

Syllabus: MICB-549 — Student Seminar Series

Credit: 1 unit

Meeting time: Wednesdays from 11:00–11:50 a.m.

Location: McKibben Hall 256 (MCK-256)

Course Coordinator: Axel H. Schönthal

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Course Background

MICB-549 is a seminar course where third-semester students (or rarely fourth-semester students) present their ongoing hands-on laboratory research. Each session has 1 student presenter, who will give a 30–40-minute summary of his/her work. Frequent interruptions due to questions from the audience (i.e., the other students in this course and the course director, as well as the presenting student's thesis committee) should be expected and considered during the assembly of the presentation. Second-semester students are welcome to audit this course for credit, but without a presentation; they are encouraged to actively participate with frequent questions for the presenter.

Course Objectives

Objectives for the presenter:

- (i) To provide a detailed overview, within the appropriate scientific background, of his/her work performed in the laboratory, including the introduction of experimental approaches, presentation of expected and unexpected outcomes, and discussion of scientific relevance and novelty of these findings. What was learned from this work and how did it advance general scientific knowledge? What are the next experiments that need to be done?
 - ◆ *For third-semester students:* In case of few (or no) results, the emphasis of the presentation should be on ideas, rationale, objectives, research strategy, and experiments that are planned for the rest of the semester. In this case, the course objective is to receive constructive feedback from the audience (students and faculty members) toward optimized progress and productivity of the project, in particular to get the project off the ground and obtain useful results. Usually, this is the first opportunity for the student's thesis committee to receive an overview of the student's research objectives, progress to date, and planned experiments; constructive feedback and guidance from the committee should be expected.
 - ◆ *For fourth-semester students:* A polished, detailed research presentation in a professional format is expected. In this case, the course objective is to evaluate the student's academic performance, in particular his/her ability to develop and execute a research project, and to present and explain this project in a professional manner.

Objectives for the student audience:

- (i) To witness ongoing biomedical research projects, gain insight into the design of experimental approaches, and practice the active participation in a research presentation (= asking frequent questions). Each student is expected to ask at least 1 question during each session.

Suggested Reading for Seminar Preparation

The Internet is a vast source of information. Do a search on *How to prepare a seminar presentation*, which will yield millions of hits. Useful examples are:

1. Guidelines for the Preparation and Delivery of a Seminar:
<http://www2.cs.uregina.ca/~hilder/cs499-900/Presentation%20Guidelines.pdf>
2. How to prepare and deliver a presentation:
<http://mi.eng.cam.ac.uk/~cipolla/archive/Presentations/MakingPresentations.pdf>

The above 2 examples will be posted as PDFs on Blackboard. Students are encouraged to review additional examples on the Internet.

Grading

Students will be evaluated on the following 4 criteria:

- (i) How thoughtful was slide assembly and overall seminar preparation?
- (ii) How well and how effectively was the seminar content delivered? Did the presenter try to engage the audience? Did the presenter provide opportunities for questions?
- (iii) How active was the student as a member of the audience (e.g., asking questions)?
- (iv) How consistent was the student's attendance in the course (arrival on time, attending each session)?

*The following 3 criteria **will not** be considered for grading:*

- (i) How extensive was the research and how many experiments were performed?
- (ii) How many positive results were obtained?
- (iii) Are there any manuscripts in preparation or published from this work?

Attendance

If a student misses more than 10% of the class sessions, a valid justification has to be submitted to the course director in person or by email. Examples of valid justifications include: (i) illness (*documented by a doctor's note*), or (ii) attendance of a symposium (*documented by a copy of the registration, or by email from the student's P.I.*). Not acceptable excuses are, for example: (i) "*I have to run an experiment*", or (ii) "*I need to attend a wedding*" (unless it is your own, in which case documentation is required).

If a student misses more than 1 session without a valid justification, or frequently arrives late, the final grade will be lowered.

If a student misses $\geq 25\%$ of the sessions, the student will receive a grade of IN (incomplete) if the absences were due to valid justifications, or a grade of F if there were no acceptable excuses.

P.I. and Committee Participation

It is strongly advised that the respective lab mentor/professor of the presenting student attends the presentation (lab members are welcome, too). The student should inform his/her professor well in advance (as early as possible) of the scheduled seminar date, time and location.

At the beginning of the third semester, the presenter needs to assemble his/her Master's Thesis Committee and invite all members of this committee to the presentation. It's often difficult to get several faculty members together at the same place and time, but the student should aim to have at least 2 committee members present. Most times, the lab P.I. is a member of the committee—and usually acts as the Chair of the committee. If in doubt how to pick members for your committee, see the website:

<https://serialmentor.com/blog/2014/1/26/how-to-pick-a-thesis-committee>

Presentation Schedule

The general presentation schedule will be provided separately.

Academic Conduct

see next page

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STANDARDS

The University prides itself in maintaining high academic integrity standards. The entire academic community benefits from the adherence to such standards. An academic integrity overview, including descriptions of dishonest acts and consequences for students found responsible, is available online at: <https://sjacs.usc.edu/students/academic-integrity/>.

Further information, including a number of tutorials for students, can be found online at: <https://libraries.usc.edu/research/reference-tutorials>. This website has tutorials such as: how to avoid plagiarism, how to prevent academic dishonesty, how to manage your research, and other useful how-to tools and tutorials.

ACADEMIC CONDUCT

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in Section 11 of the *SCampus* publication (online at: <https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus>).

Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, ASSAULT

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://dps.usc.edu/>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention (RSVP) Services at <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/> provide 24/7 confidential support, and the Sexual Assault Resource Center webpage <https://sarc.usc.edu/> describes reporting options and other resources.

OTHER SUPPORT SYSTEMS

A number of USC schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.