

[Neuroscience 3000G]
[Current Topics in Neuroscience]

Course outline for Winter 2024



Although this academic year might be different, Western University is committed to a **thriving campus**. We encourage you to check out the [Digital Student Experience](#) website to manage your academics and well-being. Additionally, the following link provides available resources to support students on and off campus: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.

1. **Technical Requirements:**



Stable internet connection



Laptop or computer

2. **Important Dates:**



Classes Start	Reading Week	Classes End	Study day(s)	Exam Period
January 10	February 17 - 25	April 8	April 9-10	April 11 - 30

* March 7, 2024: Last day to drop a second-term half course or a second-term full course without penalty

3. **Contact Information**

Course Coordinator	Contact Information
Tim Bussey	tbussey@uwo.ca

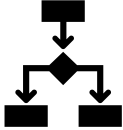


Instructor(s) or Teaching Assistant(s)	Contact Information
Rob Bartha, Instructor	rbartha@uwo.ca
Taylor Schmitz, Instructor	tschmitz@uwo.ca
Lisa Saksida, Instructor	lsaksida@uwo.ca
Azadeh Jafari, TA	ajafar@uwo.ca
Sidath Rankaduwa, TA	srankad@uwo.ca

4. Course Description and Design

Delivery Mode: [in-person]

- Asynchronous pre-work must be completed prior to sessions
- Attendance at sessions is required
- Missed work should be completed within 24 hours



All course material will be posted to OWL: <http://owl.uwo.ca>. Any changes will be indicated on the OWL site and discussed with the class.

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

[Google Chrome](#) or [Mozilla Firefox](#) are the preferred browsers to optimally use OWL; update your browsers frequently. Students interested in evaluating their internet speed, please click [here](#).

5. Learning Outcomes

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

- To develop understanding of the structure and style of neuroscience articles so that you are able to identify their key elements.
- To develop skills in critically evaluating neuroscientific investigations
- To develop skills in leading a discussion that will elicit a broad range of perspectives on a topic
- To gain familiarity with a number of methods and questions in neuroscience



6. Course Content and Schedule



Week	Dates	Topic	Instructor
1	Jan 10	Introduction to the course	Bussey
2	Jan 17	Intro lecture	T Bussey/L Saksida
3	Jan 24	Paper 1	T Bussey/L Saksida
4	Jan 31	Paper 2	T Bussey/L Saksida
5	Feb 7	Paper 3	T Bussey/L Saksida
6	Feb 14	Intro lecture	T Schmitz
7	Feb 21	Reading Week	N/A
8	Feb 28	Paper 1	T Schmitz
9	Mar 6	Paper 2	T Schmitz
10	Mar 13	Paper 3	T Schmitz
11	Mar 20	Paper 1	R Bartha
12	Mar 27	Paper 2	R Bartha
13	April 3	Paper 3	R Bartha

7. Participation and Engagement



- Students are expected to participate during sessions and engage with content as much as possible.
- Students can also participate by interacting during the session with their peers and instructors, using Slack.

8. Evaluation

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

Assessment	Due Dates	Weighting
Leading Class Discussion	Choose two from January 24 to April 3	20% (10% each)
Essay	April 8th 11:55pm EST	40%
Thought papers	Must choose at least one thought paper associated with the material covered by each instructor	20% (5% each)
Class participation		20%

In *Leading Class Discussion*, students are expected to:

- Introduce the paper
- Lead a discussion of the assigned material, which will include understanding
 - The goal and hypotheses
 - The methods
 - The results
 - The implications
- Encourage a critical evaluation of the material, addressing questions such as
 - How strongly do the results support the conclusions, and address the original goal?
 - Are there any flaws in the logic, statistics or other methodology?
 - Are the findings scientifically, clinically, or methodologically important?
 - Are they media friendly?
 - Do they replicate?



The discussion of each paper in each class will be led by 2-3 students, and each student will participate in leading two class discussions. It is not necessary or expected that students will use PowerPoint to lead class discussion unless preferred for the use of figures, illustrations, graphs or tables that are most easily shown as PowerPoint slides. All of the group should contribute to the discussion.

Thought Papers are short (500 word **maximum**) reports on the assigned readings for a class. The student may select any week's readings to write a thought paper on, as long as it is not also a week in which they are leading a class discussion. Each student will submit four thought papers. Thought papers on an assigned reading are due electronically (via OWL) *by the beginning of class* on the day that reading is discussed in class. Thought papers are intended to be brief discussions of assigned articles and can include critiques, commentary, questions, comparisons to other research results, proposals for further research, relevant ideas discussed in other courses, or similar material. Students must submit at least one thought paper associated with the material covered by each instructor in the course.

A thought paper should comprise:

- Summaries of each assigned reading. This must include the introduction, hypothesis, methods, results, and discussion for **each** paper (worth 50%)
- A critical evaluation of each paper, the nature of which is up to the student. This could include limitations, future directions, interesting questions the paper(s) raise, commentary, and/or comparisons to other studies or research methods. The critical

evaluation can be combined into one critique if the papers are closely related or easily comparable, but students **must** include **both** papers in their critical evaluation. (worth 50%)

These sections may be arranged in whatever order the student wishes. The thought papers must contain references if the student is referencing any source other than the two assigned readings. Otherwise references are not necessary. The reference section is not included in your word count, but in-text citations are.

The Essay is a critical evaluation of a topic (i.e., two papers) presented in class. Students will usually wish to write on a topic for which they led discussion, but the essay can also have a broader coverage if desired or can combine topics. The essay will comprise:

- The background to the topic (~2.5 pages)
- A description of each paper, including the goals, hypotheses, methods, results and implications (~5 pages for both papers)
- A critical evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the studies (~2.5 pages)

The maximum length is 10 double spaced pages. Style should follow the American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual 6th or 7th Edition. All essays are due on April 8, 2024, but earlier submission when possible is strongly encouraged.

Class Participation is marked on the basis of participation in discussion.

“There are no bad questions except the ones not asked”

Participation is graded for each paper and includes verbal participation during class as well as written participation online during class. Participation marks will not be given for duplication of class participation, or minimal comments such as “I agree” (such comments are not discouraged, but they won’t get you marks!)

- All assignments are due at 11:55 pm EST unless otherwise specified
- Written assignments will be submitted to Turnitin (statement in policies below)
- Rubrics will be used to evaluate assessments and will be posted with the instructions
- A student may 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

Click [here](#) for a detailed and comprehensive set of policies and regulations concerning examinations and grading. 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 evaluations:

- Late assessments without accommodation will be subject to a late penalty 10%/day.
- Late assessments with accommodation should be submitted within 24 hours of the end of the accommodation.
- An assessment cannot be submitted after it has been returned to the class; an alternate assessment will be assigned
- If a make-up assessment is missed with documentation, the student will receive an INC and complete the task the next time the course is offered

INC (Incomplete Standing): If a student has been approved by the Academic Counselling Office (in consultation with the instructor/department) to complete term work at a later date, an INC will be assigned. 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 Counselling to carry a full course load for the term the incomplete course work is scheduled.

9. Communication:

- Students should check the OWL site every 24 – 48 hours
- This course will use Slack for additional discussion
- Students should post all course-related queries on the discussion forum so that everyone can access the questions and responses



10. Office Hours:

- Graduate teaching assistant Office hours will be announced on OWL.



11. Resources

- All resources will be posted in OWL



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 (e.g., Must Knows Facebook group, Course Hero, Chegg, 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 time at the start of each week to get organized and manage your time.
2. Make it a daily habit to log onto OWL to ensure you have seen everything posted to help you succeed in this class.
3. Follow weekly checklists created on OWL or create your own to help you stay on track.
4. Take notes as you go through the lesson material. Treat this course as you would a face-to-face course. 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 and Statements

Absence from Course Commitments

A. Absence for medical illness:

Students must familiarize themselves with the [Accommodation for Illness Policy](#).

A student seeking academic accommodation for any **work worth less than 10%** must contact the instructor or follow the appropriate Department or course specific instructions provided on the course outline. Instructors will use good judgment and ensure fair treatment for all students when considering these requests. You are not required to disclose details about your situation to your instructor; documentation is not required in this situation, and you should not send any pictures to your instructor.

If you are unable to meet a course requirement for any **work worth 10% or greater** due to illness or other serious circumstances, you must provide valid medical or other supporting documentation to the Academic Counselling as soon as possible and contact your instructor immediately. It is the student's responsibility to make alternative arrangements with their instructor once the accommodation has been approved and the instructor has been informed. Please note that the format of a make-up test, exam, or assignment is at the discretion of the course coordinator.

A student requiring academic accommodation due to illness should use the Student Medical Certificate when visiting an off-campus medical facility or request a Record's Release Form (located in the Dean's Office) for visits to Student Health Services. The form can be found at: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

B. Absence for non-medical reasons:

Student absences might also be approved for non-medical reasons such as religious holidays and compassionate situations. Please review the policy on [Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). All non-medical requests must be processed by Academic Counselling. Not all absences will be approved; pay attention to the academic calendar and final exam period when booking any trips.

C. 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. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

Academic Offenses

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed [here](#) to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence.

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 or review [The policy on Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

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. You can read about the privacy and security of the UWO email accounts [here](#).

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. The details of this policy and the deadlines can be found [here](#).

Essay Course Guidelines

The guidelines for the minimum written assignments refer to the cumulative amount of written work in a course but excludes written work in examinations. You can read about essay course guidelines [here](#).

An essay course must normally involve total written assignments (essays or other appropriate prose composition, excluding examinations) as follows:

- Full course (1000 to 1999): at least 3000 words
- Half course (1000 to 1999): at least 1500 words
- Full course (2000 and above): at least 5000 words
- Half course (2000 and above): at least 2500 words

The structure of the essay course must be such that in order to pass the course, the student must exhibit some minimal level of competence in essay writing and the appropriate level of knowledge of the content of the course.

Turnitin and other similarity review software

All assignments will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. Students will be able to view their results before the final submission. 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://www.turnitin.com).

15. BMSUE Academic Policies and Statements

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, i.e., cell phones, tablets, cameras, 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. Non-programmable calculators are only allowed when indicated by the instructor. The program is not responsible for stolen/lost or broken devices.

Copyright and Audio/Video Recording Statement

Course material produced by faculty is 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.

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** on this course, irrespective of the number of decimal places used in marking individual assignments and tests, will be calculated to one decimal place and rounded to the nearest integer, e.g., 74.4 becomes 74, and 74.5 becomes 75. Marks **WILL NOT** be bumped to the next grade or GPA, e.g. a 79 will **NOT** be bumped up to an 80, an 84 **WILL NOT** be bumped up to an 85, etc. The mark attained is the mark you achieved, and the mark assigned; requests for mark "bumping" will be denied.

16. Support Services

The following links provide information about support services at Western University.

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

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.

[Academic Counselling \(Science and Basic Medical Sciences\)](#)

[Appeal Procedures](#)

[Registrarial Services](#)

Student Development Services

Student Health Services