

The BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT

SPECIAL TOPICS CLASSES:

What they are for and what is involved (revised June 2012)

Introduction:

The Special Topics class (in Biology or Marine Biology) provides an opportunity for students usually in their fourth year to pursue independent studies on topics of special interest in biology where these are not otherwise offered in the curriculum. To set up such a class, the student (or a group of students) must identify a professor or professors to supervise the class. Typically, those will be professors who conduct some research in an area related to the topic and typically the student has taken another class from the professor. A professor may or may not agree to supervise such a class.

Common Formats of the class; (i) directed reading and writing of a review paper (ii) a research project, possibly comparable to that involved in honours research (iii) a group of students might get together and organize a class, asking one or more professors to participate and (iv) other formats may be considered.

Special Topics classes should not be taken as a way to get a credit regardless of the content. Rather these classes are developed to provide a particular experience. Thus, in proposing such a class, the student should have a particular topic in mind, and have done some initial exploration of the topic. It is best to draw up a draft proposal for a class to present to a prospective supervisor. That proposal should identify the topic, the material to be covered, and provide a detailed description of how the student will be evaluated, including deadlines for submission of class assignments. The supervisor may suggest some changes, the student revises the proposal, gets the supervisor to sign it and submits it together with the registration form to the Chair of the Biology Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. The proposal is then reviewed by members of the committee and approved or not, or approved after modification.

Regulations

- The student(s) should be in the 4th year of study or equivalent and have a minimum of 12.5 full credits (75 Earned Credit Hours) including at least 8 full credits (48 credit hours) in BIOL classes.
- The supervisor(s) for Special Topics must be a faculty member on campus and hold a PhD in a Biological discipline.
- A maximum of one full Biology credit can be taken as a Special Topics class.
- Material prepared for a Special Topics class cannot be used in an Honours thesis.
- Material covered or prepared for a Special Topics cannot be derived from work performed as a routine expectation of employment.
- The content of the class should not overlap significantly with that of a regular class that is offered in the current academic year.

Grade assignments:

For reading and literature review assignments, or group projects: submit a copy of the report.

For laboratory projects, submit a 500-1000 word summary of your project.

To: the Chair of the Biology Undergraduate Curriculum Committee *on or before the last day of classes for that semester.*

The **Final Letter Grade** for the student must be submitted by the supervisor to the Chair of the Biology Undergraduate Curriculum Committee no later than 14 days after the end of classes for the term in which the student is enrolled.

An Incomplete Grade (INC) will be assigned to students for whom no grade is received by the deadline specified in the Academic Regulations. "Students are expected to complete class work by the prescribed deadlines. Only in special circumstances (e.g., the death of a close relative) may an instructor extend such deadlines." (University Academic Regulation 16.4, page 39 of the 2012-2013 Undergraduate Calendar.)

The Class Numbers:

BIOL/MARI 4806.03 the first special topics class taken (any semester)

BIOL/MARI 4807.03 if a second special topics class is taken (any semester)

Registration in Special Topics can only be approved by the Chair of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (or another designated member of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee). These are the only individuals who can sign a student into a Special Topics Class.

Deadlines: The registration form, signed and dated by the supervising Professor must be received by the Chair of the Biology Undergraduate Curriculum Committee not later than one week after the start of classes for the term in which the Special Topics is to begin. *The student is responsible for ensuring that these materials reach the Chair of the Curriculum Committee by the pertinent deadline (one week after classes begin).* Once the proposal is approved, the chair will submit a command to Banner setting up permission to register in the class and notify the student that he or she may now register in the class. The **grade assignments** are due not later than two weeks after the end of classes.

Chair of the Biology Undergraduate Curriculum Committee

Elizabeth Welsh ewelsh@dal.ca 494-7110 LSC 3130

REGISTRATION FORM

for Special Topics in the Biology Department

Deadlines:

This completed registration form and accompanying document, must be received by the Chair of the Biology Undergraduate Curriculum Committee not later than one week after the start of classes for the term in which the Special Topics is to begin.

Registration:

Along with this registration form, please submit a separate document with the following;

- Topic title.
- Outline of the project. This should be about **1-2 pages**, as for an Honours thesis proposal.
- A statement of how the student(s) and professor(s) will interact, (e.g. 1-2 hour meetings held biweekly)
- Detailed description of how the student will be evaluated including deadlines for submission of class assignments. Normally at least one deadline should be met by mid-term.

For the student:

I have read the document "The BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT SPECIAL TOPICS CLASSES: What they are for and what is involved". I agree to abide by the regulations for Special Topics classes including the requirement that I must submit a summary of the work to the Chair of the Biology Undergraduate Curriculum Committee before the end of classes and that my work will be assessed not later than two weeks after cessation of classes. I understand that failure to follow the above regulations will result in an INC grade being awarded for Special Topics classes, and that such grades are assigned a grade point value of 0.0.

Student Name and Banner Number (Print): _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student e-mail address: _____

For the Supervisor:

I have read the document "The BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT SPECIAL TOPICS CLASSES: What they are for and what is involved" and the regulations. I agree to submit a mark not later than two weeks after the end of classes. Please register the student in:

Semester: Fall Winter Summer (section: _____)

BIOL 4806.03 (first special topics class) BIOL 4807.03 (second special topics class)

MARI 4806.03 (first special topics class) MARI 4807.03 (second special topics class)

Supervisor's Name (Print): _____ Department: _____

Supervisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Biology Department Signature (Curriculum Chair): _____ Date: _____