

Honours Research and Thesis I & II Syllabus

Department of Biology

BIOL/MARI 4901 & 4902 - 2025/26

Dalhousie University acknowledges that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People and pays respect to the Indigenous knowledges held by the Mi'kmaq People, and to the wisdom of their Elders past and present. The Mi'kmaq People signed Peace and Friendship Treaties with the Crown, and section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and Treaty rights. We are all Treaty people.

Dalhousie University also acknowledges the histories, contributions, and legacies of African Nova Scotians, who have been here for over 400 years.

Course Instructor(s)

Name	Email	Office Hours
Margaret Cooper	mhcooper@dal.ca	By Appointment; LSC 4130

Course Description

This course is required of, and restricted to, all Biology/Marine Biology Honours programs in which Biology/Marine Biology is the primary area of study. Students conduct a research project supervised by a research scientist and attend weekly meetings of the class. The classes (BIOL/MARI 4901 and BIOL/MARI 4902) are generally taken in the students' final year.

NOTES: BIOL/MARI 4901 and BIOL/MARI 4902 must be taken in consecutive fall/winter terms, or winter/fall terms (co-op only). Grades will not be recorded for either course until both have been completed, and the final Honours Thesis has been evaluated.

Course Prerequisites

Permission of the course Instructor

Course Exclusions

BIOL 4900.06 or MARI 4900.06

Course Structure

Course Delivery

Lectures will take place live in the classroom. They will not be recorded.

Lectures

Fall: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:05-2:25; DUNN 304

Winter: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:35-12:55; LSC C244

Course Details

- Your thesis proposal should be submitted to the Honours Committee, by emailing it to Margi Cooper, as soon as it can be ready, particularly if you are conducting research over the summer prior to starting BIOL/MARI 4901. If you did not submit your proposal early, **the deadline for proposal submission is 9:30am on August 11th, 2025. Submission at that point should be made via the appropriate drop box on the course Brightspace site.** Please make sure to use the thesis proposal template, including the fully completed signature page.
- An interim thesis submission is **due by 11:59pm on December 10, 2025**, and will be formally evaluated by your supervisor(s). If you have more than one supervisor, each supervisor will have the opportunity to evaluate your work and the average of their assigned marks will be used. The interim thesis submission consists of any two sections of your thesis. For example, you can submit an Introduction and Methods, or submission of your Methods and Results might make more sense in the context of your project and workflow. The evaluation of your interim submission will constitute *15% of your overall mark*. Submit these sections as a PDF to the appropriate Assignment drop box on Brightspace.
- Your Final Thesis is **due by 11:59pm on April 9, 2026 (or December 10, 2025 for Co-op students that started in January 2025)**. Your thesis will be formally evaluated by your supervisor(s) and two additional readers. The *median* of the marks assigned by these readers will constitute *65% of your overall mark*. Submit your thesis as a PDF to the appropriate Assignment drop box on Brightspace.
- You will give two presentations about your on-going thesis research in class. One will be an “elevator pitch”, a 1-minute, high-level explanation of your project (*worth 1% of your overall mark*) and one will be a 12-minute, conference-style presentation (*worth 6% of your overall mark*). Presentations should be prepared with the assistance of your thesis supervisor. We encourage your supervisor(s) to attend the class the day of your conference-style presentation.
- The Biology Department runs a seminar series most Thursdays from 11:30am-12:30pm. This year, it will be a mix of in-person seminars, held in the 5th Floor Lounge, and seminars delivered via Teams or Zoom. Most seminars will be recorded and made available to the department. Seminars from recent years are available on the Dalhousie Biology Departmental Seminar

channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCr54hscxQsx3M287jYFdgw>). You will need to attend/watch 3 seminars and for each, complete a Seminar Reflection assignment in which you will critique and/or reflect on the speaker's communication strategies. The assignment document is available via Brightspace. **Your first reflection is due October 20, 2025. Your second reflection is due November 24, 2025. The final reflection is due March 30, 2026.** Submit your reflections to the appropriate Assignment drop box on Brightspace. Together, your three seminar reflections are *worth 3% of your overall mark*.

- Students who make their conference-style presentation in the *fall term* and perform well may be offered a **5-minute oral presentation** spot at the Cameron Conference. All other students will present a **poster** at the Cameron Conference. Your supervisor(s) should help you prepare your abstract and presentation. Abstracts will be due by **February 9th, 2026**. The 40th Annual Cameron Conference will be held on **Saturday, February 28, 2026**.
- The Biology Department will be archiving honours theses for future access requests. You will be asked to sign a copyright form granting Dalhousie University permission to circulate, and to have copied for non-commercial purposes, your thesis upon the request of individuals or institutions. Unless you explicitly deny this permission, in writing, your thesis will be archived for these purposes.
- In addition to a grade in BIOL/MARI 4901 & 4902, a grade in BIOL/MARI 8880: Honours Qualifying Exam will appear on your transcript when all the requirements for the Honours program have been satisfied. The Biology Department grades this "exam" on a pass/fail basis. To pass, you must:
 - Satisfy the Honours program requirements (required courses and minimum cGPA).
 - Attend all classes. Attendance will be recorded, and participation noted. If a class is missed, you must contact Margi Cooper as soon as possible (or beforehand if you know you will miss a session) and submit an SDA form to the appropriate Assignment drop box on our Brightspace site. A maximum of two SDA may be used each term.
 - Participate and present at the Cameron Conference.

Assessment

Class Presentations	7%	Fall or Winter Term
Seminar Reflections	3%	Fall and Winter Term
Cameron Conference Presentation	10%	February 28, 2026
Interim Thesis	15%	Dec. 10, 2025
Thesis	65%	April 9, 2026 (Co-ops submit Dec. 10, 2025)

Conversion of numerical grades to final letter grades follows the

[Dalhousie Grade Scale](#)

A+ (90-100)	B+ (77-79)	C+ (65-69)	D (50-54)
A (85-89)	B (73-76)	C (60-64)	F (0-49)
A- (80-84)	B- (70-72)	C- (55-59)	

Course Policies on Missed or Late Academic Requirements

Extensions for submitting theses will be considered on the basis of:

- a documented medical issue
- a letter from the supervisor stating the reasons for an extension and approving the request

Thesis extensions are granted only in very extenuating circumstances, such as a health crisis or in cases where a student's experiments fail due to circumstances outside of their control and where such a failure prevents the student from completing a thesis. Each of these cases are reviewed by the Honours Committee before an extension is granted. Requests for extensions so that a student can expand a thesis into a manuscript for submission are not granted. Creating a publishable manuscript is indeed encouraged, but the thesis must be submitted at the end of the Honours course in April (or December option for Co-ops)

Requests for extensions must be submitted in writing to the Honours Committee two weeks BEFORE the thesis submission date of April 9th, 2026. Email requests to Margi Cooper (mhcooper@dal.ca).

Those receiving an extension will not be able to graduate in May, but could do so the following October. The student will receive an "INC" on their record (BIOL/MARI 4901 & 4902). When the final grade has been determined after thesis submission, the INC will be removed and the appropriate grade inserted. If students intend to graduate in May, then a thesis extension is not possible.

Theses submitted after the deadline, without a formal extension, will receive a late penalty of 15% per day.

Course Policies related to Academic Integrity

You are expected to abide by Dalhousie University's policies on academic integrity. All submitted assessments must be your own work. This means that the use of generative AI or large language models (e.g. ChatGPT) for writing your thesis is not appropriate.

This class subscribes to a Brightspace Learning web-based service that checks for originality in submitted work.

Tentative Class Schedule

Fall Term: 1:05-2:25 in Dunn 304		
Date	Session Topic	
Sept	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome to Honours • Strategies for your Thesis Year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task Management • Managing the Student-Supervisor Relationship
	25	Career Panel – Representatives from Academia and Industry
	30	<i>National Day for Truth and Reconciliation – University Closed</i>
Oct	2	Kaitlin Burek – Career Advisor: Identifying and Articulating Skills
	7	Graduate School Considerations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Daniel Ruzzante – Biology Department’s Graduate Coordinator • Dr. Alastair Simpson – Biology Department’s Graduate Admissions Coordinator
	9	Preparing a Conference Style Presentation
	14	Boris Worm – Effective Science Communication
	16	Elevator Pitches
	20	First Seminar Reflection Due – 11:59pm
	21	Career Panel – Representative from Government
	23	Co-op Conference-style Presentations
	28	Julie Marcoux – Reference Librarian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Research Tips
	30	Conference-style Presentations
Nov	4	Conference-style Presentations
	6	Conference-style Presentations
	11&13	Reading Week
	18	Conference-style Presentations
	20	Conference-style Presentations
	24	Second Seminar Reflection Due – 11:59pm
	25	Conference-style Presentations
	27	Conference-style Presentations
Dec	2	Conference-style Presentations
	4	Conference-style Presentations
	10	Interim Thesis Submission Due – 11:59pm

Winter Term: 11:35-12:55 in LSC 244		
Date	Session Topic	
Jan	8	Conference-style Presentations
	13	Conference-style Presentations
	15	Conference-style Presentations
	20	Conference-style Presentations
	22	Conference-style Presentations
	27	Conference-style Presentations
	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make-Up for Conference-style Presentations • Preparing for the Cameron Conference
Feb	3&5	Tuesday - No Class/Thursday - Departmental Seminar
	9	Cameron Conference Abstract Due – 11:59pm
	10&12	Tuesday - No Class/Thursday - Departmental Seminar
	17&19	Reading Week
	24&26	Tuesday - No Class/Thursday - Departmental Seminar
	28	CAMERON CONFERENCE - All Day
March	3&5	Tuesday - No Class/Thursday - Departmental Seminar
	10&12	Tuesday - No Class/Thursday - Departmental Seminar
	17&19	Tuesday - No Class/Thursday - Departmental Seminar
	24	Thesis Formatting Q&A
	26	Departmental Seminar
	30	Third Seminar Reflection Due – 11:59pm
April	31&2	Tuesday - No Class/Thursday - Departmental Seminar
	7	No Class
	9	Final Thesis Submissions Due – 11:59pm

University Policies and Statements

Recognition of Mi'kmaq Territory

Dalhousie University would like to acknowledge that the University is on Traditional Mi'kmaq Territory. The Elders in Residence program provides students with access to First Nations elders for guidance, counsel, and support. Visit or e-mail the Indigenous Student Centre at 1321 Edward St or elders@dal.ca. Additional information regarding the Indigenous Student Centre can be found at: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/communities/indigenous.html

Internationalization

At Dalhousie, 'thinking and acting globally' enhances the quality and impact of education, supporting learning that is "interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, global in reach, and orientated toward solving problems that extend across national borders." Additional internationalization information can be found at: <https://www.dal.ca/about-dal/internationalization.html>

Academic Integrity

At Dalhousie University, we are guided in all our work by the values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility, and respect. As a student, you are required to demonstrate these values in all the work you do. The University provides policies and procedures that every member of the university community is required to follow to ensure academic integrity. Additional academic integrity information can be found at: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/academic-integrity.html

Accessibility

The Student Accessibility Centre is Dalhousie's centre of expertise for matters related to student accessibility and accommodation. If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course (online or in-person) that result in barriers to your inclusion, please contact the Student Accessibility Centre (https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/accessibility.html) for all courses offered by Dalhousie with the exception of Truro. For courses offered by the Faculty of Agriculture, please contact the Student Success Centre in Truro (<https://www.dal.ca/about-dal/agricultural-campus/student-success-centre.html>)

Conduct in the Classroom – Culture of Respect

Substantial and constructive dialogue on challenging issues is an important part of academic inquiry and exchange. It requires willingness to listen and tolerance of opposing points of view. Consideration of individual differences and alternative viewpoints is required of all class members, towards each other, towards instructors, and towards guest speakers. While expressions of differing perspectives are welcome and encouraged, the words and language used should remain within acceptable bounds of civility and respect.

Diversity and Inclusion – Culture of Respect

Every person at Dalhousie has a right to be respected and safe. We believe inclusiveness is fundamental to education. We stand for equality. Dalhousie is strengthened in our diversity. We are a respectful and inclusive community. We are committed to being a place where everyone feels welcome and supported, which is why our Strategic Direction prioritizes fostering a culture of diversity and inclusiveness (Strategic Priority 5.2). Additional diversity and inclusion information can be found at: <http://www.dal.ca/cultureofrespect.html>

Student Code of Conduct

Everyone at Dalhousie is expected to treat others with dignity and respect. The Code of Student Conduct allows Dalhousie to take disciplinary action if students don't follow this community expectation. When appropriate, violations of the code can be resolved in a reasonable and informal manner - perhaps through a restorative justice process. If an informal resolution can't be reached, or would be inappropriate, procedures exist for formal dispute resolution. The full Code of Student Conduct can be found at:

https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/student-life/code-of-student-conduct.html

Fair Dealing Policy

The Dalhousie University Fair Dealing Policy provides guidance for the limited use of copyright protected material without the risk of infringement and without having to seek the permission of copyright owners. It is intended to provide a balance between the rights of creators and the rights of users at Dalhousie. Additional information regarding the Fair Dealing Policy can be found at: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/academic/fair-dealing-policy-.html

Originality Checking Software

The course instructor may use Dalhousie's approved originality checking software and Google to check the originality of any work submitted for credit, in accordance with the Student Submission of Assignments and Use of Originality Checking Software Policy. Students are free, without penalty of grade, to choose an alternative method of attesting to the authenticity of their work and must inform the instructor no later than the last day to add/drop classes of their intent to choose an alternate method. Additional information regarding Originality Checking Software can be found at: <https://www.dal.ca/about/leadership-governance/academic-integrity/faculty-resources/ouriginal-plagiarism-detection.html>

Student Use of Course Materials

Course materials are designed for use as part of this course at Dalhousie University and are the property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third party copyrighted materials (such as books, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian Copyright law. Copying this course material for distribution (e.g. uploading to a commercial third-party website) may lead to a violation of Copyright law.