

# **BISC 593 Practicum in Teaching Biological Sciences**

**Instructors:** Rory Spence, PhD,  
Office hours: by appointment via zoom.  
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## **Time and Place**

Tuesdays, 12:30-2, Zoom

## **TEXT: not applicable**

I will provide supplemental reading and visual information for you on Blackboard.

## **I. Learning outcomes**

1. Develop an appreciation for pedagogical methods in science.
2. Develop the ability to properly apply pedagogical methods in science.
3. Understand teaching technology and resources specific to teaching science at USC.
4. Improve skills for communicating ideas, both orally and in writing.

## **II. Course Description**

This is a 2-credit TA training course designed specifically for graduate students in the Molecular and Computational sections of the Department of Biological Sciences, USC Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. One of the main goals of the course is to help students to become thoughtful and inspiring teachers, encouraging not just their immediate success in the classroom, but their long-term development as teachers. In addition to the basic teaching skills, the course will also focus on specific challenges and strategies in teaching Molecular Biology and Computational Biology. Concurrent registration or prior completion of this course is a condition of being assigned a first Teaching Assistantship in Molecular and Computational Biology.

## **III. Grading**

This course will be taught Credit/No Credit. Each student will be assigned to give more than one presentation (specific number depends on the students enrolled in the class) that will be critiqued by the rest of the class. The instructor will lead and coordinate the critique discussion. At the end of discussion, an evaluation form will be filled out to give the presenter feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the presentation and suggestions of improvement. Credit will be based on quality of presentation, class participation and reading assignments.

## IV. SCHEDULE

Week 1, Course Introduction, Teaching Tools (Zoom and Blackboard), Q/A

Week 2, Pedagogical Methods in Science, Building Community Remotely

Week 3, DPS, Testing, Grading and Cheating,

Week 4, Teaching Technology and Resources

Week 5, Q&A with Experienced TA's

Weeks 6-15, Q/A, Student presentations, followed by class discussion

## V. 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 *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). 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>.

## VI. Support Systems

*Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. [engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling)

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255*

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. [engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp)

*Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: [sarc.usc.edu](http://sarc.usc.edu)

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086*

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. [equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu)

*Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

*Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)

*Diversity at USC*

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. [diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

*USC Emergency Information*

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

*USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.*

Provides overall safety to USC community. [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)