

## **Biology 3355A (Molecular Cell Biology of Stress)**

### **1. General Course Information**

#### **Course Information**

Biology 3355A (Molecular Cell Biology of Stress), **Fall 2025**

#### **List of Prerequisites**

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean's Designate (Department/Program Counsellors and Science Academic Advisors) 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.

### **2. Instructor and Contact Information**

**Instructor:** Dr. Alexander Timoshenko, E-mail: [atimoshe@uwo.ca](mailto:atimoshe@uwo.ca)

Students must use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses and include Bio3355 in the subject line when contacting their Instructor or TA.

### **3. Course Syllabus, Schedule, Delivery Mode**

**Course Description and Learning Outcomes:** Biology 3355A is an advanced course in cell biology. This course will cover a range of environmental, physiological, and pathological stresses common to animal cells. The focus will be on evolutionarily conserved cell stress responses, individual signaling pathways and the molecules controlling the action of specific stress stimuli. The lecture topics may be adjusted to reflect current progress or to introduce new and exciting developments in the field.

*By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:*

- ☒ Describe signaling processes underlying heat shock response, endoplasmic reticulum stress and unfolded protein responses, oxidative stress, hypoxic stress, osmotic stress, metal stress, inflammatory stress, DNA damage response, and nucleolar stress.
- ☒ Understand the structure and properties of stress-related transcription factors and discuss molecular mechanisms of their regulation in mammalian cells.
- ☒ Use some available online resources that allow to identify stress-sensitive genes, transcription factors, and miRNAs (GeneCards, Harmonizome, and Diana Tools)
- ☒ Describe the experimental methods used to study cellular stress responses and understand how to apply these methods in cell biology laboratories.
- ☒ Apply the knowledge of cell stress biology to discuss and explain biological principles of some human diseases.

- ☒ Develop and practice their presentation skills by performing the oral presentation of novel concepts, current methodology and techniques in cell stress biology and reviewing primary articles published in scientific journals (tutorial component).
- ☒ Demonstrate competence with scientific writing and critical thinking by preparing a midterm assignment on transcription factors and miRNAs using available bioinformatics online tools.

**Contingency plan:** Although the intent is for this course to be delivered in person, should any university-declared emergency require some or all courses to be delivered online, either synchronously or asynchronously, the course will adapt accordingly. The grading scheme will **not** change. Any assessments affected will be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

## 4. Course Materials

There is no specific textbook assigned to this course. The list of recommended readings (links to primary and review scientific articles), lecture handouts, announcements, tutorial assignments, and other important course information, will be posted to BrightSpace OWL: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>. Students are responsible for checking the course web-site regularly for news, updates, and changes. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. If students need assistance with the course BrightSpace OWL site, they can seek support on the [Brightspace OWL Help](#) page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800. As additional resources, students may consider the following textbooks related to some course topics and activities, which are free available in/through the Western Library:

1. Lodish et al. (2021) Molecular Cell Biology, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, Austin, Macmillian Learning;
2. Alberts et al. (2015) Molecular Biology of the Cell, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, New York, Garland Science.
3. Knisely, K. (2021) A Student Handbook for Writing in Biology, 6th Edition, Macmillian Learning.

**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 and available lecture handouts.

**Technical Requirements:** When offered in online mode all students must have access to a stable internet connection, and a computer with a working microphone and/or webcam. During in-person learning it is highly recommended that students bring a portable computer that can be used for in-class learning and reporting activities.

## 5. Methods of Evaluation

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

The overall course grade - **out of 100** - will be calculated as listed below:

Component	Notes	Value
Take-home assignment	Submit on BrightSpace OWL	<b>12</b>
Tutorial presentation	Individually scheduled	<b>15</b>
Tutorial participation	Individual Reports and Attendance	<b>5</b>
Midterm Test 1	45 min, in-class	<b>18</b>
Midterm Test 2	45 min, in-class	<b>18</b>
Final Exam	TBA and scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (2 h)	<b>32</b>

This course also offers a bonus mark (1%) if you complete the **Western Academic Integrity Tutorial for Undergraduate Students**, which is available at:

<https://teaching.uwo.ca/teaching/assessing/academic-integrity.html>

(click the link, then page down to the second bullet under Additional Resources on Academic Integrity).

## Take-home assignment

A short-written assignment will be based on a bioinformatics search and analysis of regulatory factors of stress-related genes using available online tools and resources (GeneGards, Harmonizome, and Diana Tools). The purpose of this assignment is to identify and describe tentative **transcription factors** and **miRNAs** that can be involved in transcriptional and post-transcriptional regulation of your gene-of-interest. You will be individually responsible for selecting a stress-sensitive gene for your analysis. Rubrics will be used to evaluate assignments and will be posted with the instruction handout. All assignments are expected to be submitted by deadline as an electronic copy on BrightSpace OWL. This assignment represents coursework with assessment flexibility, i.e. should extenuating circumstances arise, students do not need to request Academic Consideration and they are permitted to submit their assignment up to 72 hours past the deadline without a late penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 72 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 5% per day will be applied. Academic Consideration requests may be granted only for extenuating circumstances that started before the deadline and lasted longer than the No-Late-Penalty Period (72 hours). **The take-home assignment must be completed to pass the course.**

## Tutorial information

**In groups of two**, students are required to select one **primary research article** from a peer-reviewed journal to present during tutorial sessions. The PowerPoint presentation (12 min and 3 min Q&A) is intended to broaden your knowledge of animal/human cell stress biology and to provide students with the opportunity to develop their oral presentation skills. The purpose of the presentation is to convey novel concepts or findings in cellular responses to microenvironmental stress, current methodology and techniques, and their application in a specific situation. The presentation is not intended to be a critique of the paper. **The tutorial presentation must be completed to pass the course.**

Students may only attend the tutorial section in which they are registered unless special permission has been granted by the instructor. **Tutorial attendance** will be taken and contribute to your final grade (max 5 points). The tutorial participation grade will be proportionally adjusted for any unexcused

absence in tutorials. Tutorial participation implies submission of **individual reports** by the end of each tutorial summarizing your brief reflection on the presentations, which should indicate one interesting fact that you learned from each presentation.

## Midterm tests and final exam

There will be two in-class midterm tests, each covering five different units. There will only be one make-up for each midterm test. The final exam will be cumulative. Midterm tests and the final exam will be based on a combination of multiple-choice questions and short answers.

## 6. Student Absences

Students must familiarize themselves with the *University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs*, posted on the Academic Calendar:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/academic\\_consideration\\_Sep24.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf). This policy does not apply to requests for Academic Consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult [Accessible Education](#). For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage: [https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic\\_considerations/](https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/). All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

All Academic Consideration requests must include supporting documentation; however, recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make one Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** in this course. However, the following assessments are excluded from this, and therefore always require formal supporting documentation:

- Examinations scheduled during official examination periods
- Midterm tests/Presentation/Group Project

When a student *mistakenly* submits their one allowed Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** for the assessments listed above or those in the **Coursework with Assessment Flexibility**, the request cannot be recalled and reapplied. This privilege is forfeited.

In this course, if a student misses both the midterm test and the make-up or both midterm tests with a valid excuse from your Faculty Academic Counselling, its weight will be transferred to the final exam: [18+32] or [36+32].

**Tutorial attendance is mandatory** and attendance will be taken. There will be a corresponding deduction from the final tutorial participation mark for each unexcused absence (1 point per tutorial).

There will be no makeups or re-weights if you miss your pre-scheduled tutorial presentation, unless with a valid excuse from your Faculty Academic Counselling.

**Absences from Final Examinations:** When a student misses the Final Exam and their Academic Consideration has been granted, they will be allowed to write the Special Examination (the name given

by the University to a makeup Final Exam). See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)), especially for those who miss multiple final exams within one examination period.

## 7. Accommodation and Accessibility

### Religious Accommodation

When conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing to the course instructor and/or the Academic Advising office of their Faculty of Registration. This notice should be made as early as possible but not later than two weeks prior to the writing or the examination (or one week prior to the writing of the test). Please visit the Diversity Calendars posted on our university's EDID website for the recognized religious holidays: <https://www.edi.uwo.ca>.

### Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/Academic\\_Accommodation\\_disabilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf).

## 8. Academic Policies

The website for Registrar Services is <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>.

In accordance with policy, [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies\\_procedures/section1/mapp113.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section1/mapp113.pdf), 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 their official university address is attended to in a timely manner.

If you require **Requests for Relief** (formally known as “appeals”), please consider the following links:

*Policy on Request for Relief from Academic Decision:*

[https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/requests\\_for\\_relief\\_from\\_academic\\_decisions.pdf](https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/requests_for_relief_from_academic_decisions.pdf)

*Procedures on Request for Relief from Academic Decision (Undergraduate):*

[https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/undergrad\\_requests\\_for\\_relief\\_procedure.pdf](https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/undergrad_requests_for_relief_procedure.pdf)

**Scholastic offences** are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy at the following links:

*Policy on Scholastic Offences:*

[https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_offences.pdf](https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf)

*Procedures on Scholastic Offences (Undergraduate):*

[https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/undergrad\\_scholastic\\_offence\\_procedure.pdf](https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/undergrad_scholastic_offence_procedure.pdf)

**Use of Electronic Devices During Assessments:** In courses offered by the Faculty of Science, the possession of unauthorized electronic devices during any in-person assessment (such as tests, midterms, and final examinations) is strictly prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to: mobile phones, smart watches, smart glasses, and wireless earbuds or headphones. Unless explicitly stated otherwise in advance by the instructor, the presence of any such device at your desk, on your person,

or within reach during an assessment will be treated as a scholastic offence, even if the device is not in use. Only devices expressly permitted by the instructor may be brought into the assessment room. It is your responsibility to review and comply with these expectations.

**Use of Generative AI Tools:** Unless otherwise stated, the use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini, or similar platforms) is not permitted in the completion of any course assessments, including but not limited to assignments, lab reports, presentations, tests, and final examinations. Using such tools for content generation, code writing, problem solving, translation, or summarization—when not explicitly allowed—will be treated as a scholastic offence. If the use of generative AI is permitted for a particular assessment, the conditions of use will be specified by the instructor in advance. If no such permission is granted, students must assume that use is prohibited. It is your responsibility to seek clarification before using any AI tools in academic work.

**TURNITIN:** 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 The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

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

- ☒ Students are expected to be professional and scholarly in all online postings. Use proper grammar and spelling. Cite the ideas of others appropriately.
- ☒ All course materials created by the instructor are copyrighted and cannot be sold/shared
- ☒ 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
- ☒ All recorded sessions will remain within the course site or unlisted if streamed

## 9. Support Services

Please visit the Science & Basic Medical Sciences Academic Counselling webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic-related matters: <https://www.uwo.ca/sci/counselling/>

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

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](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).

Please contact the course instructor if you require lecture or printed material in an alternate format or if any other arrangements can make this course more accessible to you. If you have any questions regarding accommodation, you may also wish to contact Accessible Education at

[http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/index.html](http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html)

Learning-skills counsellors at the Student Development Centre (<https://learning.uwo.ca>) are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

Western University is committed to a thriving campus as we deliver our courses in the mixed model of both virtual and face-to-face formats. We encourage you to check out the Digital Student Experience website to manage your academics and well-being: <https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/>.

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC: <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.

## 10. 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 outside of the class hours:

1. Invest in a planner or application to keep track of your courses. Populate all 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 BrightSpace OWL to ensure you have seen everything posted to help you succeed in this class.
3. Take notes as you go through the lecture/tutorial material. Keeping handwritten notes or even notes on a regular Word document will help you learn effectively.
4. Connect with others. Try forming an online study group and try meeting on a weekly basis for study and peer support.
5. Do not be afraid to ask questions. If you are struggling with a topic, check the online discussion Forums or contact your instructor and or teaching assistant.
6. Reward yourself for successes. It seems easier to motivate ourselves knowing that there is something waiting for us at the end of the task.
7. Take advantage of office hours with your instructor.

## 11. Equal Opportunity and Evaluation Policy

All individuals involved in the offering of Biology 3355A were, at one time, undergraduate students themselves. Accordingly, your professor and your teaching assistants thoroughly understand the importance of course grades and the hard work that you will invest into this course. They are there to help you achieve your goals. We want you to do well in the course, but we also have to be fair. The university is committed to academic integrity and has high ethical and moral standards. All students will be treated equally and evaluated using the criteria presented in this course outline and their respective weights. The evaluation criteria are based strictly on actual achievement, not on effort or how hard the student tried. Claims of an excellent academic history, of attendance in the course components, or of personal issues (family, relationship, financial, etc.) cannot be used to justify a



higher grade in the course because they are not criteria for evaluation. There is no extra work available for extra credit or to “make up” another grade. We do not offer any extra assignments, essays, or other work of any kind to any student. The requirement for a higher grade in order to, for example, maintain a scholarship, enter a program, or obtain a higher GPA for various reasons, is not a justifiable reason for increasing your grade. If we increased or “bumped” your grade (*i.e.* gave you a grade that you did not legitimately earn), it would be unfair to the other students and also a great disservice to the scholarships and programs who are evaluating all students on the basis of their grades.

## 12. Land acknowledgment

We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Attawandaron peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous peoples (e.g. First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society.

*Good Luck with your Studies!*