

## Syllabus for Fall 2021

### MCB 3421: Introduction to Molecular Evolution and Bioinformatics

[https://j.p.gogarten.uconn.edu/mcb3421\\_2021](https://j.p.gogarten.uconn.edu/mcb3421_2021)

**Prerequisites:** Recommended preparation: At least one 2000 level course in MCB.

**Grading Basis:** Graded

Evolution of biomolecules and application to molecular data analysis and the design of new molecules. Topics include prebiotic chemistry, origin of cells, selfish genes, molecular innovations, data bank searches, alignment of sequence and 3-D protein structures.

Course includes lectures, discussions, and computer lab exercises.

Mondays & Wednesdays 11.15AM-12.05PM, [UTEB 150](#)

Fridays 10:10AM - 11:40AM or 1:25PM - 2:55PM [Whetten Graduate Center 300A](#)

#### Instructors:

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#### Office hours

**JPG:** MW after class, or via webex after arrangement: for fast response send an [email!](#)

**SPG:** MW 2-3pm via webex in <https://uconn-cmr.webex.com/meet/spg11004>

For questions of general interest, use the bulletin board on huskyCT.

#### Basis for grading:

**Participation** (huskyct discussion board, in class discussions, in class pop-up quizzes),

**Computer lab worksheets,**

**Notebook (one reflective statement per lecture, detailed notes on computer labs)**

**Take-home exams,**

**Midterm,**

**Final.**

##### **Weights:**

20% Final

20% Midterm

10% Notebook

10% Computer Lab worksheets

10% Participation, bulletin board postings, pop-up quizzes, other in-class assignments:

30% Take-home assignments:

You can **drop the worst 4** grades from the Take Home Assignments – at least 8 will be offered

## Grading Scale:

Letter Grade	If your overall percentage is greater than or equal to this	and your overall percentage is less than this
A	93	—
A-	90	93
B+	87	90
B	83	87
B-	80	83
C+	77	80
C	73	77
C-	70	73
D+	67	70
D	63	67
D-	60	63
F	0	60

**Expectation:** More than 4h reading/studying per week (most will do fine with about 3-6h/week).

### Classroom Etiquette

*Cell Phones:* Cell phone use is only permitted for data recording (pictures, notes, etc) and is never permitted for texting, calls, apps not related to the class, or email.

*Computer Use:* Use of computers during lab sections should be limited to class materials.

*Masks:* To ensure a safe learning environment for everyone, the proper wearing of face masks will be strictly enforced. Both mouth and nose need to be covered. More information about proper usage of masks is available from UConn Environmental Health and Safety at this [link](#). If a student is not wearing a mask/face covering, they will be asked to put one on immediately or leave the classroom. Repeatedly failing to follow this expectation will result in a referral to Community Standards. Activities that involve temporarily removing the mask, such as eating or drinking are not allowed. Please leave the classroom for such activities. If an instructor is not wearing a mask/face covering, students should feel comfortable asking the instructor to put one on immediately.

Although at present social distancing will not be required inside classrooms for vaccinated individuals, please be respectful of the wishes of others who prefer to maintain social distancing. For their own protection, unvaccinated individuals are requested to maintain 6 feet social distancing from others.

### Our Philosophy

We believe in having a dynamic classroom, open to discussion, participation, and inquiry from all members of the class. We strive to establish a fair and balanced classroom where all students can participate.

### Learning objectives:

By the end of the semester students will be able to

1. visualize, analyze, and align protein structures
2. understand and apply the homology concept to nucleotide and amino acid sequences
3. judge the significance of similarity between sequences
4. perform database searches using NCBI's entrez interface
5. connect to the bioinformatics cluster using sftp and ssh
6. execute repetitive databank searches using the command line
7. understand the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to sequence alignment
8. perform dotplot analyses to compare genes and genomes and identify recombination events
9. reconstruct the evolutionary history of molecules from sequence data

10. understand different approaches to taxonomy – appreciate the book title “Why Fish Don't Exist”.
11. discuss and recognize the different forces acting in sequence evolution
12. discuss the role of vertical and horizontal inheritance in evolution
13. explain the concept of constructive neutral evolution
14. discuss the roles and contributions of introns, inteins and other genetic elements that function as molecular parasites in today's organisms
15. keep clear and informative electronic records of computational analyses.

### **Academic Honesty**

Academic misconduct is dishonest or unethical academic behavior that includes, but is not limited to: misrepresenting mastery in an academic area (e.g., cheating), intentionally or knowingly failing to properly credit information, research or ideas to their rightful originators or representing such information, research or ideas as your own (e.g., plagiarism). Examples of misconduct in this class include, but are not limited to: cheating on exams, plagiarism, turning in questions for fellow students, impersonating another student, falsifying data, copying, fabricating or stealing data. For more details on the University of Connecticut's policy on academic integrity, including the instructor's role and procedures you are referred to the following page and references therein:

<https://community.uconn.edu/the-student-code-appendix-a/>

**Plagiarism** and "collaborations" for writing assignments and take-home exams will not be tolerated!

In case of misconduct, **you will receive an F for the assignment, AND the F will count towards the final grade** (*i.e.*, you cannot drop an F due to academic misconduct). If, to answer a question on a take-home exam, you use information from a website (either verbatim or paraphrased) put in a reference to the website.

**Exam policy:** When students are forced to miss the final examination due to illness, accident, death in the family, or other unavoidable reasons they need to contact the Office of Student Services & Advocacy to receive approval to arrange another exam time. Students should present appropriate documentation to support their request. Students who have a conflict about which they have or should have had advanced notice (bunched finals, religious obligation, legal/medical appointments ...) should seek permission to reschedule their assessment **NO LATER THAN November 30th**.

If you need to reschedule your midterm or final exam, please let your instructor know ASAP.

The general policy for Syllabi, including links to the expected workload and class attendance is at <http://provost.uconn.edu/syllabi-references/>

**Switch to remote teaching due to covid19:** In case we need to switch to remote teaching due to an outbreak in class, or a worsening overall situation, we will use webex for synchronous lectures (MW, 11.10 am ET, and we will move the computer labs to your personal computers/laptops (10.05 am ET or 2.25 pm ET).

**Disability accommodation.** The Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at UConn provides accommodations and services for qualified students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability for which you wish to request academic accommodations and have not contacted the CSD, please do so as soon as possible. The CSD is located in Wilbur Cross, Room 204 and can be reached at (860) 486-2020 or at [csd@uconn.edu](mailto:csd@uconn.edu). Detailed information regarding the accommodations process is also available on their website at [www.csd.uconn.edu](http://www.csd.uconn.edu).

If you need any additional information on this course, please send an email to [gogarten@uconn.edu](mailto:gogarten@uconn.edu) !

## Very Preliminary Schedule

**red:** computer lab exercises in the Whetten Graduate Center 300A (F 10.10 -11.40 or 13.25-14.55);

**blue:** lectures, demonstrations, and discussions UTEB 150 (MW 11.15-12.05)

[Class 01](#): Overview; topics; textbook; reading materials; How will grades be calculated?

[Class 02](#): Homology, basics of protein structure

[Computer-lab assignment 01](#): Intro to chimera - binding pocket substrate interactions

[Class 03](#): ATPase structure, function, and evolution; the RNA world concept; discussion of homology

[Computer-lab assignment 02](#): Comparing structures for ancient duplicated genes / following a structure through the catalytic cycle

[Class 04](#): ATP binding sites and convergent evolution, natural selection and definitions of life

[Class 05](#): Divergence of sequences, symbiotic relationships, inteins

[Computer-lab assignment 03](#): Exploring intein structures in chimera

[Class 06](#): The tangled tree of life.

[Class 07](#): Mutationism and the Modern Synthesis ; Mutual Aid, HGT and endosymbiosis

[Computer-lab assignment 04](#): Literature Databanks and Entrez

[Class 08](#): Statistics of sequence comparison

[Class 09](#): Databanks, Blast, Unix

[Computer-lab assignment 05](#): Statistics of Sequence Comparison

[Class 10](#): Dayhoff and the history of bioinformatics

[Class 11](#): Strand-bias and recombination

[Computer-lab assignment 06](#): Blast searches using the command line

[Class 12](#): (A) cladistics (B) early humans

[Class 13](#): Ebola as an example for the usefulness of molecular evolution; review of endosymbiosis in eukaryotes

[Computer-lab assignment 07](#): Creating gene plots

Class 14: Review Session

### Midterm

[Computer-lab assignment 08](#): Gene plots, strand bias, and mummer

[Class 15](#): Gene duplication and post mating hybridization barriers, discussion lab 8, sequence alignment

[Class 16](#): Sequence alignment, multidimensional sequence space.

[Computerlab assignment 09](#): Dotlet and Jalview exercises on repetitive motifs, introns and sequence space.

[Class 17](#): Introns late versus introns early

[Class 18](#): Intro to trees and phylogenies

[Computerlab assignment 10](#): Phylogenies, bootstrap, model tests, LBA

[Class 19](#): Discussion of LBA, Why can gene trees be in conflict?

[Class 20](#): selection, deterministic models, genetic drift

[Computerlab assignment #11](#): Simple scripts to handle genome sized data sets

[Class 21](#): Detecting positive and purifying selection

[Class 22](#): dN/dS continued

[Computerlab assignment #12](#): Bayesian analysis to determine evolutionary parameters in sequences.

[Class 23](#): Types of selection / GTAs and purifying selection

[Class 24](#): Intro to PSI blast.

[Computerlab assignment #13](#): PSI blast exercises

[Class 25](#): Discussion of PSIBlast lab, CNE, early Earth and bottlenecks

Class 26: Review session

[Computerlab assignment #14](#): Phylogenetic analysis of an intein containing gene

### Final