



UTTyler™

DEPARTMENT OF
CHEMISTRY & BIOCHEMISTRY

Seminar **CHEM 4191** Syllabus

Spring 2026

The University of Texas at Tyler
3900 University Blvd.
Tyler, TX 75799

Table of Contents

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Course Description | 2 |
| Class & Instructor Info | 2 |
| Course Overview | 2 |
| Learning Outcomes | 3 |
| Materials Required | 3 |
| Topic Selection | 3 |
| Course Grading | 4 |
| Assignment Descriptions | 4 |
| Dropping the Course | 4 |
| Course Schedule | 5 |
| University Policies | 6 |

Meeting Times and Dates

Semester runs from Jan 12 to May 2

| Section | Time | Room | Instructor |
|---------|----------------------|----------|---------------------|
| 001 | Fri 12:20 PM—1:15 pm | RBS 1031 | Mr. Jason DiStefano |



Instructor Contact Information

| Instructor of Record | Office | Office Hours | Email | Phone |
|---------------------------------|----------|---|------------------------|--------------|
| Mr. Jason DiStefano Lecturer | RBS 3006 | Wednesday 2:00—4:00pm Friday 1:00—4:00pm | jdistefano@uttyler.edu | 903.566.7185 |

Course Description

Chemistry is an experimental science. Chemical knowledge and results have resulted from experimental observations and studies made by thousands of scientists over many centuries. Communicating chemical information effectively is key for the scientific community to advance. In Seminar (CHEM 4191), students will learn to interpret and disseminate chemical information by researching a current literature topic and presenting the information at a formal oral presentation session.

Prerequisite: Senior standing and credit for Chemical Literature (CHEM 4190).

Course Overview

This course is the second of a 2-semester capstone sequence for the B.S. degrees in Chemistry and Biochemistry. It is designed to teach you how to perform one of the most important jobs of any chemist, the interpretation and dissemination of chemical information. Scientists communicate the fruits of their labor mostly in written form (i.e. scientific articles, textbooks, short communications, and reviews). Conferences and other forms of verbal communication; however, are also vitally important. Success in such endeavors is an important part of getting other scientists to take your ideas and results seriously. Good communications skills are also important in getting and maintaining a job. Thus, any training to becoming a successful chemist must contain significant literature and presentation components, which will be developed throughout this course.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate the ability to acquire, evaluate, and integrate information from the chemical literature.
- Prepare a clear, concise abstract.
- Prepare a formal oral presentation supplemented with a slide show presentation program
- Discuss a chosen topic with a faculty mentor
- Effectively organize and present the scientific information verbally and in writing at an oral presentation session.

In addition to the core objectives, students will also be expected to:

- Attend lectures on science literacy and proper research of chemical literature
- Access the chemical literature and develop a slide show presentation
- Participate in the faculty mentorship program
- Prepare a one-paragraph abstract for the topic to be presented
- Create and present a general online lecture
- Prepare an oral scientific presentation and present it at an oral presentation session

Materials Required for the Course:

- **Computer Access:** with PowerPoint, Word, Publisher, Zoom, or similar software suitable for the course.
- **Communication:** This course will be hosted on UT Tyler's Canvas server. You may access your Canvas account online at <https://www.uttyler.edu/canvas>. This site will contain a significant amount of information that will help you in this course in addition to being the medium through which you may access your current grade.
I will mostly contact you through Canvas, so be sure you have your account to receive alerts. I am not responsible for you not receiving announcements pertaining to this course. I will also occasionally send information to you via email. You will need to make sure you are checking your Patriots email account regularly.
- A curious mind and a good attitude

Topic Selection

- Your topic needs to have a strong chemical or biochemical focus in terms of synthesis, characterization, and/or biological effects. It is HIGHLY recommended that this topic comes from a reputable, peer-reviewed journal. Your instructor/mentor can help guide you, but don't wait until the last moment. Pick a topic you are interested in, not just one that is easy. If you are not excited about your topic, how can you expect anyone else to be?
- **Take pride in your presentation.** One of the main purposes of this course is for you to demonstrate what you have learned. Not taking this course seriously will not only hurt your grade in this course, but it may also have a negative impact on letters of recommendation.

Course Grading

Your overall course grade will tentatively be based on the 90/80/70/60 percentage scale, but it may be adjusted based upon your instructor's judgment of the overall class performance. The weighted averages for each assignment is shown below.

Seminar Presentation:

The main focus of this course is to teach you how to research the literature in order to design and present an oral scientific presentation of someone else's research. The presentation is an excellent way for a researcher to share that most recent findings of their project. It also provides the scientific community the opportunity to observe the latest research amongst multiple disciplines and topics in one session meeting. Throughout the semester, you will build the skills needed to design a high quality, professional slide show presentation. You will then present that in the same manner that is frequently done at local, regional, and national meetings such as ACS.

Group Presentations:

As stated above, this course will teach you how to design a high quality, professional poster that are frequently used as a form of communication with the scientific community. I understand that this may be your first formal presentation to develop in your scientific career. Therefore, we will have weekly group presentations to give you practice with presenting. These presentations will help you build skills in efficient literature searching, dissecting articles, writing scientifically, and developing a scientific presentation. This will also give you practice presenting in front of live audiences.

Assignments:

While the seminar presentation is the main focus of this course and your overall grade, the secondary focus is building time management and professional skills. Regardless of your plans after graduation, (grad school, post-baccalaureate program, workforce, etc.), developing skills for oral presentations are crucial for your success. Your employer/advisor will most likely require you to give presentations for multiple reasons. Therefore, additional oral presentations will be assigned and used to calculate your final course grade. Additionally, meeting with your mentor is a requirement and will also be assessed. See the section below on submitting work late.

The grades for this course will be weighted as follows:

| | |
|------|----------------------|
| 50% | Seminar Presentation |
| 10% | Group Presentations |
| 10% | Assignments |
| 20% | Mentor Meetings |
| 10% | Attendance |
| 100% | Total* |

*Students must score within the 30th percentile or better on the DUCK exam to pass this course.

Mentorship Program:

Mentorship is essential because it provides guidance, support, and knowledge sharing that fosters personal and professional growth. Your assigned mentor is committed to help you navigate this challenging process of understanding the chemistry and communicating the science. They also help build confidence and develop skills, while offering insights from their own experiences. This relationship accelerates learning, expands networks, and empowers the student to achieve their goals and unlock their potential. You are required to meet with your mentor on three separate occasions to be approved for final presentation. Completion of the program is also worth 15% of your overall grade.

Attendance

This is a presentation based course that relies heavily of participation. Throughout the course, students will give oral presentations that showcases their progress. Student feedback will be important to you and your colleagues. Furthermore, this is a dynamic course that requires student interaction. Therefore, it is vital that you attend each meeting.

Diagnostic Undergraduate Chemistry Knowledge (DUCK) Exam:

All students must take the Diagnostic Undergraduate Chemistry Knowledge (DUCK) exam and score 30th percentile or better to be approved for graduation.

Assignment Past Due Date Policy:

All due dates and/or times are "set in stone" and nonnegotiable (unless unforeseen circumstances require changes). Assignments can be turned in after the due date but will incur a 20% per business day grade reduction. The first reduction occurs immediately after the due date and time. Subsequent reductions occur every 24 hours after the due date and time. Weekend days (Saturday and Sunday) do not count in the grade reduction.

Course Schedule

| <u>Day:</u> | <u>Class Schedule</u> |
|-------------|--|
| Jan 16 | Introduction to course, syllabus, and schedule |
| Jan 23 | Lecture: <i>Designing a Slide Show Presentation</i> |
| Jan 30 | Lecture: <i>Elevating Your Slide Show Presentation</i> |
| Feb 6 | Personal Workshop and/or Meet with Mentor Due: Mentor Sign-Off 1 |
| Feb 13 | DUCK Exam—Must be taken this week. 110 minutes required; schedule with instructor. |
| Feb 20 | Seminar Practice (10 minute)—Group A |
| Feb 27 | Seminar Practice (10 minute)—Group B |
| Mar 6 | Seminar Practice (10 minute)—Group C Due: Online Presentation 1 |
| Mar 13 | Spring Break—Class will not meet this week |
| Mar 20 | Personal Workshop and/or Meet with Mentor Due: Mentor Sign-Off 2 |
| Mar 27 | Seminar Practice (10 minute)—Group D |
| Apr 3 | Seminar Practice (10 minute)—Group E Due: Online Presentation 2 |
| Apr 10 | Seminar Practice (10 minute)—Group F Due: Final Abstract |
| Apr 17 | Personal Workshop and/or Meet with Mentor Due: Mentor Sign-Off 3 & Approval |
| Apr 20-24 | Presentation Week. Scheduled presentations will not be during class time Due: Final Presentation Copy (must upload to Canvas for credit) |
| May 1 | Final Exam Week — Class will not meet this week |

Note: the right to substitute or switch dates, as required by unforeseen circumstances, is reserved.

University Policies & Important Information

Withdrawing from Class

Students may withdraw (drop) from this course using the Withdrawal Portal. Withdrawing (dropping) this course can impact your Financial Aid, Scholarships, Veteran Benefits, Exemptions, Waivers, International Student Status, housing, and degree progress. Please speak with your instructors, consider your options, speak with your advisor, and visit the One-Stop Service Center (STE 230) or email enroll@uttyler.edu to get a complete review of your student account and the possible impacts to withdrawing. We want you to make an informed decision. UT Tyler faculty and staff are here for you and often can provide additional support options or assistance. Make sure to carefully read the implications for withdrawing from a course and the instructions on using the Withdrawal portal..

Texas law prohibits students from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career*. The six courses dropped includes those from other 2-year or 4-year Texas public colleges and universities. Consider the impact withdrawing from this class has on your academic progress and other areas, such as financial implications. We encourage you to consult your advisor(s) and Enrollment Services for additional guidance. **CAUTION #1:** Withdrawing before census day does not mean you get a full refund. Please see the Tuition and Fee Refund Schedule. **CAUTION #2:** All international students must check with the Office of International Programs before withdrawing. All international students are required to enroll full-time for fall and spring terms. **CAUTION #3:** All UT Tyler Athletes must check with the Athletic Academic Coordinator before withdrawing from a course. **CAUTION #4:** All veterans or military-affiliated students should consult with the Military and Veterans Success Center.

* Students who began college for the first time before 2007 are exempt from this law.

Final Exam Policy

Final examinations are administered as scheduled. If unusual circumstances require that special arrangements be made for an individual student or class, the Dean of the appropriate college, after consultation with the faculty member involved, may authorize an exception to the schedule. Faculty members must maintain student final examination papers for a minimum of three months following the examination date.

Incomplete Grade Policy

If a student, because of extenuating circumstances, is unable to complete all of the requirements for a course by the end of the semester, then the instructor may recommend an Incomplete (I) for the course. The "I" may be assigned in place of a grade *only when all of the following conditions are met:* (a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all coursework or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor, and (c) the student presents these reasons before the time that the final grade roster is due. The semester credit hours for an Incomplete will not be used to calculate the grade point average.

The student and the instructor must submit an Incomplete Form detailing the work required and the time by which the work must be completed to their respective department chair or college dean for approval. The time limit established must not exceed one year. Should the student fail to meet all of the work for the course within the time limit, then the instructor may assign zeros to the unfinished work, compute the course average for the student, and assign the appropriate grade. If a grade has yet to be assigned within one year, then the Incomplete will be changed to an F, or NC. If the course was initially taken under the CR/NC grading basis, this may adversely affect the student's academic standing.

Grade Appeal Policy

Disputes regarding grades must be initiated within sixty (60) days from the date of receiving the final course grade by filing a Grade Appeal Form with the instructor who assigned the grade. A grade appeal should be used when the student thinks the final course grade awarded does not reflect the grades earned on assessments or follow the grading scale as documented in the syllabus. The student should provide the rationale for the grade appeal and attach supporting document about the grades earned. The form should be sent via email to the faculty member who assigned the grade. The faculty member reviews the rationale and supporting documentation and completes the instruction section of the form. The instructor should return the form to the student, even if a grade change is made at this level. If the student is not satisfied with the decision, the student may appeal in writing to the Chairperson of the department from which the grade was issued. In situations where there is an allegation of capricious grading, discrimination, or unlawful actions, appeals may go beyond the Chairperson to the Dean or the Dean's designee of the college from which the grade was issued, with that decision being final. The Grade Appeal form is found in the Registrar's Form Library.

NOTE: The Grade Appeal Form is different from the Application for Appeal form submitted to the Student Appeals Committee, which does not rule on grade disputes as described in this policy.

Students on an F-1 Visa

To remain in compliance with Federal Regulations requirements you must do the following:

- Traditional face-to-face classes: Attend classes on the regular meeting days/times.
- Hybrid Classes: Attend all face-to-face classes convened by the instructor according to the schedule set for your specific course.
- Online course: Only one online course can count toward your full-time enrollment. Students are expected to be fully engaged and meet all requirements for the online course.

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>.

University Policies & Important Information

Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical, and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler/> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with the Assistant Director Student Accessibility and Resources/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <https://www.uttyler.edu/disability-services>, the SAR office located in the Robert Muntz Library, LIB 460, email saroffice@uttyler.edu, or call 903.566.7079."

Military Affiliated Students

UT Tyler honors the service and sacrifices of our military-affiliated students. If you are a student who is a veteran, on active duty, in the reserves or National Guard, or a military spouse or dependent, please stay in contact with your faculty member if any aspect of your present or prior service or family situation makes it difficult for you to fulfill the requirements of a course or creates disruption in your academic progress. It is important to make your faculty member aware of any complications as far in advance as possible. Your faculty member is willing to work with you and, if needed, put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you. The [Military and Veterans Success Center \(MVSC\)](#) has campus resources for military-affiliated students. The MVSC can be reached at MVSC@uttyler.edu or via phone at 903.565.5972.

Academic Honesty and Academic Misconduct

The UT Tyler community comes together to pledge that "Honor and integrity will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do." Therefore, we enforce the [Student Conduct and Discipline policy](#) in the Student Manual Of Operating Procedures (Section 8).

FERPA

UT Tyler follows the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as noted in [University Policy 5.2.3](#). The course instructor will follow all requirements to protect your confidential information.

Absence for Official University Events or Activities

This course follows the practices related to [Excused Absences for University Events or Activities](#) as noted in the Catalog.

Absence for Religious Holidays

This course follows the practices related to [Excused Absences for Religious Holy Days as noted in the Catalog](#).

Absence for Pregnant Students

This course follows the requirements of Texas Laws SB 412, SB 459, SB 597/HB 1361 to meet the needs of pregnant and parenting students. Part of the supports afforded pregnant students includes excused absences. Faculty who are informed by a student of needing this support should make a referral to the Parenting Student Liaison. NOTE: Students must work with the Parenting Student Liaison in order to receive these supports. Students should reach out to the Parenting Student Liaison at parents@uttyler.edu and also complete the [Pregnant and Parenting Self-Reporting Form](#).

Recording of Class Sessions

Class sessions may be recorded by the instructor for use by students enrolled in the course. Recordings that contain personally identifiable information or other information subject to FERPA shall not be shared with individuals not enrolled in the course unless appropriate consent is obtained from all relevant students. Class recordings are reserved only for the use of students enrolled in the course and only for educational purposes. Course recordings should not be shared outside of the course in any form without express permission.

Artificial Intelligence Statement

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy. *Refer to the About This Course section of the UT Tyler Syllabus Module for specific information on appropriate use of AI in your course(s).*

For this course, AI is not permitted in this course at all. I expect all work students submit for this course to be their own. To best support your learning, you must complete all graded assignments by yourself to assist in your learning. This exclusion of other resources to help complete assignments includes artificial intelligence (AI). Refrain from using AI tools to generate any course context (e.g., text, video, audio, images, code, etc.) for an assignment or classroom assignment.

Student Resources

Resources to assist you in the course

- [UT Tyler Student Accessibility and Resource \(SAR\) Office](#) (provides needed accommodations to students with document needs related to access and learning)
- [UT Tyler Writing Center](#)
- [The Mathematics Learning Center](#)
- [UT Tyler PASS Tutoring Center](#)
- [UT Tyler Supplemental Instruction](#)
- [Upswing \(24/7 online tutoring\) - covers nearly all undergraduate course areas](#)
- [Robert Muntz Library](#) and [Library Liaison](#)
- [Canvas 101](#) (learn to use Canvas, proctoring, Unicheck, and other software)
- Digital Support Toolkit (for supported courses only. Students are automatically enrolled in the toolkit for supported courses)
- LIB 422 -- Computer Lab where students can take a proctored exam
- [The Career Success Center](#)
- [UT Tyler Testing Center](#)
- [Office of Research & Scholarship Design and Data Analysis Lab](#)

Resources available to UT Tyler Students

- [UT Tyler Counseling Center](#) (available to all students)
- [MySSP App](#) (24/7 access to Student Support Program counseling through phone or chat and online wellness resources available in a variety of languages)
- [Student Assistance and Advocacy Center](#)
- [Military and Veterans Success Center](#) (supports for our military-affiliated students)
- [UT Tyler Patriot Food Pantry](#)
- [UT Tyler Financial Aid and Scholarships](#)
- [UT Tyler Student Business Services](#) (pay or set up payment plans, etc.)
- [UT Tyler Registrar's Office](#)
- [Office of International Programs](#)
- [Title IX Reporting](#)
- [Patriots Engage](#) (available to all students. Get engaged at UT Tyler.)