

Department of Physiology and Pharmacology
The Pharmacology of Drugs of Abuse – Pharmacology 4370B

Course Syllabus for Winter 2025



Western University is committed to a **thriving campus**; therefore, your health and wellness matter to us! The following link provides information about the resources available on and off campus to support students: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/> Your course coordinator can also **guide you** to resources and/or services should you need them.

1. Technical Requirements:



Stable internet connection



Laptop or computer



Working microphone



Working webcam

2. Important Dates:



Classes Begin	Reading Week	Classes End	Study day(s)	Exam Period
January 6	February 15–23	April 4	April 5–6	April 7–30

March 31, 2025: Last day to withdraw from second-term half course without academic penalty

3. Contact Information

Course Coordinator	Contact Information
Peter Chidiac	pchidiac@uwo.ca

Teaching Assistant	Contact Information
Maria Nica	mnica2@uwo.ca

4. Course Description and Design

Delivery Mode: blended; classroom and online

Prerequisite(s): Pharmacology 3620 or Physiology 3140

Course Description: This course will cover the pharmacological and pathophysiological effects of non-medicinal drug use including mechanisms of action, tolerance and addiction, long-term effects, side effects and toxicity, treatment of addictions and overdoses. Pharmacokinetics will also be examined including routes of administration, activation, deactivation, elimination, and drug-drug interactions.

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.

Overview:

Part 1: Pharmacology of CNS drugs – general concepts

January 7 – 21

Topics to be covered: Concepts and definitions (categories of psychoactive drugs, addiction, tolerance, dependency, side effects, toxic effects, etc.); Pharmacodynamics and drug targets; Pharmacokinetics and routes of drug administration; acute and long-term tolerance; drug withdrawal; addiction; experimental methods to study tolerance and addiction.

Part 2: Effects of psychoactive drugs

January 28 – February 25

Topics to be covered: CNS depressants (ethanol, opioids, benzodiazepines, etc.); CNS stimulants; perception-altering drugs (hallucinogens, dissociatives, deliriant; cannabis).

Student Presentations

March 4 – April 1

These will focus on special topics or subclasses of psychoactive drugs. Topics will be assigned and presented in reverse-alphabetical order by surname. There will be 6 presentations per week. Students will need to upload their video presentation by the preceding Thursday for in-class online Discussion/Q&A the following Tuesday. Questions may be asked in the online Forum prior to or after class, orally during class, or via the Zoom chat function.

Each recorded presentation should be 15 minutes. Further instructions will be given in class.

Weekly lectures –the class will meet in person or via Zoom on Tuesdays at 9:30 (see the posted schedule below).

Timetabled Sessions

Component	Date(s)	Time
Lectures (weeks 1,2,4,5,6,8)	Tuesdays	9:30 AM (in person)
Discussions (weeks 3,9,10,11,12,13)	Tuesdays	9:30 AM (via Zoom)

Asynchronous pre-work must be completed prior to sessions

- Attendance at sessions is required
- A recording will be provided of sessions held online

All course material will be posted to OWL: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/login>. 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 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:



- explain the major factors underlying drug tolerance and substance use disorders
- understand how pharmacokinetic factors influence psychoactive drug effects
- know the major pharmacological targets of psychoactive drugs
- appreciate the interplay between the molecular, physiological, and psychological effects of psychoactive drugs
- understand the toxic effects of psychoactive drugs

6. Course Content and Schedule

Week	Dates	Topic	Instructor
1	Jan 7	Introduction to psychoactive drugs	Chidiac
2	Jan 14	Introduction to psychoactive drugs II	Chidiac
3	Jan 21	Discussion – factors contributing to substance use disorders (online)	Chidiac, Nica
4	Jan 28	CNS depressants	Chidiac
5	Feb 4	Opioid drugs; CNS stimulants I	Chidiac
6	Feb 11	CNS stimulants II; Perception-altering drugs I	Chidiac
7	Feb 17–23	Reading Week (starts February 15 th)	N/A
8	Feb 25	Perception-altering drugs II; Cannabis Submission of video presentations 1-6	Chidiac
9	Mar 4	Discussion - Student presentations 1-6 Submission of video presentations 7-12	Chidiac, Nica
10	Mar 11	Discussion - Student presentations 7-12 Submission of video presentations 13-18	Chidiac, Nica
11	Mar 18	Discussion - Student presentations 13-18 Submission of video presentations 19-24	Chidiac, Nica
12	Mar 25	Discussion - Student presentations 19-24 Submission of video presentations 25-30	Chidiac, Nica
13	Apr 1	Discussion - Student presentations 25-30	Chidiac, Nica

7. Participation and Engagement

- Students are expected to participate and engage with content as much as possible
- Participation will be assessed via contributions to online class discussions and postings to associated online forums (12%), as well as timely completion of assigned peer evaluations (3%). For full participation marks, a student must contribute four *non-trivial* questions or comments each discussion day (*i.e.*, Weeks 3, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13), either orally or in writing.
- Attendance is mandatory (5%).

8. Assessment and Evaluation

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

Assessment	Format	Weighting	Due Date	Flexibility
Midterm Exam (weeks 1-4)	Short answer/essay	25%	Thurs, Feb 6 th at 6PM (2 hours)	None-Designated assessment
Assignment	Video + Q/A	30%	Feb 27-April 1 as assigned	48 hour no late penalty
Participation & Attendance		20%	During the term	One absence permitted without penalty
Final Exam (weeks 5-8)	Short answer/essay	25%	April exam period, 2 hours	None

General information about assessments

- Videos of assigned presentations are due to be uploaded at 5 PM EST on the Tuesday preceding the scheduled date for class discussion. There is a 48 hour grace period, after which late submissions without academic consideration will be penalized 10% per day. Presenters must answer all online forum questions regarding their videos by 11:55 pm the following Friday.
- Peer evaluations are due by 5 PM EST on the Friday after the assigned presentation
- Questions and comments on student presentations may be posted from the time the video is made available until 11:55 pm the following Thursday.
- Rubrics will be used to evaluate assessments and will be posted with the instructions
- 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. If you run into technical difficulties uploading, please contact the TA or course manager as soon as possible.
- 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
- Any grade appeals on assignments, quizzes, or midterms must be received within 3 weeks of the grade being posted.
- Participation mark (20%): Attendance of weekly class sessions is expected. A student's final mark will be based on class participation, including *attendance (5%), contributions to class discussions (12%), and peer evaluations (3%)*.

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:

- MIDTERM EXAM

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

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 assessments:

- Late assessments without academic consideration will be subject to a late penalty **10%/day**.
- One make-up test will be offered for missed Midterm or Final Exam. Format may be different, at the discretion of the course manager.
- Class attendance is mandatory. One unexcused absence is permitted, and thereafter 0.5% will be deducted from the attendance mark per missed class, up to a maximum of 5%.

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. 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 exam or the student misses the makeup exam for reasons approved by the Academic Advising Office, the student will write the exam the next time the course is offered. Outstanding SPCs will reduce the course load for the term the exam is deferred as outlined in [Types of Examinations](#) policy.

9. Communication

- Students should check the OWL Brightspace site every 24–48 hours
- Students should email their instructor and teaching assistant.
- Emails will be monitored daily; students will receive a response in 24–48 hours
- This course will use discussion forums 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, either in person or via Zoom, should be booked with the instructor. Drop-ins *may* be accommodated.

11. Resources

- All resources will be posted in 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 (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 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 and Statements

A. Absence from Course Commitments

Students must familiarize themselves with the Policy on [Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

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.

Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the policy for [Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). 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.

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](#).

B. 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.

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.

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 or review [The policy on 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. You can read about the privacy and security of the UWO email accounts [here](#).

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

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, 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. 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., 74.45 becomes 74, and 74.50 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.

Statement on the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Platforms

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.

16. Support Services

- Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @Western Health <https://www.uwo.ca/health/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.
- To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.
- Other important links:
 - [Academic Advising \(Science and Basic Medical Sciences\)](#)
 - [Appeal Procedures](#)
 - [Registrarial Services](#)
 - [Student Development Services](#)
 - [Student Health Services](#)

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:

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