

**BIOL 830P 03**  
**Special Topics in Biology: Contemporary Issues in Health**  
**Spring 2023**

**Instructor:** Dr. Todd Bartee, Professor of Public Health

**Office Hours:** Face-to-Face or virtual: MWF 11:00 – 11:30; Tuesday 11:00-12:00;  
Thursday 1:00-2:00

Or by appointment face-to-face or via Zoom:

<https://unk.zoom.us/j/5833531208>

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(308) 865-8179



## THE BASICS

**Section Information:** This course is asynchronous. We do NOT have scheduled class meeting times.

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Course Description:** Topics are studied which are not assigned or covered in other courses in the department. The format of this course will vary depending on the topic of instruction and the needs of students. Topics in Botany Topics in Fresh Water Biology Topics in Vertebrate Biology Topics in Invertebrate Biology Topics in Nebraska Flora Topics in Physiology

**Course Information:** This course is designed to engage critical thinking and problem-solving skills by approaching health-related issues through multiple perspectives. It includes reading, analyzing, interacting, and reflecting about current issues and future concerns as they relate to the health sciences as well as individual, community, and societal health-related needs. Students will examine issues by critiquing information sources and using scientific research. Topics vary based on student interests and trends in the health sciences.

**Required Course Materials:** There is no required textbook. Course materials will be provided.

**Introduction to the Course:** **BIOL 830P 03-Contemporary Issues in Health**, is a fully online course. We will not meet face-to-face for the duration of the course unless you set up a time to meet with me. This course is not an independent study course. You will have specific due dates for each assignment and will be expected to participate in discussion board activities with your classmates and instructor. The assignments in the course are made up of reading/viewing assignments, discussion board activities, and presentation and writing assignments.

**Course Comments:** When you are taking an online course, it is expected that you will read all the materials and keep up with due dates on your own. Do not rely on me to remind you of due dates for the course.

## WHAT'S THIS COURSE REALLY ABOUT?

This course is designed to get you investigating and learning more about timely health-related topics that you are curious to learn more about. This course allows you the time to dig into topics that we sometimes want to learn more about but can't/don't make the time. Think about this course as a meeting among colleagues/friends around the kitchen table, at the coffee shop, or at the local pub to share what they are learning, what questions, they have, and importantly, what questions still linger after we've discussed a topic.

## WHAT WILL WE BE LEARNING ABOUT?

**Goals:** Generally speaking, the following general goals tell us where this course is going and the five biggest things you'll take away from this learning experience.

1. Greater appreciation that nearly all issues have many sides.
2. Recognition that different perspectives/positions from your own can be legitimate and based in fact.
3. Knowledge about a variety of contemporary issues in health.
4. Development of critical thinking skills in relation to contemporary issues in health.
5. Respectful communication with others.

**Course Objectives:** Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Develop an informed opinion on multiple contemporary health issues.
2. Differentiate between sources of information regarding credibility.
3. Organize and communicate information from different sources, including peer-reviewed research on contemporary health issues.
4. Effectively (think clarity, accuracy, and respect) communicate research findings on a contemporary health issue with others who may not "see" the issue and or solution the same way you do.



## WHAT YOU WILL BE GETTING OUT OF THIS COURSE, WHY YOU SHOULD CARE, AND WANT TO DO WELL

We live in an age where there is plenty of information available related to health, health care, public health, self-care, etc. As a professional with a graduate degree, you'll be expected to be knowledgeable in your field. To many, that means you are a credible source of accurate information when asked. It also means you'll want to provide that information in way that people can understand. Last, you'll also know the limits of your comprehension of a topic and know how to find additional information from credible sources.

To rephrase some course goals and learning objectives, this course will provide us with the opportunity to dialogue and discuss a variety of timely topical and professional health-related issues. In doing so, we will get to practice appreciating different perspectives and how to communicate with others respectfully and clearly both orally and in writing to a variety of audiences. We'll also get to practice and build other skills such as locating information within the scientific literature and critically evaluating scientific literature.

## HOW DO YOU EXCEL IN THIS COURSE?

Don't approach this course as a hoop to jump through. Don't plan your work by doing "just enough to meet the minimum requirements". Manage your time in a way that allows you to do your best work! Now, I know this course isn't all you have going on in life and that you may not always be in a position to give your 100%. However, we are always in a position to give the best we can at that time. Be thoughtful and complete with your work. Be engaged with the assignments, and respectful of others.

I work hard to create a course and learning environment where students shouldn't have to worry about their grades but rather focus on learning. Now, having said that there are policies that need to be in place.

**Late Work/Make-up Policy:** Late work for all assignments will be downgraded 10% points for each day late. One day late starts the minute after the assignment is due. For example, if an assignment is due by 8:00 PM CST and you turn in your assignment at 8:01, this will be considered one day late and receive a 10% reduction on the assignment grade. Assignments more than three days late will not be accepted and receive a grade of zero.

Effort Rubric		Achievement Rubric	
4	I worked on the task until it was completed. I pushed myself to continue working on the task even when difficulties arose or a solution was not immediately evident. I viewed difficulties that arose as opportunities to strengthen my understanding.	4	I exceeded the objectives of the task or lesson.
3	I worked on the task until it was completed. I pushed myself to continue working on the task even when difficulties arose or a solution was not immediately evident.	3	I met the objectives of the task or lesson.
2	I put some effort into the task, but I stopped when difficulties arose.	2	I met some of the objectives of the task or lesson, but I did not meet others.
1	I put very little effort into the task.	1	I did not meet the objectives of the task or lesson.

This isn't our formal rubric, but it illustrates the point I hope I'm getting across! 😊

## WHAT WILL A TYPICAL WEEK LOOK LIKE?

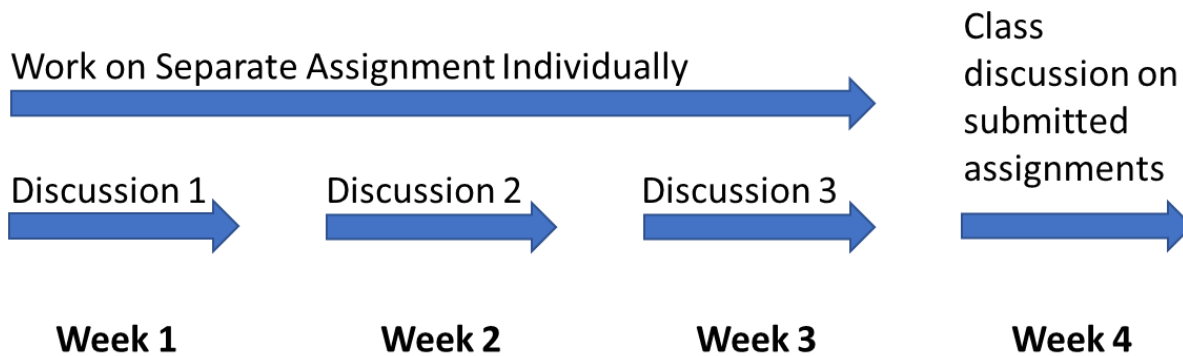
**General Assignment Due Date Information:** Unless otherwise noted in the assignment instructions, all assignments, and discussions, etc. are due by 8:00 PM Central Time. Any assignment may be turned in earlier than the due date. Please note that computer problems will not be a valid excuse for late work, please plan accordingly.

### Discussion Weeks (approximately 9)

- Monday morning – readings/viewings become available with weekly assignment (I plan to have available as early as Friday night.)
- Wednesday by 8:00 PM CST – initial discussion posts are due
- Friday by 8:00 PM CST – at least 4 replies (eg, reply, question, reply to a question, etc.) are due

### Non-Discussion Weeks (approximately 4)

- Monday by 8:00 PM CST – Assignments posted to discussion board by students
- Wednesday by 8:00 PM CST – student read/view assignments with initial responses
- Friday by 8:00 PM CST – additional replies due



## WHAT WILL WE BE DOING IN TERMS OF ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES TO HELP MEET THE LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND COURSE GOALS?

**Course Readings/Viewings Synthesis Papers** - There will be three of these assignments and they will occur at the beginning of the semester. These are focused on topics that may or may not be review for you but having a grasp of these concepts will allow you to succeed in the course. Specifically, to successfully complete the weekly discussions and Critical Thinking Presentations.

After reading/viewing and thinking about the course materials provided for the topic, write a couple of paragraphs reflecting on the topic. Be sure to read critically, think about how readings and videos relate to each other, and write thoughtfully, connecting to course materials. Your informed opinion counts, but here I want to be sure you have understood the perspectives of the authors/narrators. Excess unsubstantiated opinion will result in loss of credit.

**Discussions:** I anticipate up to 9 discussion topics. I have several topics listed for possible discussion but would like to (also) include topics that you are most interested in. Most of our discussions will require students to take a position on a topic and state reasons for why they are taking that position. Dr. Bartee will provide students with the readings or viewings that frames/focuses the discussion topic. Initial readings/viewings could be different for different topics. For example, we could start with a popular news article, professional commentary articles found on the internet, position/opinion articles found in peer-reviewed research journals, or articles of research studies found in peer-reviewed research journals. Videos could include short educational videos, documentaries, and even feature-length movies.

Discussions will typically be assigned Monday morning and your initial discussion posts due before 8:00 PM CST Wednesday with replies to other students and or Dr. Bartee by 8:00 PM CST Friday. The emphasis of the discussion will be the quality of your posts/replies and not quantity. Each initial post should be thoughtful and complete, and each reply should ADD to what is being learned about the topic by advancing the discussion.

You are expected to respond to each discussion thread created by Dr. Bartee and contribute at least 4 replies to other students and or Dr. Bartee. Your “reply” could be in the form of a reply, you could ask a question, or reply to a question. While your response to the original question(s) posed by Dr. Bartee will most likely represent your opinion, you will need to cite at least two peer-reviewed articles. Your cited articles should support multiple/both sides of the issue.

Correct spelling, grammar, in-text citation formatting and referencing is expected.

**Discussion Reflection/Summary:** At any time after all your four replies are completed you must summarize your learning about the topic. You should include what your original position or view of the topic was, what new information you learned through your own research and the responses/research of classmates, to what degree your position/perspective has changed on the topic/issue, and what lingering questions you have on the topic/issue. Double-spaced and at least 1 page in length.



**Critical Thinking Research Presentations:** There will be three critical thinking presentations. The purpose of these assignments is to provide you the freedom to apply the steps of critically think and problem solving to health-related topics that are timely and you are curious to learn more about. An issue, by definition, is an important topic or problem for debate or discussion. A list of timely issues will be provided; however you are free to choose another issue. You will need to approve the issue you want to research with Dr. Bartee (whether from the list provided or not). The first presentation will be on any issue you are curious to learn more about. Another presentation will utilize a health-related documentary on a topic you are interested in, and the third will focus on a topic that relates to or has impact on your current or planned career field. Each of these presentations will require you to cite credible sources, examples and or ideas about how to get credible information in front of the most important audiences who need to become more aware of the issue of your choice. Your presentation will include your voice-over and be approximately 12 minutes in length.

**Final Reflection Paper:** Your comprehensive final assignment is an opportunity to show that you can apply what you have learned throughout the course. This “take-home” reflection will be a piece of writing that allows you to share/address your personal experiences and interactions with the course. Your reflection will tell the story of how you experienced the main themes and concepts as well as how these main themes and concepts interact with your own ideas and values. Your reflection might also tell the story of how your interactions and experiences with the course relate to or can be applied to your future career or other coursework and or life experiences. Additionally, you may analyze main themes and concepts based on teaching and learning methods used in the course. The specific instructions for this assignment will be provided toward the end of the semester.

**Evaluation Criteria**

**Approximate Number of Points**

Course Readings/Viewings Synthesis Papers	40
Discussions	360
Discussion Reflection/Summary	90
Critical Thinking Research Presentations:	300
Final Reflection Paper	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>850</b>

**Grading Scale**

A+ = 100%;      A = 93% to 99%; A- = 90% to 92%      F = lower than 60%  
 B+ = 87% to 89%; B = 83% to 86%; B- = 80% to 82%  
 C+ = 77% to 79%; C = 73% to 76%; C- = 70% to 72%  
 D+ = 67% to 69%; D = 63% to 66%; D- = 60% to 62%



## Tentative Calendar

*Discussion Topics 1-9 - Initial Post Due by 8PM CST Wednesday; replies by 8PM CST Friday*

*3 Critical Thinking Presentations – Due Mondays before 8am CST*

**Week 1** – Introductions; syllabus review; Student Poll- Formative Assessment, Course Q & A; Readings/viewings on Initial Course Topics Available

**Week 2** – *Course Readings/Viewings Synthesis Papers due Friday 8PM CST* – 1) Critical Thinking & Problem Solving, 2) Credible Sources, and 3) Scientific Literature,

**Week 3** – Discussion Topic 1 – Can a person be fit and fat?

**Week 4** - Discussion Topic 2 – Have the risks of obesity been exaggerated?

**Week 5** - Discussion Topic 3 – Should weight loss be the focus of being healthier or the Health At Every Size approach?

**Week 6** – Critical Thinking Presentation of Personal Choice

**Week 7** – Discussion Topic 4 – Is social media accountable for reduced mental health in youth?

**Week 8** – **SPRING BREAK**

**Week 9** – Discussion Topic 5 – Will individual or corporate changes be needed to combat climate change?

**Week 10** – Discussion Topic 6 - Is food addiction real or do people just need more willpower?

**Week 11** – Critical Thinking Presentation Personal Choice – Documentaries / Edutainment

**Week 12** - Discussion Topic 7 – Does your genetic code or zip code have greater influence on health?

**Week 13** – Discussion Topic 8 – What is the future role of livestock on a sustainable planet?

**Week 14** – Discussion Topic 9 – Does insects' harm to human health outweigh their benefits?

**Week 15** – Critical Thinking Presentation Personal Choice Career-related

**Week 16** – Dead Week

**Week 17** – Reflection Final Due





## UNK Policy Required Information

**Student Conduct:** Students will be held accountable for their student conduct in this course as stated in the UNK Student Handbook, Section VIII. UNK Academic Dishonesty Policy found here: <http://catalog.unk.edu/undergraduate/academics/academic-regulations/academic-integrity-policy/>.

## UNK Student Attendance Policy Statement

Students are expected to attend all meetings of classes for which they are registered, including the first and last scheduled meetings and the final examination period. Instructors hold the right and responsibility to establish attendance policies for their courses. Each instructor must inform all classes at the beginning of each semester concerning their attendance policies.

Participation in official University activities, serious health concerns, personal emergencies, and religious observances are valid reasons for absence from classes. Students are responsible for informing their instructors prior to their absence(s) from class and for completing assignments missed during their absence(s). No adverse or prejudicial effects shall result to any student with a documented, excused absence.

Questions may be directed to the Dean of Student Affairs office or to Student Health & Counseling.

## Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of the University of Nebraska at Kearney to provide flexible and individualized reasonable accommodation to students with documented disabilities. To receive accommodation services for a disability, students must be registered with the UNK Disabilities Services for Students (DSS) office, 175 Memorial Student Affairs Building, 308-865-8214 or by email [unkdso@unk.edu](mailto:unkdso@unk.edu)

## UNK Statement of Diversity & Inclusion

UNK stands in solidarity and unity with our students of color, our Latinx and international students, our LGBTQIA+ students and students from other marginalized groups in opposition to racism and prejudice in any form, wherever it may exist. It is the job of institutions of higher education, indeed their duty, to provide a haven for the safe and meaningful exchange of ideas and to support peaceful disagreement and discussion. In our classes, we strive to maintain a

positive learning environment based upon open communication and mutual respect. UNK does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability or political affiliation. Respect for the diversity of our backgrounds and varied life experiences is essential to learning from our similarities as well as our differences. The following link provides resources and other information regarding D&I:

<https://www.unk.edu/about/equity-access-diversity.php>

### **Students Who are Pregnant**

It is the policy of the University of Nebraska at Kearney to provide flexible and individualized reasonable accommodation to students who are pregnant. To receive accommodation services due to pregnancy, students must contact Sarah Mattson the Academic Success office at 308.865.8797. The following link provides information for students and faculty regarding pregnancy rights. <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/pregnant-and-parenting-students-rights-faqs-college-and-graduate-students>

### **Reporting Student Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence or Sexual Assault**

Reporting allegations of rape, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and stalking enables the University to promptly provide support to the impacted student(s), and to take appropriate action to prevent a recurrence of such sexual misconduct and protect the campus community. Confidentiality will be respected to the greatest degree possible. Any student who believes she or he may be the victim of sexual misconduct is encouraged to report to one or more of the following resources:

**Local Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault Advocacy Agency** 308-237-2599

**Campus Police (or Security)** 308-865-8911

**Title IX Coordinator** 308-865-8655

Retaliation against the student making the report, whether by students or University employees, will not be tolerated.

### **UNK Counseling**

Diminished mental health, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with optimal academic performance. Problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis can also contribute to decreased academic performance.

UNK Counseling provides mental health services to support the academic success of students. Counseling Services, a part of Student Health & Counseling department, provides full range of short-term professional mental health services. Services include confidential personal counseling, group counseling, substance use counseling, crisis intervention, outreach programming, and consultation to help you manage personal challenges that may threaten your well-being.

It is not my intention to know the details of what might be bothering you, but simply to let you know I am concerned and that help, if needed, is available.

Getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do -- for yourself *and* for those who care about you. You can contact UNK Counseling at 308-865-8248 or visit their website for more information: [https://www.unk.edu/offices/counseling\\_healthcare/counseling\\_care/index.php](https://www.unk.edu/offices/counseling_healthcare/counseling_care/index.php)