

# BSC 3945 – Learning Assistants in Biology – Spring 2024

**Instructor:** Dr. Cynthia Bayer (Section 0001)  
**Office:** BIO 202D **LA Coordinators:** Ms. Yeargain, Dr. Tye, Dr. Atkinson  
**Office Hours:** M&F 12:30-2:00 pm **Communication:** Webcourses *Inbox* (3 credit hours)

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## Course meeting times:

- *Pedagogy Group* meeting (BA1-147) Tues 1:30-2:50 pm
  - *AL Preview* meeting (TBA) with Ms. Yeargain, Dr. Tye, or Dr. Atkinson
  - *AL Classroom* sessions: Bio I, Bio II, or Principles of Zoology
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**Course Objectives:** This upper-division, restricted elective course will prepare students for the role of Learning Assistant (LA) in an undergraduate Biology lecture course. Students will enhance their communication and reflection skills, learn and practice pedagogical concepts, and reinforce their understanding of biological principles to guide peers in conceptual learning while facilitating active learning (AL) sessions in the classroom.

**Course Prerequisites:** Successful completion (with a grade of B or higher) of the LA-supported course, *e.g.*, Biology I (BSC 2010C), Biology II (BSC 2011C) or Principles of Zoology (BSC 3930/3005). Permission of Instructor and LA Coordinator required.

Upon invitation of Instructor, a student may complete this course a second time for credit. Returning LAs may help lead and moderate Pedagogy Group discussions.

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## Student Learning Outcomes:

- Build community within Pedagogy Group and with students in LA-supported course
- Demonstrate appropriate preparation to facilitate discussion during Active Learning sessions
- Promote and practice collaborative learning in *AL Preview* meetings & *AL Classroom* sessions
- Demonstrate effective problem-solving strategies in group learning activities
- Build knowledge about learning theories and learning assessment
- Reflect on learning modes and teaching practices
- Practice and model equitable and inclusive learning interactions with peers
- Communicate biology content effectively in writing and speech

Students will be evaluated on meeting these objectives via: assessment of upholding responsibilities to students in LA-supported course through participation and engagement, reflective writing and discussion, instructor observation, and group project preparation and presentation.

## Class times & Locations:

- One weekly *Pedagogy Group* meeting with Instructor (Dr. Bayer): Tues 1:30-2:50 pm **BA1-147**
  - One weekly *Active Learning Preview* meeting with specific course LA Coordinator: **TBA**
  - One weekly *Active Learning Classroom* session with specific course LA Coordinator: **TBA**
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**Textbook:** A textbook is not required for this course. Assigned readings, videos, discussion topics, and AL exercises will be posted in Webcourses.

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**Academic Activity:** Students will meet with the instructor during our first scheduled pedagogy meeting on Tues, **Jan 9 at 1:30 pm** in BA1-147. Attendance will serve as satisfactory engagement in the course to confirm academic activity by 5:00 pm Friday, Jan 12 as required by the registrar for disbursement of financial aid.

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**Grading:** The course grade is based on participation and performance in *Pedagogy* assignments and *AL Preview* and *AL Classroom* sessions according to the following criteria:

50% = *Pedagogy* assignments - weekly online reflections, in-class group discussions & activities

30% = Group project preparation & presentation

20% = Instructor & LA Coordinator evaluation of *AL Preview* meetings & *AL Classroom* sessions:  
- punctuality, content preparation, communication, engagement, improvement

- **Expectations & Penalties:**
  - LAs are expected to attend all *Pedagogy Group* meetings, *AL Preview* meetings & *AL Classroom* sessions with all necessary preparations.
  - LAs are expected to arrive to the *AL Classroom* at least 10 min prior to the start of class. If you cannot arrive on time, you are expected to notify the LA Coordinator as soon as possible.
  - Unexcused tardiness or absence from *AL Preview* meetings or *AL Classroom* session will result in a **5% grade deduction** from your overall grade for each instance.
  
- Students are responsible for keeping track of their own grades and identifying issues within 2 weeks of any grade posting in Webcourses. Letter grades will be awarded according to the scale below.

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A = 90-100%   B = 80-89%   C = 70-79%   D = 60-69%   F = 59% and below

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### **Course Policies:**

**Teaching Practices:** All Learning Assistants will meet with their specific course LA Coordinator (Ms. Yeargain, Dr. Tye, or Dr. Atkinson) for weekly *Active Learning Preview* meetings prior to each *Active Learning Classroom* session. During the *AL Preview* meeting, the LA Coordinator will brief LAs about the concepts that will be covered in the *AL Classroom* session. LAs will be expected to work through the AL worksheet beforehand to demonstrate that they know that material sufficiently to guide students in the classroom. LAs will work with each other to practice guided questions and collaborative learning.

During each *AL Classroom* session, the LA Coordinator will observe the LAs, model and encourage engagement and collaborative learning among classroom students and give feedback and advice during the next *AL Preview* meeting.

The role of an LA is to take part in active learning through *AL Classroom* sessions, and in some cases, proctoring. LAs will not be responsible for preparing test questions, grading, or taking over the office hours of the course LA Coordinator.

**Course Requirements:** LAs are required to attend every *Pedagogy Group* meeting at the time listed above. Equally important, LAs are required to be prepared for and attend every *AL Classroom* session. If you do not attend the *AL Preview* meeting, then you will not be allowed to facilitate the corresponding *AL Classroom* session. Tardiness to or absence from a *Pedagogy Group* meeting, *AL Preview* meeting, or *AL Classroom* session will result in a grade penalty (See details above, in **Grading**.)

**Missed Session/Late Assignment:** Most of the course assignments involve participation in real time so there are few opportunities for making up a missed/late session or assignment. An absence may be excused with proper documentation (see below) if approved by Instructor or LA Coordinator approves.

**Excused absence:** An official, documented, University-accepted absence includes special curricular requirements (*e.g.* field trip, professional conference), official UCF business at which your presence is required (*e.g.* university sponsored team event), U.S. Military-related business, legal obligation (*e.g.* jury duty).

- You must provide to Instructor or LA Coordinator documentation with your name and the date affected **1 week prior** to the scheduled meeting.
- **Emergency:** Any other legitimate documented reason that circumstances beyond your control prevented you from taking the scheduled exam (including, but not limited to, your hospitalization or a death in your immediate family) may be excused. *Official documentation from an appropriate authority (doctor, police, judge, etc.) must be **provided within 24 hours of the missed event**.* \*A doctor's note must be written on letterhead paper with a contact phone number and must document that a medical condition was treated or that a medical procedure or hospitalization occurred.

**Unexcused absence:** Absences that result from forgetting that there was an *AL Preview* or *AL Classroom* meeting, vacations, family gatherings or without acceptable documentation will be considered unexcused and subject to the 5% grade reduction for each event.

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**Weekly Pedagogy Meeting Schedule:**

- Pre-class: **Read & Submit** Reflection on weekly Pedagogy article (due Tues 12:30 pm)
- **Discuss** article or video
- **Engage** in group exercise

Date	Topic
1/9	1 - The LA Model
1/16	2 - Classroom discourse
1/23	3 - Questions & Questioning strategies
1/30	4 - Bloom's Taxonomy
2/6	5 - Challenging Group Work
2/13	6 - Mindset
2/20	7 - Misconceptions
2/27	8 - Mental models
3/5	9 - Constructing Knowledge
3/12	10 - Metacognition
3/19	SPRING BREAK
3/26	11 - Learning Assessment Design
4/2	12 - Diversity and Inclusion
4/9	Project presentations
4/16	Project presentations

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**Academic Integrity:** As reflected in the UCF creed, integrity and scholarship are core values that should guide our conduct and decisions as members of the UCF community. Plagiarism and cheating contradict these values and are serious academic offenses. Students enrolled at UCF are expected to familiarize themselves and uphold the standards of academic behavior defined in the University's *Rules of Conduct* (Section UCF-5.008) in the Golden Rule handbook <http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu>.

**Course Accessibility and Inclusion:** It is my goal that this class be an accessible and welcoming experience for all. UCF and I consider the diversity of our students, faculty, and staff to be a strength and critical to our educational mission. UCF expects every member of the university community to contribute to an inclusive and respectful culture for all in its classrooms, work environments, and at campus events. Dimensions of diversity can include sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, intellectual and physical ability, sexual orientation, income, faith and non-faith perspectives, socio-economic class, political ideology, education, primary language, family status, military experience, cognitive

style, and communication style. The individual intersection of these experiences and characteristics must be valued in our community.

If there are aspects of the design, instruction, or experiences within this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement, please notify me to discuss reasonable options or adjustments. You may also want to contact SAS <http://sas.sdes.ucf.edu> (Ferrell Commons 185; 407-823-2371) to talk about academic accommodations.

**Deployed Active-Duty Military Students:** Students who are deployed active-duty military or National Guard personnel and require accommodation should contact their instructors as soon as possible after the semester begins and/or after they receive notification of deployment to make arrangements.

**UCF Cares:** UCF and I care not only about your academic success, but also your overall well-being. Please visit UCFcares.com <http://cares.sdes.ucf.edu/> if you are seeking resources or support, or if you are worried about a friend or classmate. Free services and information are included for a variety of student concerns, including but not limited to alcohol use, bias incidents, mental health concerns, sexual harassment or assault, and financial challenges. You can also e-mail [ucfcares@ucf.edu](mailto:ucfcares@ucf.edu) with questions or for additional assistance. You can reach a UCF Cares staff member Student Care Services, <http://scs.sdes.ucf.edu>, Ferrell Commons 142, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. by calling 407-823-5607.

If you are in immediate distress, please call Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Counseling Center 101 <http://caps.sdes.ucf.edu> to speak directly with a counselor 24/7 at 407-823-2811, or call 911.

**Academic and Non-academic Services and Resources:** A list of available services is available at [UCF Student Services](#). Click on "Academic Support and Learning Services" or "Support" to filter.

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**Campus Safety Statement:** Emergencies on campus are rare, but if one should arise in our class, we will all need to work together. Everyone should be aware of the surroundings and familiar with some basic safety and security concepts.

- In case of an emergency, dial 911 for assistance.
- Every UCF classroom contains an emergency procedure guide posted on a wall near the door. Please make a note of the guide's physical location.
- Familiarize yourself with evacuation routes from each of your classrooms and have a plan for finding safety in case of an emergency.
- If there is a medical emergency during class, we may need to access a first aid kit or AED (Automated External Defibrillator). To learn where those items are located in any building, see <https://ehs.ucf.edu/automated-external-defibrillator-aed-locations> (In HEC, building 116, they are located near the 1st floor elevator).
- To stay informed about emergency situations, sign up to receive UCF text alerts by going to [my.ucf.edu](http://my.ucf.edu) and logging in. Click on "Student Self Service" located on the left side of the screen in the tool bar, scroll down to the blue "Personal Information" heading on your Student Center screen, click on "UCF Alert", fill out the information, including your e-mail address, cell phone number, and cell phone provider, click "Apply" to save the changes, and then click "OK."
- If you have a special need related to emergency situations, please speak with me during office hours.
- Consider viewing this video [You CAN survive an active shooter](#) about how to manage an active shooter situation on campus or elsewhere.

***The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus or other aspects of the course at any time. These changes will be announced in class or in Webcourses.***