

FALL 2025

FIRST YEAR FAQ

Welcome to first-year Biology, BIOL 1212: Organismal & Ecological Biology! This course focuses on fundamental concepts in ecology, evolution, and biodiversity. We will build an understanding of how life on Earth began, and the basis of the diversity that we see around us today.

This is a lecture-only course and there is no lab component. Please note that if you plan to take any second-year Biology course, you must complete the first-year BIOL courses: BIOL1211 (Molecular and Cell Biology), BIO1212 (Organismal and Ecological Biology) and BIOL1213 (Applications in Biology).

Many students have questions before the start of the course. We will go over all of the course requirements on the first day of class, but if you would like some answers before then, please see below for some general information.

Course website

Saint Mary's University uses Brightspace for course websites. The BIOL 1212 Brightspace site will be opened in the first week of September. Plan to check Brightspace regularly throughout the term for essential information, lecture slides, and important announcements.

To log into Brightspace, activate your S-number at <https://activate.smu.ca/>. For help, please contact the EIT help desk at hdesk@smu.ca.

BIOL 1212

Organismal and
Ecological Biology



Professor: Dr. Laura Weir

Textbook (required)

We will use [Biology 2e](#) on openstax. It is free for you to use (or you can make a donation if you wish!). You will have short readings from the book and a very short quiz on Brightspace before class to help you prepare for the topics of the day.

Learning Catalytics (required)

I'll ask you to participate in your learning during lectures using an interactive student response software called Learning Catalytics. It is paid software that you can run from your phone or computer, and it will be required for BIOL1212 lectures. A purchase link for your student account will be shared on Brightspace, and on the first day of class.

Attending class

The course begins on Thursday, September 4, 2025. Being present in class is essential for your success. Please plan to attend every class and participate fully in the learning activities. The textbook and course website will not be a substitute for regular attendance and participation.

During the term, you'll want to set aside some time for reading and to review your notes from class. Plan to do this regularly, at least a couple times a week, and you should have a very successful and positive experience in the course. Strategies for effective reading and studying will be covered in class. Enjoy the rest of your summer, and I look forward to seeing you on September 4th.



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