

Junior / Senior Seminar

F: 1:10 – 2:10
Copley 101

Instructor Dr. John D. Thoburn
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Office Hours By appointment – send me an e-mail!

Objectives Your work in the Chemistry department has center on course work and lab work. Learning does not stop with your undergraduate education. Professors and professionals of all sorts are constantly learning too, but we rarely, if ever, find the answers to our questions in text books or on the internet. Instead we look for clues in the literature and from our colleagues. We also share our results at conferences and seminars.

In this seminar class you will not be giving presentations, but rather learning how to learn from seminar presentations. You will be encouraged to interact with the speaker in a professional manner. Finally, it is hoped that the seminar series will give some ideas about which career path you may wish to follow.

Learning from a seminar is difficult. The subject material is usually quite advanced. Some speakers/presentation are better than others. You will be pushed outside of your comfort zone. The more you know about the subject area, the more of the presentation you will understand. To get the most out of the presentation one must come prepared having done some background work. Therefore you will read and discuss a relevant journal article prior to the seminar presentation.

Seminars are meant to be interactive. The back and forth between the speaker and the audience is critical to learning.

Details This fall we will have “seminar presentations” every 2-3 weeks. These seminars will be interleaved with “seminar prep work” (reading and questions) during the “off” weeks.

The seminar prep will consist of reading a journal article and answering a series of questions. You will use the class period to read the article and work out answers to the questions. I will help introduce new material as needed. Due dates for the assignments will be announced each class, but will general be at the beginning of the next class period. The questions will focus on background material and key results. Your may work in pairs or small groups, but you may not copy verbatim the answers of a colleague (see AI section). The purpose of this assignment is to leave you better prepared to follow the seminar presentation in the following week.

On the day of the seminar presentation I will be looking for students to take the speaker out to lunch (e.g. dining center or Suzanne's). I would like to include as many of you as possible, although I realize some of you will have conflicts with other classes, so that is not mandatory. I will try to mix juniors and seniors for lunch. Lunch with the speaker is usually an enjoyable event that both speaker and students look forward to.

I will be looking for "volunteers" to introduce the speaker at the the beginning of the seminar. We anticipate that the presentation will last about 40-45 followed by 10-15 minutes of question and answer. *You are expected to ask questions.* It is part of your grade. After the seminar you will have to turn in a very brief summary of the presentation.

Grades Your grade will be based on:

- (1) Homework assignments (due at the beginning of class)
- (2) Seminar summaries (due at the end of the seminar)
- (3) Participation in the seminar *as demonstrated by asking questions*
- (4) Additional assignments as announced

Tentative Schedule

COVID and other unforeseeable factors could affect the planned schedule. Stay flexible. . . . and stay tuned. We will adjust the program as necessary.

9/6	Course Introduction
9/13	seminar prep
9/20	seminar prep
9/27	Dr. John D. Thoburn (RMC)
10/4	seminar prep
10/11	TBA
10/18	seminar prep
10/25	TBA
11/1	seminar prep
11/8	TBA
11/15	seminar prep
11/22	Dr. Emma Tiernan (UVa)
11/29	no class - Happy Thanksgiving !
12/9	Dr. Douglas McIlwaine (ChemTreat)

ADA Randolph-Macon College is committed to providing access to programs and services for qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and require accommodations to participate in and complete requirements for this course, please notify your instructor and contact the Disability Support Services Office (DSS@rmc.edu or 804-752-7343) for verification of eligibility and determination of specific accommodations.

PED Policy All phones and personal electronic devices should be silenced and put away for the duration of each class session, with the following exceptions: (1) in order to take electronic class notes, or (2) if a student has a legitimate requirement for an electronic device in class -- for example, because of accommodation for a disability, on-call duty as an EMT, etc. -- the student should clear the use of the device with the instructor BEFORE the class session starts. **Under NO circumstances should you be web surfing, texting, checking e-mail, etc. during class or seminar. Doing so is not only counter-productive, it is rude to the guest.** Accessing your cell phone or other electronic device for any purpose during a quiz, exam, or other in-class graded assignment, without prior instructor approval, will be considered a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity and will be handled according to the Code's procedures.

Academic Integrity

You are expected to adhere to the Code of Academic Integrity as found in your student handbook. Any infraction of this code (such as plagiarism, cheating, or allowing others to cheat) will result in appropriate action by the course instructor per the Code. **Always reference any source of information in all your work.** For problem sets, I encourage you to work together. Copying work, however, is cheating. It is also really dumb to copy homework when you don't understand what you are copying. Such action will not help you understand the seminar. If you have any questions, please ask the instructor. It is always better to ask than to end up with an AI charge!

Virginia Department of Education Licensure

For students seeking Licensure from the Virginia Department of Education, this course will ensure competence in the following areas:

Understanding of the nature of science and scientific inquiry including the:

- a) Reliability of scientific knowledge and its constant scrutiny and refinement;
- b) Self-checking mechanisms used by science to increase objectivity including peer review.