

Instructor

Nature of Life Program Director, Frances Wood – fkwood@umn.edu

Moos Tower 5-220 (Department of Biology Teaching and Learning) – office hours by appointment

Course Basics

- **Course Website:** University of Minnesota (U of M) Canvas (<https://canvas.umn.edu>)
- **Course Meeting Time:** Online, with periodic in-person small group meetings.
- **Course Questions:** If you have general questions about the course that are not answered by reading the syllabus or Canvas, please email them to nol@umn.edu

Learning Objectives

The Nature of Life course series is designed to promote the success of each student who enters CBS. Personal self-awareness and the ability to adapt and course-correct based on experience and knowledge equips you to overcome challenges during college and beyond; these are desirable characteristics sought by professional schools and employers alike. Your work in the Nature of Life course series helps you to build and hone these skills.

Throughout this four-semester course series, you will:

- Engage with questions of identity, motivation and aspirations (e.g. What matters to me? Who do I want to become? How will I get there?);
- Develop skills in critical reflection and metacognition;
- Develop social and professional networks at the U of M;
- Explore and enrich your undergraduate experience using resources and experiencing events that interest you.

During BIOL 2906, you will:

- Access resources strategically in support of your goals and refine your personal picture of success through structured reflection;
- Connect with peers around a shared interest to provide accountability and motivation as you work to achieve an individual goal related to that theme.

Required Material

- BIOL 2906 Canvas Site: <https://canvas.umn.edu/courses/151801>
- The BIOL 2906 Canvas site contains all important and current information about the course. In the first week of the semester you should review it thoroughly and refer back to it regularly as the semester progresses.

Course Workload

This course has been designed to align with the University's workload formula of 2 hours of outside-class work for every hour in lecture. **To earn an 'S' in this 0.5 credit class, you should expect to spend a total of 25 hours (and average of ~1.5 hours/week) on course activities throughout the semester.** Always, the amount of time you spend on the course will be proportional to its impact. In other words, **you will get out of Nature of Life what you put into it.**

Course Components and Structure

You are the architect of your BIOL 2905/2906 experience. You will select the content that you want to focus on during the semester within this structure:

- **Complete one Individual-Choice Module of your choosing:** The module should take you 3 - 4 hours in total to complete across two weeks; all aspects of the module must be completed by the specified deadlines.
- **Complete the Progress Project:** A semester-long small group project that combines personal goal-setting with group accountability and support.
- **Complete the CBS Knowledge Assessment:** A college-wide effort to assess the effectiveness of the CBS curriculum. *Important:* no letter grade is associated with this knowledge assessment.

Full descriptions of each course component, its purpose and the specific instructions for each assignment within that component are available on the BIOL 2906 Canvas site.

Assignment Grading Criteria

When you complete work in BIOL 2906, e.g. an Individual-Choice Module discussion post or a Progress Project Update, the CBS Junior who is grading your work in the course will review the submission, add their comments and assign it a points value according to the rubric below.

Work completed with a “good faith effort” earns full credit and signifies successful completion of that assignment. In the context of BIOL 2906, a good faith effort is defined as thoughtful and complete work (e.g. answering all prompts in a given assignment, writing a response that observes the recommended word limit, etc.) which has been submitted by the deadline (10:00 pm on the specified date).

Assignment Rubric

Course Component	Quality of Participation/Submission and Points Earned
Individual-Choice Module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full credit (20 points) earned for work submitted by the deadline that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meets the “good faith effort” standard by addressing all reflection prompts in the assignment instructions and demonstrating thoughtful engagement with the topic by adhering to the recommended word count. ○ Demonstrates that all tasks specified in the assignment have been completed, e.g. module pre-work or online workshop content referenced in discussion posts. • Partial credit (10 points) earned for work submitted by the deadline that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does not respond to all assignment instructions or reflection prompts, falls substantially short of the recommended word count or is otherwise incomplete. • No credit (0 points) earned if no work is submitted by the deadline.
Progress Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full credit (20 points) earned for the Progress Project Focus Selection or Progress Project Update assignments for work submitted by the deadline that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meets the “good faith effort” standard by addressing all reflection prompts in the assignment instructions and demonstrating thoughtful engagement with the topic by adhering to the recommended word count. • Partial credit (10 points) earned for work submitted by the deadline that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does not respond to all assignment instructions or reflection prompts, falls substantially short of the recommended word count or is otherwise incomplete. • No credit (0 points) earned if no work is submitted by the deadline. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full credit (20 points) earned for the Progress Project small group meeting when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is held within the specified time window leading up to a Progress Project Update deadline. ○ Details about the meeting have been provided in the update and your meeting attendance can be verified with fellow group members. • No credit (0 points) earned if you do not attend the small group meeting.
CBS Knowledge Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full credit (20 points) earned when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Required CBS Knowledge Assessment is completed during an in-person proctored session.

Assignment Point Values and How to Pass the Course

Each assignment in BIOL 2906 is worth 20 or 40 points as shown in the following chart. It is possible to earn 200 points during BIOL 2906; to pass the course **you must earn at least 160/200 available points**. While you should plan to complete all elements of BIOL 2906, this means that you may miss up to two deadlines and still earn an S in the course. It is your responsibility to monitor your progress in the course and ensure that you are on track to earn an S.

Coursework Categories and Assignment Points Values

Coursework Category	Assignment	Points Possible
Individual-Choice Module	Week One: Module Pre-Work <i>and</i> Initial Discussion Post	20
	Week Two: Module Work <i>and</i> ≥ Two Discussion Replies	20
Progress Project	Progress Project Focus Selection	20
	Progress Project Update #1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend and participate in small group meeting – 20 points • Complete written reflection – 20 points 	40
	Progress Project Update #2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend and participate in small group meeting – 20 points • Complete written reflection – 20 points 	40
	Progress Project Update #3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend and participate in small group meeting – 20 points • Complete written reflection – 20 points 	40
CBS Knowledge Assessment	In-person knowledge assessment (required)	20
Maximum Points Available = 200		

Course and University Policies

Academic Integrity in the Nature of Life courses

As in all your academic courses at the University of Minnesota, your work in BIOL 2905/2906 is governed by the Student Conduct Code. Much of the work in this course relies on you to self-report your completion of specified tasks, e.g. meeting with a campus resource, attending a particular workshop, taking part in the Progress Project etc. Your honesty and academic integrity is expected and subject to the terms of the Scholastic Dishonesty policy stated here:

Code Subd. 1. Scholastic Dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarism; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, misrepresenting, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Student Conduct Code

The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry and that serves the educational mission of the University. Similarly, the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities and welfare of students, faculty, staff and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community. As a student at the University of Minnesota you are expected to adhere to Board of Regents Policy: Student Conduct Code. Please see here to review the full Student Conduct Code:

http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf.

Disability Accommodations

The University of Minnesota views disability as an important aspect of diversity and is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities (seen and unseen, permanent and temporary) to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations.

- **If you are registered with the DRC and have a disability accommodation letter dated for this semester or this year, please notify the Nature of Life Program Director, Frances Wood, early in the semester (or when accommodations are assessed and provided) to review how the accommodations will be applied in this course.**
- If you have, or think you have, a disability in any area such as mental health, attention, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical, please contact the DRC office on your campus (U of M Twin Cities - 612.626.1333) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.
- Students with short-term disabilities, such as a broken arm, can often work with instructors to minimize classroom barriers. In situations where additional assistance is needed, students should contact the DRC as noted above.
- If you are registered with the DRC and have questions or concerns about your accommodations please contact your access consultant/disability specialist.

Well-being, Mental Health and Stress Management:

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning such as increased anxiety, strained relationships, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. Such mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. U of M services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health website: <http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu/>. Please also find a 'Useful Resources' link on the front page of the BIOL 2906 Canvas website:

<https://canvas.umn.edu/courses/151801/pages/useful-resources>. Please know that the U of M has legal requirements to help protect and support students, satisfy title IX requirements and report sexual misconduct as per policy:

<https://policy.umn.edu/hr/sexharassassault>.