

# Term paper grading rubric. Biology 522S. Origins of Cellular Life Spring 2025

Papers will be in the style of review articles describing the literature surrounding a strong thesis argument. Paper format (length, style, bibliography, etc) will be in the style of **Trends in Genetics** "Reviews and Opinions" papers. Follow the instructions for paper ideas, content, and format. Papers will be graded in the following categories:

## Logistics

- Rough drafts are due **11:59pm, Wed February 26, 2025** by email to Dr. Schmid and to your peer review partner. Submit in an editable format (Microsoft Word is preferable, LaTeX via Overleaf is acceptable).
- Final papers are due **11:59pm on the last day of class, April, 23, 2025**.
- Rough drafts will be graded for completeness (i.e. full draft submitted), timeliness, and clear evidence of a central thesis argument taking shape. Dr. Schmid will provide feedback for each rubric category for you to incorporate into the final draft.
- The grading rubric listed below will be used for grading final papers.
- As a general topic, you are free to choose the subject area. Students are strongly advised to meet with Dr. Schmid early in the writing process to discuss topic ideas, thesis arguments, and/or feedback on rough drafts.
- For peer reviews of your rough draft, Prof Schmid will randomly assign an anonymous peer review partner, and you will edit each others' rough drafts. Please use the rubric to evaluate your partner's paper. Please email your peer reviews (using track changes feature in Word, or "comments" panel in Adobe for PDFs) to Prof Schmid two weeks after the rough draft due date, i.e. **11:59 pm, Wed March 5, 20** **extra credit participation points will be awarded for on-time peer reviews**, with the typical course late policy (subtract 25% extra credit points for 24 hours late, 50% for 48 hours late, 0 points thereafter) applying for late reviews. Prof Schmid will distribute your review to your partner. You should expect to receive your rough draft edits back from the instructor then as well. These deadlines are also listed on the syllabus and wiki.

## Rubric\*

1. **Timely submission - 5 points**
2. **Title Page - 5 points.** Must follow the Trends in Genetics instructions for authors specifications. Use a whole page for the title page.
3. **Thesis statement - 10 points.** Clearly and concisely state your purpose in a single sentence. The thesis statement should argue a particular point, which will be supported by literature evidence in the rest of the paper. The thesis should be compelling, thought-provoking.
4. **Introduction - 15 points.** The introduction should give an overview of the structure of the paper as well as providing sufficient background for non-specialists in the field to understand the body of the paper. This section should be only a few paragraphs. Be sure to state why the thesis you have chosen is important. Follow the specifications on the instructions for authors page.
5. **Paper body - 10 points.** Clearly demonstrates well-organized and reasoned logic. Should be clearly written for a scientifically educated audience who are not necessarily experts in the topic you present.

6. **Evidence, argument, and support - 15 points.** Each paragraph supports the main thesis with detail from the relevant primary and review literature (with an emphasis on primary literature). Detailed, peer-reviewed evidence should argue and support the main thesis idea, but also provide a glimpse of leading alternative viewpoints to convince the audience of your thesis statement. As stipulated in the MicroReview instructions, the body of the paper is expected to present “thought pieces, not merely summaries of existing findings and ideas”.
7. **Organization - 10 points.** Demonstrate logical and subtle sequencing of ideas with clear transition statements between well-developed paragraphs.
8. **Conclusion - 10 points.** Briefly summarizes the paper, restates the thesis and key pieces of evidence in support of the thesis, but is not simply a reiteration of the thesis statement itself.
9. **Mechanics and usage - 10 points.** The paper should be free from errors in punctuation or spelling. The paper should be of appropriate length and follow the format specified in the “instructions for authors” page. The paper should be free of grammatical errors, and should have clear and correct sentence structure (no run-ons, etc.).
10. **Citations and Bibliography - 10 points.** All inline citations (to both figures, tables, and references) should be in the correct format with no errors. As a general rule, for any idea that does not come from the writer’s own head, the appropriate paper should be cited inline. Bibliography should be in the correct format as specified on the “instructions for authors” page. At least 10 and not more than 100 primary articles should be cited.
11. **Novelty - 5 points (extra credit).** The ideas presented are new, not previously explored in the literature, or synthesize disparate areas of thought.

\*Total full-credit point value is 100. “Novelty” extra credit provides bonus points.  
Rubric adapted from <https://www.cte.cornell.edu/documents/Science%20Rubrics.pdf>