

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE SYLLABUS
NEUROSCIENCE

GMS 6791-Visual Neuroscience Journal Club (1 credit hour)

Semester: Spring 2025

Delivery Format: Presential

Instructor Name: Cristhian J Ildefonso, Ph.D.

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Email Address: ildefons@ufl.edu

Office Hours: Monday and Friday 2:00 – 3:00 pm

Graduate Assistant: None

Preferred Course Communications: E-mail

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites for this course.

Purpose and Outcome:

The Visual Neuroscience Journal Club promotes interest in vision science research among graduate students. After completing this journal club, we expect students to understand the different areas of vision research better and develop the confidence to scientifically judge research articles in the vision science field through constructive criticism.

Course Overview:

This journal club is for students interested in learning more about the visual system, disease mechanisms, and therapeutic strategies to prevent vision loss. The focus will be on the retina, a thin, light-sensitive neuronal tissue in the back of the eye. Students must select scientific papers focused on the visual system, lead a presentation on their subject of interest, and convey the study's goals and conclusions. In the first section of the journal clubs, the students will be expected to present and discuss their selected research article using PowerPoint or Google Slides to guide the discussion. Students should be able to communicate a story instead of merely recapitulating every figure in the paper. Figures may be omitted in the interest of time and to enhance the story's meaning. Other figures from the literature may be included to convey the scientific significance of the article of their choice.

In the second section of the journal club, students must select a different research article for a round-table discussion with their peers. The student leading the discussion will be in charge of directing the critical evaluation of the article. At the same time, the rest will be expected to provide their evaluation and defend their point of view using positive feedback. We welcome and encourage the discussion of contradictory findings that generate more questions than answers.

Relation to Program Outcomes:

After completing this course, you will have a knowledge base of retinal structure and function to facilitate your graduate research and comprehensive neuroscience training. This course also aims to familiarize with state-of-the-art technology used in the vision sciences at the basic, translational, and clinical levels.

Course Objectives and/or Goals:

Upon completing the course, students will be able to evaluate scientific literature in the field of vision sciences.

Instructional Methods:

Students may choose to present papers from their research area, allowing the audience to contribute to essential feedback. The presenter will also identify the article's strengths and weaknesses while providing input on potential drawbacks. Members of the audience are expected to actively participate by asking questions and commenting to promote discussion of the results and the manuscript in general. A list of suggested articles will be provided at the beginning of the course for the student's consideration. Students will be encouraged to choose from this list of research articles; however, they will be free to choose any other research article for their presentation. Such a research article should be submitted to the course director by two weeks before their scheduled presentation to be approved by the directors.

Blended Learning:

What is blended learning and why is it important?

A Blended Learning class uses a mixture of technology and face-to-face instruction to help you maximize your learning. Knowledge content that, as the instructor, I would have traditionally presented during a live class lecture is instead provided online before the live class takes place. This lets me focus my face-to-face teaching on course activities designed to help you strengthen higher order thinking skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration. Competency in these skills is critical for today's health professional.

What is expected of you?

You are expected to actively engage in the course throughout the semester. You must come to class prepared by completing reading the assigned articles. This preparation gives you the knowledge or practice needed to engage in higher levels of learning during the live class

sessions. If you are not prepared for the face-to-face sessions, you may struggle to keep pace with the activities occurring in the live sessions, and it is unlikely that you will reach the higher learning goals of the course. Similarly, you are expected to actively participate in the live class. Your participation fosters a rich course experience for you and your peers that facilitates overall mastery of the course objectives.

Description of Course Content:

Topical Outline/Course Schedule

Week	Date(s)	Topic(s)	Readings
1	01/27	Introduction: Presenting Research Articles	No Article
2	02/03	Student-led Presentation 1	Article will be assigned
3	02/10	Student-led presentation 2	Article will be assigned
4	02/17	Student-led presentation 3	Article will be assigned
5	02/24	Student-led presentation 4	Article will be assigned
6	03/03	Introduction 2: Round Table Discussion of Research Articles	No Article
7	03/10	Student-led discussion 5	Article will be assigned
8	03/24	Student-led discussion 6	Article will be assigned
9	03/31	Student-led discussion 7	Article will be assigned
10	04/07	Student-led discussion 8	Article will be assigned
11	04/14	Introduction 3: Providing Reviewing Critiques	No Article
12	04/21	Group Discussion	Article will be assigned

Course Materials and Technology:

No formal textbook is required for this course. However, a comprehensive online book on the retina structure and function can be found at <https://webvision.med.utah.edu/>

For technical support for this class, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

- Learning-support@ufl.edu
- (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- [UF eLearning](#)

Academic Requirements and Grading:

Students are required to actively participate of the discussion by asking questions pertaining to the article and by giving constructive criticism. Ability to present a research article, and to successfully convey the main discoveries/concepts of the article will be considered when grading the student.

Assignments:

Articles will be distributed 2 weeks in advance of their discussion. It is the responsibility of each student to read the article in its entirety before its discussion.

Grading:

This course will use a pass/fail grading system.

More information on UF grading policy may be found at:

<http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#grades>

Policy Related to Required Class Attendance:

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Excused absences must be consistent with university policies in the Graduate Catalog (<http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#attendance>). Additional information can be found here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Student will be responsible for communicating with the course coordinators in a timely manner. The student will be responsible for the article discussed that day, and will be required to submit a summary of the article, a series of comments, and constructive criticism pertaining to the article in writing to the course coordinators.

Student Expectations, Roles, and Opportunities for Input:

Expectations Regarding Course Behavior:

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional fashion, and to adhere to all the core values of the institution.

Communication Guidelines:

Students are encouraged to communicate with the course coordinators via e-mail. Alternatively, they can meet in person using office hours or by phone. All in-person communication must adhere to the COVID-19 guidelines established by UF.

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to act in accordance with the University of Florida policy on academic integrity. As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge:

"We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity."

You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For additional information regarding Academic Integrity, please see Student Conduct and Honor Code or the Graduate Student Website for additional details:

<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

<http://gradschool.ufl.edu/students/introduction.html>

Please remember cheating, lying, misrepresentation, or plagiarism in any form is unacceptable and inexcusable behavior.

Online Faculty Course Evaluation Process:

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at

<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their

Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Policy Related to Guests Attending Class:

Only registered students are permitted to attend class. However, we recognize that students who are caretakers may face occasional unexpected challenges creating attendance barriers. Therefore, by exception, a department chair or his or her designee (e.g., instructors) may grant a student permission to bring a guest(s) for a total of two class sessions per semester. This is two sessions total across all courses. No further extensions will be granted. Please note that guests are **not** permitted to attend either cadaver or wet labs. Students are responsible for course material regardless of attendance. For additional information, please review the [Classroom Guests of Students policy](#) in its entirety.

Support Services:

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester. The College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to assist students in their coursework.

Counseling and Student Health:

Students sometimes experience stress from academic expectations and/or personal and interpersonal issues that may interfere with their academic performance. If you find yourself facing issues that have the potential to or are already negatively affecting your coursework, you are encouraged to talk with an instructor and/or seek help through University resources available to you.

- The Counseling and Wellness Center 352-392-1575 offers a variety of support services such as psychological assessment and intervention and assistance for math and test anxiety. Visit their web site for more information: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu>. On line and in person assistance is available.
- You Matter We Care website: <http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/>. If you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed, you can reach out for help through the You Matter We Care website, which is staffed by Dean of Students and Counseling Center personnel.

- The Student Health Care Center at UF Health is a satellite clinic of the main Student Health Care Center located on Fletcher Drive on campus. Student Health at UF Health offers a variety of clinical services. The clinic is located on the second floor of the Dental Tower in the Health Science Center. For more information, contact the clinic at 392-0627 or check out the web site at: <https://shcc.ufl.edu/>
- UF Health Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32698, ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center.
- University Police Department: Visit police.ufl.edu/ or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- Crisis intervention is always available 24/7 from:

Alachua County Crisis Center:

(352) 264-6789

<http://www.alachuacounty.us/DEPTS/CSS/CRISISCENTER/Pages/CrisisCenter.aspx>

Do not wait until you reach a crisis to come in and talk with us. We have helped many students through stressful situations impacting their academic performance. You are not alone so do not be afraid to ask for assistance.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services career.ufl.edu/.

Library Support: cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ ask various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. teachingcenter.ufl.edu/

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/

Student Complaints On-Campus: sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/

On-Line Students Complaints: distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process

