

The **BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT**

BIOL/MARI 4806.03 and BIOL/MARI 4807.03 **SPECIAL TOPICS COURSES**

Coordinated by the Chair of the Biology Undergraduate Curriculum Committee
Elizabeth Welsh ewelsh@dal.ca 494-7110 LSC 3130

Information: *(revised June 2013)*

The Special Topics courses in **Biology** or **Marine Biology** provide an opportunity for students (usually in their fourth year) to pursue independent studies on topics of interest in biology where these are not otherwise offered in the curriculum. The student (or a group of students) must identify a professor or professors to supervise the course. Typically, those will be professors who conduct research in an area related to the topic. A professor may or may not agree to supervise such a course.

Common Formats of the course; (i) directed reading and writing of a review paper (ii) a research project, comparable to that involved in honours research (iii) a group of students might get together and organize a course, asking one or more professors to participate and (iv) other formats may be considered. Special Topics courses should not be taken as a way to get a credit regardless of the content. Rather these courses are developed to provide a particular experience outside the regular classroom.

The student should have a particular topic in mind, and have done some initial exploration of the subject. The student should draw up a draft proposal to present to a prospective supervisor. That proposal should identify the topic, the material to be covered, and with some input from the supervisor provide a detailed description of how the student will be evaluated, including deadlines for submission of course assignments. At least one deadline should be met by mid-term. The supervisor may suggest some changes, and the student revises the proposal. The finalized proposal and the completed registration form (signed by both the supervisor and the student) are then submitted to the Chair of the Biology Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. The proposal is then reviewed 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 Biology courses.
- The supervisor for a Special Topics course is usually a faculty member at Dalhousie University and holds a PhD in a Biological discipline.
- A maximum of one full Biology credit can be taken as a Special Topics course.
- Material prepared for a Special Topics course cannot be used in an Honours thesis.
- Material covered or prepared for a Special Topics course cannot be derived from work performed as a routine expectation of employment.
- The content of the course should not overlap significantly with that of a regular course that is offered in the current academic year.
- For reading and **literature review assignments**, or group projects: submit a copy of the report, and 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.*

Application Deadline:

The proposal and registration form signed and dated by both the student and 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 course is to begin. The student is responsible for ensuring that these materials reach the Chair of the Curriculum Committee by the appropriate deadline. Once the proposal is approved, the chair will set up through the Banner system, permission to register in the course and notify the student that he or she may now register in the course.

Final Letter grade Deadline:

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 two weeks 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 course 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 35 of the 2013-2014 Undergraduate Calendar.)

The Course Numbers:

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

BIOL/MARI 4807.03 - the second special topics course taken (any semester)

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

REGISTRATION FORM

for Special Topics Courses in the Biology Department

Registration:

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

- Topic title.
- Proposal/Outline of the project. This should be about two pages, similar to an Honours thesis proposal.
- A statement of how the student(s) and professor(s) will interact, (e.g. one or two hour meetings held biweekly).
- Detailed description of how the student will be evaluated including deadlines for submission of course assignments. At least one deadline (and assessment) should be met by mid-term.

For the student:

I have read the information and regulations for Special Topics courses on the previous pages. I agree to abide by the regulations for Special Topics courses 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 regulations will result in an INC grade being awarded for Special Topics courses, and that such grades are assigned a grade point value of 0.0.

Student Name and Banner Number: _____

Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student's e-mail address: _____

For the Supervisor:

I have read the information and regulations for Special Topics courses on the previous pages. I agree to submit a mark to the Chair of the Biology Undergraduate Curriculum Committee not later than two weeks after the end of courses.

Please register the student in:

Semester: Fall Winter Summer (section: _____)

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

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

Supervisor's Name: _____ Department: _____

University: _____

Supervisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

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