only permitted if a full and precise citation is provided which MUST include the following:

1. The name of the AI software used.
2. The prompt(s) used to generate the output.

Students are responsible for ensuring the veracity and accuracy of any materials generated by AI.

## **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).

Computer-code and other assessment materials may be subject to similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in formatting that may indicate cheating.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

# **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](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](mailto: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	<a href="#">Policy</a>
General Policy	Structure of the Academic Year	<a href="#">Policy</a>
Registration, Progression, Graduation	Course Numbering Policy, Essay Courses, and Hours of Instruction	<a href="#">Policy</a>
Registration, Progression, Graduation	Undergraduate Course Credit	<a href="#">Policy</a> • <a href="#">Procedures</a>

Examinations	Definitions of Types of Examinations	<a href="#">Policy</a>
Examinations	Evaluation of Academic Performance	<a href="#">Policy</a>
Examinations	Examination Conflicts	<a href="#">Policy</a>
Rights and Responsibilities	Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities	<a href="#">Policy</a>
Rights and Responsibilities	Accommodation for Religious Holidays	<a href="#">Policy</a>
Rights and Responsibilities	Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs	<a href="#">Policy</a> • <a href="#">Procedures</a>
Rights and Responsibilities	Requests for Relief from Academic Decisions (Undergraduate)	<a href="#">Policy</a> • <a href="#">Procedures</a>
Rights and Responsibilities	Requests for Relief from Academic Decisions (Graduate)	<a href="#">Policy</a> • <a href="#">Procedures</a>
Rights and Responsibilities	Scholastic Offences (Undergraduate)	<a href="#">Policy</a> • <a href="#">Procedures</a>
Rights and Responsibilities	Senate Review Board Academic Appeals	<a href="#">Policy</a> • <a href="#">Procedures</a>