

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
LONDON CANADA

Department of Psychology
Fall 2026

Psychology 3221F Section 001

Introduction to Animal Behaviour

1 Calendar Description

An introduction to the scientific study of animal behaviour, emphasizing evolutionary and ecological influences on behaviour. Recent research from the field and captivity will be used to illustrate such topics as communication, foraging, orientation, territoriality, mate choice, sexual selection, sociality, and cognition.

Antirequisite: Biology 3436F/G

Prerequisites: Both Psychology 2801F/G (or one of Health Sciences 2801A/B, Psychology 2840F/G, Psychology 2855F/G) and Psychology 2811A/B (or one of Biology 2244A/B, Economics 2122A/B, Economics 2222A/B, Geography 2210A/B, Health Sciences 3801A/B, MOS 2242A/B, Psychology 2830A/B, Psychology 2850A/B, Sociology 2205A/B, Statistical Sciences 2035, Statistical Sciences 2141A/B, Statistical Sciences 2143A/B, Statistical Sciences 2244A/B, Statistical Sciences 2858A/B, the former Social Work 2207A/B), or the former Psychology 2820E, or both the former Psychology 2800E and the former Psychology 2810, and one of Psychology 2220A/B, Psychology 2221A/B or Neuroscience 2000.

3 lecture hours;

Course Weight: 0.5

Unless otherwise stated, students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all prerequisites prior to enrolling. Where prerequisites have not been met, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the course. In accordance with Western policy, this decision is not subject to appeal.

In the event of a discrepancy between this outline and Senate or University policies, the latter shall prevail. The instructor reserves the right to modify elements of this course outline for pedagogical or operational reasons. Any such changes will be communicated to students in a timely manner.

2 Course Information

Instructor: Dr. Carrie Branch

Office & Phone: AFAR 201
Office Hours: By Appointment
Email: cbranch6@uwo.ca

Teaching Assistant: TBA
Office: TBA
Office Hours: TBA
Email: TBA

Time and Location of Classes: Thursdays 9:30 am – 12:30 pm, UC 3225

3 Course Materials

Rubenstein. 2022 *Animal Behavior 12th Edition*. Oxford University Press: UK.

Approximate cost of textbook via Amazon.ca \$200.00

4 Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

This course provides an introduction to the scientific study of animal behaviour, along with more advanced discussion of selected topics. Psychologists and zoologists, as well as naturalists, philosophers, and others have always asked why animals and people behave as they do. This course examines the answers that are provided by modern research in animal behaviour. The causes of behaviour, the functions that behaviour serves, how behaviour develops, and how it has evolved will all be examined. The influence of natural selection on behaviour and the adaptive consequences of behaviour are emphasized. Examples and illustrations are drawn from recent research in animal communication, foraging, navigation and orientation, sexual behaviour, social organization, animal cognition, and other topics.

The following table outlines the course learning outcomes and how they are assessed.

Learning Outcome	Learning Activity	Assessment
Depth and Breadth of Knowledge	Reading	Term Test
Describe and explain key concepts and research findings in animal behaviour.	Participating in class discussion	Class presentation
Distinguish among evolutionary, functional, causal, and developmental questions about behaviour.	Preparing for class presentation	Essay
Differentiate among ecological, behavioural, and neural levels of analysis of behaviour.	Writing essay	Final Exam

Knowledge of Methodologies Use of <i>Google Scholar</i> to locate current research findings. Organize and synthesize research results.	Reading Participating in class discussion Preparing for class presentation Writing essay	Term Test Class presentation Essay Final Exam
Application of Knowledge Critically evaluate concepts and theories of primary literature. Formulate testable hypotheses about animal behaviour.	Reading Participating in class discussion Preparing for class presentation Writing essay	Term Test Pre-class quizzes Class presentation Essay Final Exam
Communication Skills Communicate ideas and research-based evidence orally and in writing in a professional manner Colloquial sharing of knowledge on topics in Animal Behaviour	Participating in class discussion Delivering class presentation Writing essay	Term Test Pre-class quizzes Class presentation Essay Final exam
Awareness of Limits of Knowledge Critically evaluate concepts and theories of primary literature. Identify gaps in literature and propose future studies to address these gaps	Reading Participating in class discussion Preparing for class presentation Writing essay	Term Test Pre-class quizzes Class presentation Essay Final Exam
Autonomy and Professional Capacity Work with others to share responsibilities in group project. Identify strengths in group work.	Participating in class discussion Preparing for class presentation	Class presentation Essay

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5 Evaluation

Attendance and active participation during lecture are strongly encouraged and will be 10% of your final grade. The term test (20%) and the final examination (20%) will consist of short answer and essay questions on lectures and text material. The final exam will emphasize lecture and course material not previously examined in the term test, although understanding of some basic ideas and concepts may be examined in both the term test and the final exam. The group presentation (10%) consists of a 30-minute presentation by students in groups, on a topic chosen to illustrate how research in animal behaviour is done in the field and in the lab. Each student will be assigned a research paper on the topic and the presentation will be a collective project by all members of the group. Non-presenting students will be required to read the papers and pre-class quizzes on these readings will make up 10% of the final grade. The essay (20%) is a written discussion by each student of their assigned research paper and is strictly an individual, not group, effort. The written assignment is due one week following the presentation and should be 10 typed, double-spaced pages in length (~3000 words). Style should follow the American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual 6th Edition. Finally, the ethogram assignment will be worth 10% of your grade. You will be required to observe any non-domestic animal of your choice for 2 hours, a spreadsheet with your observations and short shares with the class will be due on the last day of term.

The evaluation and testing formats for this course were created to assess the learning objectives as listed in section 4 and are necessary for meeting these learning objectives. All evaluations listed in this course outline are required components of the course and together account for 100% of the final grade. Weightings and assessment formats may be adjusted where required to support course learning objectives, with appropriate notice to students.

Policy on Missing Coursework

For all missing assignments, students will receive a zero. Late assignments will be accepted within 14 days of the due date, but will be penalized 3% for each day the assignment is late. Group presentations cannot be made-up, however, if student's require an extension for their written essay, an extension to the next Monday will be provided given extension is requested via email prior to deadline.

Make-Up exams will be held within one week of the original exam for excused absences for the Term and Final exams.

Students who encounter extenuating circumstances affecting their academic responsibilities may submit a request for academic consideration in accordance with Western University's Academic Consideration policies. Requests must be submitted through the [Student Absence Portal](#) and may require supporting documentation.

Because this is an essay course, as per Senate Regulations, you must pass the essay component to pass the course. That is, the average mark for your written assignments must be at least 50%.

This course is exempt from the Senate requirement that students receive assessment of their work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade at least three full days before the date of the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty.

Course grades within the Psychology Department are expected to be distributed around the following averages:

70%	1000-level to 2099-level courses
72%	2100-2999-level courses
75%	3000-level courses
80%	4000-level courses

In the event that course grades are significantly higher or lower than these averages, instructors may be required to make adjustments to course grades. Such adjustment might include the normalization of one or more course components and/or the re-weighting of various course components.

Policy on Grade Rounding

Course grades are rounded to the nearest whole number. No additional assignments will be offered to enhance a final grade. Requests to change a grade because it is needed for a future program will not be considered.

6 Assessment/Evaluation Schedule

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percent of grade</u>	<u>Due date</u>
In class participation	10%	weekly
Reading quizzes	10%	weekly
Term test	20%	October 22
Group presentation	10%	various
Essay	20%	1 week after presentation, various
Ethogram assignment	10%	Dec 3
Final exam	20%	TBA

7 Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Text chapters and assignments
<i>10-Sep</i>	<i>What is animal behaviour? And Tinbergen's 4 questions</i>	<i>Chp 1, 2</i>

17-Sep	Communication	Chp 8
24-Sep	Foraging, predation, and optimality +Group 1 pres.	Chp 6 Reading quiz
1-Oct	Social evolution & sociality +Group 2 pres.	Chp 12, 13 Reading quiz
8-Oct	Territoriality & movement +Group 3 pres.	Chp 7 Reading quiz
15-Oct	Reading Week	
22-Oct	Term test 1 ½ hours	
29-Oct	Sex and sexual selection +Group 4 pres.	Chp 9 Reading quiz
5-Nov	Mating systems +Group 5 pres.	Chp 10 Reading quiz
12-Nov	Parental care +Group 6 pres.	Chp 11 Reading quiz
19-Nov	Development of behaviour +Group 7 pres.	Chp 3 Reading quiz
26-Nov	Brain and behaviour +Group 8 pres.	Chp 4, 5 Reading quiz
3-Dec	Ethogram shares	Ethogram Assignment due through Brightspace BEFORE class

8 Academic Integrity

Scholastic offences are treated seriously at Western University. Students are expected to understand and comply with the University's standards of academic integrity. Scholastic offences may result in penalties up to and including expulsion from the University. Please read [Western's Scholastic Offences](#) policy for definitions and examples of Scholastic offences.

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

No electronics are permitted to be used during exams, this includes cellular phones and 'smart' watches.

Plagiarism Detection Software

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All

papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between Western and Turnitin.com.

Use of AI

Responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools is **permitted** in this course as a support for learning, not as a substitute for critical thinking or scholarly work. All use of artificial intelligence tools must comply with Western University's academic integrity standards.

Students may use AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot) for:

- Brainstorming ideas or refining research questions
- Improving clarity, grammar, or organization
- Preliminary or background exploration of topics

AI must not be used to:

- Generate full drafts or final versions of assignments
- Replace analysis, interpretation, or synthesis
- Fabricate, misrepresent, or cite sources that the student has not independently consulted
- Bypass engagement with course materials

You are ultimately responsible for all work submitted under your name. AI output should be critically evaluated, substantially revised, and integrated thoughtfully, not copied verbatim.

All written assignments must include a brief AI Usage Statement, indicating:

- Which tools were used (if any)
- The purpose for which they were used
- How the output was modified and incorporated

Assignments submitted without an AI Usage Statement will not be accepted. Misuse of AI or failure to disclose its use may constitute a scholastic offence and will be addressed in accordance with Western University's academic integrity policies. Students are responsible for ensuring that all work complies with Western's scholastic integrity standards.

9 Academic Accommodations and Accessible Education

Western University is committed to providing an accessible learning environment. Students with disabilities or medical conditions requiring accommodation are encouraged to contact Accessible Education as early as possible. Accommodations will be implemented in accordance with University policy. Please review [Western's policy on academic accommodations](#) for student with disabilities. Accessible Education provides supports and services to students with disabilities at Western. If you think you may qualify for ongoing accommodation that will be recognized in all

your courses, visit [Accessible Education](#) for more information. Email: aw@uwo.ca Phone: 519 661-2147

10 Absence & Academic Consideration

Please review Western's policy on [Academic Considerations](#):

11 Other Information

Helpful Websites

- Western's academic policies are available at the [Office of the Registrar](#).
- Departmental policies are available at the [Psychology Department website](#).
- Learning supports available at [Learning Development & Success](#).

Well-being

Western University provides a range of supports to promote student well-being. Students are encouraged to seek assistance when needed. Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Health and Wellness at Western](#) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you.

Grade Appeals

If you wish to appeal a grade, please read the [policy documentation](#) on requests for relief. Please first contact the course instructor. If your issue is not resolved, you may make your appeal in writing to the Undergraduate Chair in Psychology (psyugrd@uwo.ca).