

Keck School of Medicine of USC

Syllabus: MICB 549 — Student Seminar Series

Term: Fall 2024

Credit: 1 unit

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

Location: KAM B40/42 (Keith Administration, Basement)

First Day of Class: August 28th, 2024

Course Coordinator: Axel H. Schönthal

Contact: schontha@usc.edu

Syllabus version: 2.0 (August 14, 2024)

Course Background

MICB 549 is a seminar course where second-year 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 members of the presenting student's thesis committee) should be expected and considered during the assembly of the presentation.

First-year 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. Participation of students in their first or second semester (without a presentation) is encouraged; however, irrespective of students' audit during their first year, all students are required to enroll in this course during their third semester (i.e., at the beginning of the second year in the program, which typically is the Fall semester) and present a seminar.

Course Objectives

Objectives for the presenter:

- (i) To present ongoing research in a succinct manner, both in writing and verbally.
 - ◆ In writing: Complete the ABSTRACT form page describing the ongoing research.
 - ◆ Verbally: Present a seminar describing the ongoing research.
- (ii) 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?
 - ◆ 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 year. 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.

- ◆ A further 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 all students in the 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.
2. How to prepare and deliver a presentation.

Grading

Students will be evaluated on the following 5 criteria:

- (i) Was the ABSTRACT form page submitted on time (see below)? Was it filled in completely and in a sensible manner? Did it succinctly summarize the ongoing research?
- (ii) How thoughtful was slide assembly and overall seminar preparation?
- (iii) 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?
- (iv) How active was the student as a member of the audience (e.g., asking questions and providing suggestions)?
- (v) 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?

ABSTRACT Form Page

The ABSTRACT form page will be provided through BrightSpace. It is a fillable PDF, where the student can enter content. Each fill-box has limited space; once the limit is reached, no more text can be entered (any further text will be invisible to the reader). There are 2 requirements for providing this form page:

- i. The completed form page must be emailed to all course participants (= students + presenter's thesis committee + course director) at the latest 48 hours before the respective student's seminar presentation. This means that the deadline is 11 o'clock a.m. on the Monday preceding the student's presentation on the following Wednesday.
- ii. The completed form page must be printed as a hard copy and distributed to each student at the time of start of class on the day when the respective student presents his/her work.

Missing one or both of the above requirements will result in a lowered final grade at the end of the course. For example, a grade of B+ will be lowered to a grade of B.

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 you should invite the class).

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 2 (or more) 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, discuss the issue with your lab P.I. or contact the course director, Prof. Schönthal.

Fellow lab members of the presenting student are welcome to attend the presentation.

Presentation Schedule

The general presentation schedule will be provided separately.

Academic Conduct and Support Systems

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.

Students and Disability Accommodations

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. DSP is located in GFS-120 (University Park Campus) and is open 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Stress Management

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the Eric Cohen Student Health Center on this campus (the Health Sciences Campus, HSC). The phone number is (323) 442-5631 and the website is <http://ecohenshc.usc.edu>. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

Student Counseling Services

Tel: (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.
<https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Tel: 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. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

Beyond Academic Challenges

Balancing course work, midterms, finals, and laboratory research presents a challenge and at times can feel overwhelming. On top of that, many students are far away from home and family, perhaps even their country and their native language, which can feel quite depressing. Sometimes, relationship problems come up and make life miserable. But no matter the problem, USC offers resources to help students deal with depression, anxiety, and other types of distress. USC's services are not only geared toward helping students with academic challenges, but also with personal problems. Students in need should not hesitate to take advantage of the services that are listed above (and on the next page); there is no need to feel embarrassed or ashamed. USC is offering these services and resources so that students are in the best position to meet their academic and personal goals.

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
sites.google.com/usc.edu/counseling-mental-health

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call
988lifeline.org

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call
sites.google.com/usc.edu/rsvpclientservices/home

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086
eetix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776
osas.usc.edu

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 740-0411
campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101
diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, *HSC:* (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, *HSC:* (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)
ombuds.usc.edu

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu
chan.usc.edu/patient-care/faculty-practice

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.