BINF704 Fall 2025

INSTRUCTOR - Jeff Solka Ph.D., jsolka@gmu.edu

OFFICE HOURS – By appointment.  
  
PLACE AND TIME - Course fully asynchronous.

PURPOSE of the COURSE  
This course serves to train students in understanding scientific presentations and publications while simultaneously giving them a rudimentary capability to craft a colloquium style presentation based on a journal article.  
  
EXPECTATIONS - Students are expected to **record a presentation** on a journal paper as chosen by them, **watch 4 online presentations from outside speakers**, and **answer quizzes on 2** of them and provide **write-ups on 2** of them. Ideally the paper presented should be related to the student's ongoing research and the student is free to present on ongoing research. Alternatively, students can present on a paper of the professor's choosing. **Ideally students will present in teams of 2 where each team will have 45 minutes to present. Depending on enrollment in the course students may have to individually present. The audio from these presentations will be recorded using this feature in Microsoft PowerPoint.** **Students will be required to speak a professor provided code word during their presentation.** This **code word** will be used to validate that their fellow students actually watched the presentations when they score them.

**All student presentations will be due to Blackboard by 6:00 pm Monday October 20, 2025.**

In addition, students are expected to submit 2 in-depth write-ups, 7-10 pages 14pt single spaced, on external speaker presentations. Write-ups should minimally provide a summarization of the talk in the student's own words. Any insights into the research discussed in the talk should be presented within the body of the write-up. **One of these writeups will be due by 6:00 pm Monday October 20, 2025 and one will be due by 6:00 pm Monday December 8, 2025. In addition, one quiz will be due by 6:00 pm Monday October 20, 2025 and the second quiz is due by Monday 6:00 pm December 8, 2025.**

Finally, students are expected to evaluate each of the student presentations on a 100-point scale as follows  
  
33 pts - Presentation Content  
33pts - Organization of the Talk  
34 pts - Student's Understanding of Material

**All of these ratings will be due by 6:00 pm Monday December 8, 2025.**

**When one turns in the grade for a talk via Blackboard they are also expected to submit a code word which is embedded in the audio track of the talk.** All course material will be submitted via Blackboard and students are expected to use the course Blackboard Wiki to select presentation partners.

GRADING - Students grades will be calculated in the following manner.

20% Quiz Grades

20% Fellow Student Presentation Scoring  
30% Course Presentation  
30% Presentation Write-ups  
  
Grading will be on the following scale. 93-100  (A), 90-92 (A-), 87-89 (B+), 83-86 (B), 80-82(B-), less than 80 (C). Student averages will be rounded to the closest integer to determine final letter grades.

**The four external speaker talks and the associated quizzes will be listed on Blackboard by 9/3/24.**

There is no final exam for the course, but the students are encouraged to attend semester end student research presentations if conducted by the department.

**Late work policy**

Late work in the class will not be accepted except in the case of documented medical emergency.