

MDSC 561/CMMB 561
Cancer Biology

Course coordinator & instructor:

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Instructors:

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Office Hours/Policy on Answering Student Emails

Please note that all course communications must occur through your @ucalgary email, and the instructors will attempt to respond to emails sent via student's @ucalgary emails within 48 hours (excluding weekends and statutory holidays).

Time and Location:

Tuesdays and Thursdays between January 13th and April 14th, 3:30pm – 4:45pm (see class schedule for specific dates) Check D2L for location

Prerequisite/Co-Requisite:

Biochemistry 341 or 393; and Medical Science 341 or Biology 311; and Medical Science 351 or Biology 331; and Medical Science 408 or Cellular, Molecular and Microbial Biology 411

Course Description:

Advances in methodology and in theoretical concepts have permitted continuing breakthroughs in our understanding of the organismal, cellular and molecular biology of cancer cells, and in the development of novel strategies for cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment. These advances will be presented in a comprehensive overview of cancer including issues of demographics and incidence, causation and detection, origins and progression and therapeutics approaches. Emphasis will be placed on the cell and molecular biology of cancer and on the interaction of the cancer cell with the host organism.

Overarching Theme

This course will explore the nature of cancer, including its global burden, the hallmarks that are common among most cancers, how cancer is caused and treated, including an exploration of emerging therapeutics.

Global Objectives

- To gain a comprehensive understanding of cancer – what it is, how it arises and how it is treated.
- To engage students in active discussion of topical issues in cancer biology
- To introduce students to the breadth and excitement of cancer research

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the scale of cancer burden globally.
2. Describe the hallmarks of cancer and their interplay in cancer development, tumour growth and spread.
3. Understand molecular mechanisms underlying the common causes of cancer including viruses, environmental toxins, radiation and genetics.
4. Define categories of anti-cancer therapies (including chemotherapy, radiotherapy, precision, immunotherapy), their history and emerging therapeutic approaches.
5. Understand the major challenges of cancer research and treatment including cancer heterogeneity, therapy resistance and limitations of animal models.

Transferable Skill Development:

Many of the skills and abilities that you are developing in your coursework are transferable to the workforce, graduate and professional studies and other facets of life. Employers seek applicants with transferable skills because they can be an asset in the workplace, regardless of industry or sector. Transferable skills are core skills for your success in building your future career.

The work that you will do in MDSC/CMMB 561 will help you build the following transferable skills:

- **Verbal Communication:** Learn and share information by asking questions in class, listening, and interacting with others.
- **Creativity and Innovation:** Being curious, thinking imaginatively.
- **Critical Thinking:** Actively and skillfully conceptualize, apply, analyze, synthesize, and/or evaluate information (data, facts, published research findings) to make a reasoned judgement or draw a reasonable conclusion.
- **Information Literacy:** Find, understand, use and connect information presented through words, symbols, and images
- **Written Communication:** Link together and share research results, ideas and information using your own words.

Learning Resources

There is no required textbook for this course.

Recommended Textbooks/Readings

Recommended readings will be uploaded onto the classes D2L.

Learning Technology Requirements

Brightspace (by D2L) is located on the University of Calgary server and will be used extensively for communication with students. **It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they receive all posted communications and documents and that they receive emails sent by instructors or fellow students through D2L.** Only your @ucalgary.ca email address may be linked to D2L. Please ensure that you are regularly checking your @ucalgary.ca account.

A laptop, desktop, tablet or mobile device is required for D2L access. If you need help accessing or using D2L, please visit the Desire2Learn resource page for students: <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/d2l-student/>.

Evaluation

The University policy on grading and related matters is described in Section F of the 2025-2026 Calendar. In determining the overall grade in the course, the following weights will be used:

Assessment *	Weight (% of Grade)	Due Date and Time	Alignment with course Learning Objectives
Quiz 1	10	27-Jan, 3:30 pm (in-class, closed book)	Answer questions, discuss, and synthesize ideas related to material covered in Lectures 1-4
Midterm 1	20	12-Feb, 3:30 pm (in-class, closed-book)	Answer questions, discuss, and synthesize ideas related to material covered in Lectures 5-8
Midterm 2	25	24-Mar, 3:30 pm (in-class, closed-book)	Answer questions, discuss, and synthesize ideas related to material covered in Lectures 9-15
Written assignment	25	14-Apr, 11:59 pm (take-home, open-book, assigned March 19 th)	Find, read, and understand published reviews and original research material to synthesize your ideas and write in your own words about the molecular mechanisms and treatment opportunities for one type of cancer (full assignment details to be given out in class)
Final exam	20	Registrar scheduled Apr 17–28 (closed-book)	Answer questions, discuss and synthesize ideas related to material covered in Lectures 16-21

Descriptions and rubrics/marketing guidelines of each assessment item will be posted in D2.

A student's final grade for the course is the sum of the separate assignments. It is not necessary to pass each assignment separately to pass the course.

A Note regarding Writing Assignments:

Writing skills are important to academic study in all disciplines. In keeping with the University of Calgary's emphasis on the importance of academic writing in student assignments (Section E.2 of 2025-26 Calendar), writing is emphasized, and the grading thereof in determining a student's mark in this course. The Bachelor of Health Sciences values excellence in writing. Competence in writing entails skills in crafting logical, clear, coherent, non-redundant sentences, paragraphs and broader arguments, as well as skills with the mechanics of writing (grammar, spelling, punctuation). Sources used to complete each assessment must be properly documented, unless otherwise noted by the instructor. The University of Calgary offers instructional services through the Students' Success Centre's Writing Support Services (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/writingsupport/>)

for students seeking feedback on assignments or seeking to improve their general writing skills. Students are **strongly encouraged** to take advantage of these programs.

Grading Scheme:

Letter Grade	Description	Percentage
A+	Outstanding performance	96-100
A	Excellent performance	90-95.99
A-	Approaching excellent performance	85-89
B+	Exceeding good performance	80-84
B	Good performance	75-79
B-	Approaching good performance	70-74
C+	Exceeding satisfactory performance	65-69
C	Satisfactory performance	60-64
C-	Approaching satisfactory performance	57-59
D+	Marginal pass	54-56
D	Minimal pass	50-53
F	Does not meet course requirements	0-49

Missed Components of Term Work:

Late completion of assignments: Students will lose 5% per day late past the deadline for all assignments. Assignments will NOT be accepted more than 72 hours after the posted deadline and students failing to submit any assignment within this time frame will receive a mark of zero. **Students who miss a quiz/exam will receive a mark of zero unless the instructor has been previously notified.**

As per University Calendar Section G.2.3, **students who are absent from an in-class assessment will receive a mark of zero on the missed component.** Students who are absent are responsible for contacting their instructor to discuss the impact of their missed assessment. The instructor may ask for supporting documentation to confirm an absence. Alternative opportunities for completing missed assessments or shifting of the assessment weight **may** be possible but are not guaranteed. Students who are identified as falsifying information related to missed assessments will be subject to investigation for academic misconduct.

Extensions will NOT be granted on any assignment or quizzes in MDSC/CMMB 561. The only exceptions to this are those in keeping with the University Calendar (debilitating illness, religious conviction, or severe domestic affliction) that are received in writing and with supporting documentation. Traffic jams and late or full buses are common events in Calgary and are NOT acceptable reasons for late arrivals to class, meetings and examinations. Please note that while absences are permitted for religious reasons, students are responsible for providing advance notice and adhering to other guidelines on this matter, as outlined in the University Calendar <https://calendar.ucalgary.ca/pages/02ffccb6b1a541db880fe4223d122b5e>

Course Evaluations and Student Feedback

Student feedback will be sought at the end of the course through the new UCalgary Course Experience Survey and a qualitative student evaluation. Students are welcome to discuss the process and content of the course at any time with the instructor. Students may also address any concerns they may have with Dr. Fabiola Aparicio-Ting, Associate Dean (Undergraduate Health and Science Education) in the Cumming School of Medicine (feaparic@ucalgary.ca).

Attendance

Regular attendance is advised in order to succeed in MDSC/CMMB 561. Students are expected to take notes during class and should not rely solely on material supplied by the instructors. Instructors may or may not post

lectures notes to D2L, at their individual discretion. In-class discussion and all content presented in class, including concepts and examples, can constitute substantial learning and can be considered for assessment.

Conduct During Lectures

The classroom should be respected as a safe place to share ideas without judgement - a community in which we can all learn from one another. Students are expected to frame their comments and questions to lecturers in respectful and appropriate language, always maintaining sensitivity towards the topic. Students, employees, and academic staff are also expected to demonstrate behaviour in class that promotes and maintains a positive and productive learning environment.

As members of the University community, students, employees and academic staff are expected to demonstrate conduct that is consistent with the University of Calgary Calendar, the Code of Conduct and Non-Academic Misconduct policy and procedures, which can be found at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-conduct/policy>

Use of Internet and Electronic Communication Devices in Class

The Bachelor of Health Sciences program aims to create a supportive and respectful learning environment for all students. The use of laptop and mobile devices is acceptable when used in a manner appropriate to the course and classroom activities. However, research studies have found that inappropriate/off-topic use of electronic devices in the classroom negatively affects the learning of others during class time.

Students are responsible for being aware of the University's Internet and email use policy, which can be found at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-electronic-resources-and-information-policy>

Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), and specifically foundational models that can create writing, computer code, and /or images using minimal human prompting includes not only GPT-4 (and its siblings ChatGPT and Bing), but many writing assistants that are built on this or similar AI technologies.

Students may use artificial intelligence tools as a learning tool and for creating an outline of their written assignment, but the **final submitted written assignment must be original work produced by the individual student alone; students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit**. This use must be documented in an appendix for each assignment. The documentation should include what tool(s) were used, how they were used, and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work. You could also be asked to provide evidence of your own work. **Failure to cite the use of AI generated content in an assignment/assessment will be considered a breach of academic integrity and subject to Academic Misconduct procedures.** <https://libguides.ucalgary.ca/c.php?g=733971&p=5302331>

Students are not allowed to upload class slides, assignment instructions, or other course materials to AI tools or platforms. These are the intellectual property of the course instructor (IP); uploading these to and AI platform may breech IP rules since some of these sites may use these as training/output data.

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY POLICIES AND SUPPORTS

Copyright

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy>) and requirements of the Copyright Act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks, etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-non-academic-misconduct-policy>

Instructor Intellectual Property

Course materials created by instructors (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may **NOT** be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the professor. **The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited.** Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the course **at the same time** may be allowed under fair dealing.

Academic Accommodations

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations according to the University policies and procedures listed below. The Student Accommodations policy is available at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/access/prospective-students/academic-accommodations>. Students needing an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Accommodation-for-Students-with-Disabilities-Procedure.pdf>).

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a Protected Ground other than Disability should communicate this need in writing to Dr. Fabiola Aparicio-Ting (feaparic@ucalgary.ca), Associate Dean (Undergraduate Health and Science Education).

Academic Misconduct

The University of Calgary is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. The University of Calgary has created rules to govern all its members regarding the creation of knowledge and the demonstration of knowledge having been learned.

Academic Misconduct refers to student behaviour that compromises proper assessment of a student's academic activities and includes (but is not limited to): cheating, fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance, failure to comply with an instructor's expectations regarding conduct required of students completing academic assessments in their courses, and failure to comply with exam regulations applied by the Registrar. **It also includes using of third party websites/services to access past/current course material, essay/assignment writing services, or real-time assistance in completing assessments, seeking answers to assessment questions and similar, whether paid, bartered or unpaid.**

For information of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures, please visit; <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-academic-misconduct-policy>.

Additional information is available on the Academic Integrity website at: <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/learning/academic-integrity>.

Recording of Lectures

Audio or video recording of lectures (or similar) by students is prohibited except where explicit permission has been received from the instructor.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Student information will be collected in accordance with typical (or usual) classroom practice. Students' assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty. Private information related to the individual student is treated with the utmost regard by the faculty at the University of Calgary.

Appeals

If there is a concern with the course, academic matter or a grade, first communicate with the instructor. If these concerns cannot be resolved, students can proceed with an academic appeal, as per Section I of the University Calendar. Students must follow the official reappraisal/appeal process and may contact the Student Ombuds' Office (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/ombuds>) for assistance with this and with any other academic concerns, including academic and non-academic misconduct. Students should be aware that concerns about graded term work may only be initiated **within 10 business days** of first being notified of the grade. <https://calendar.ucalgary.ca/pages/e31a7115dca740ec83579e946d4a4193>

Media Recording

Audio or video recording of lectures (or similar) is prohibited except where explicit permission has been received from the instructor.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy

The University recognizes that all members of the University Community should be able to learn, work, teach and live in an environment where they are free from harassment, discrimination, and violence. The University of Calgary's sexual violence policy guides us in how we respond to incidents of sexual violence, including supports available to those who have experienced or witnessed sexual violence, or those who are alleged to have committed sexual violence. It provides clear response procedures and timelines, defines complex concepts, and addresses incidents that occur off-campus in certain circumstances. Please see the policy available at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/sexual-and-gender-based-violence-policy>

Resources for Support of Student Learning, Success, Safety and Wellness

Student Success Centre <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/>

Student Wellness Centre <http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/>

Student Advocacy and Wellness Hub (CSM)

<https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/mdprogram/current-students/student-advising-wellness>

Distress Centre <http://www.distresscentre.com/>

Library Resources <http://library.ucalgary.ca>

Wellness and Mental Health Resources

The University of Calgary recognizes the pivotal role that student mental health plays in physical health, social connectedness and academic success, and aspires to create a caring and supportive campus community where individuals can freely talk about mental health and receive supports when needed. We encourage you to explore the excellent mental health resources available throughout the university community, such as counselling, self-help resources, peer support or skills-building available through the SU Wellness Centre (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/services/mental-health-services>) and the Campus Mental Health Strategy (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/>).

Student Ombuds' Office

The Student Ombuds' Office supports and provides a safe, neutral space for students. For more information, please visit www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/ombuds/ or email ombuds@ucalgary.ca

BHSc Student Faculty Liaison Committee (SFLC)

The BHSc SFLC, with elected representatives from all majors, serves to raise issues of interest to BHSc students to the program administration, including items pertaining to curriculum, scheduling and events. A list of current representatives can be found on the BHSc website.

Student Union (SU) Information

The SU Vice-President Academic can be reached at (403) 220-3911 or suvpaca@ucalgary.ca; the SU representatives for the Cumming School of Medicine can be reached at medrep1@su.ucalgary.ca or medrep2@su.ucalgary.ca.

Student Success Centre

The Student Success Centre provides services and programs to ensure students can make the most of their time at the University of Calgary. Our advisors, learning support staff, and writing support staff assist students in enhancing their skills and achieving their academic goals. They provide tailored learning support and advising programs, as well as one-on-one services, free of charge to all undergraduate and graduate students. For more information visit: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success>

Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points

As part of the University of Calgary Emergency Evacuation plan, students, faculty, and staff should locate the closest Assembly Point in case of Fire Alarm. Safety signage is posted throughout the campus showing the locations and the possible route to these locations. All students, faculty, and staff are expected to promptly make their way to the nearest Assembly Point if the Fire Alarm is activated. No one is to return into campus facilities until an all clear is given to the warden in charge of the Assembly Area. For more information, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/risk/emergency-management/drills/assembly-points-and-evacuation-maps>

Safewalk

Campus security will escort individuals, day or night, anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences Centre, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). Call 403-220-5333 or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk>. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths. Please ensure your personal safety by taking advantage of this service.