On the class website:
- Proposal review guide with instructions e.g. formatting, turning in your critiques
- These slides
- Sample critique (Long chain FA proposal)
- Scoring guide for Study Section
Study Section and research proposal critiques

I will send you:
- Your study section assignment (May 9, 10 or 11, from 1pm until finished (~3:30pm)
- 2 proposals for you to write critiques
- The Abstract/Specific Aims page for the other proposals in your study section

You will email your 2 critiques to me & the 2 faculty leading your section - see instructions on website

Your faculty leaders will send Study Section meeting info later this week (e.g. in-person room + hybrid, or Zoom)
Study Section and research proposal critiques

**Purpose / learning objectives:**

**Writing the proposals:**
- Improve your ability to derive hypotheses on a circumscribed biological process and formulate experimental approaches to test the hypotheses
- Advance your ability to write proposals, convey your ideas and logic

**Reviewing the proposals:**
- Develop your skills in critical evaluation of scientific writing
- Begin to get a sense for how the peer review process works
Study Section and research proposal critiques

As a graduate student and as a scientist, you will be continuously evaluated on your written and spoken work.

The feedback you receive is constructive criticism:
- Process and think deeply about the feedback so that you can improve your work.
- The feedback may seem harsh, but adjust your perception about constructive criticism so that you can use the information to advance your work.
- Rarely (1% of time) feedback is not given in a constructive way. Have an experienced individual read the feedback to determine whether it is out of bounds - you are too close to the situation.
Study Section and research proposal critiques

Critiques

You are using the pre-2009 format of NIH research proposal critiques.

You are using the post-2009 scoring system, 1 – 9 to rank the proposals.

Your proposal critique will have no bearing on the grade of the proposal; the two faculty Study Section facilitators will write an evaluation of the proposal and give a letter grade for the student author.

Your proposal critique will be given to the student author as feedback.
Critiques, continued

Read the proposal carefully, think about the science, and compare and contrast with the proposal that you have written. Consult the literature when necessary to make sure that you understand the research area and experimental approaches that are new to you.

Critique has three parts

1. **Description section** - An objective description of the biological questions, hypothesis, and the experimental approaches that will be used to test the hypotheses. Present what you understand to be the investigators views.

   - When you receive the student critique of your proposal: if the Description content does not agree with what you tried to present, then think about how you could have a more effective presentation in the future.
Study Section and research proposal critiques

Critiques, continued

2. Critique section - Your evaluation of the proposal. Consider feasibility, originality and significance. Is this a significant problem/area? Does the author understand the area? What are the hypotheses and do they make sense? Do the experiments address the hypotheses? Is the genetics correct?

3. Summary section - In a few sentences, summarize your overall enthusiasm for the proposal and give a score on the 1 - 9 scale (1 = best). Mentally you want to compare the two proposals so that they are relatively ranked, as well as with the Abstract/Specific Aims of the other proposals.
Study Section and research proposal critiques

At the Study Section

• For each proposal: the two assigned students will give oral presentations of their critiques. Then faculty and students in the Study Section will ask the two presenters questions about the proposal. After the discussion is completed, the Study Section members will determine a score.

• Know well the two proposals that you read for your oral presentation of the critique. Plan the oral presentation for ~ 5 min. The faculty and students in the study section will ask follow-up questions, potentially on any aspect of the proposal.
At the Study Section, continued

- As happens at a real Study Section, if you believe that you’ve read a very strong proposal, you need to be an advocate for that proposal.

- Alternatively, if the proposal has issues, particularly with the genetics, you need to point those out. But don’t get stuck on small points.

- The two faculty members will help guide the discussion and will bring up areas that have not been brought up in the oral presentation.

- It typically takes ~30 min to fully discuss a proposal.
At the Study Section, continued

- Most study sections will have 5 proposals and 5 student reviewers, and 2 faculty members.

- You will be sent the Abstract/Specific Aims pages of all the proposals that are to be discussed. Read over the Abstract/Specific Aims pages so that you can ask questions of the reviewers and are able to rank all the proposals.
Study Section and research proposal critiques

Confidentiality

• All discussions during the Study Section and the identity of the reviewers of each proposal should not leave the study section meeting and remain confidential.

• If you are joining the study section by Zoom, please find a private area so you can participate confidentially.

• In most cases the faculty member will not know whose proposal they are reviewing, unless you were in their Discussion section. However, you will know the faculty reviewers, so that you are able to contact them with questions about their review.

• Your written critique will be shared with the proposal writer, so remember to use only your ID number on the critique document.
Return of critiques to proposal authors

- Faculty critiques, with grade, and the two student critiques will be emailed to you by ~ May 20.

- Read over all the critiques and think deeply about the comments and how the proposal could be improved. When you write your next proposal, think about these comments.

- If you have any questions or want clarification of what the faculty reviewer meant, it is highly recommended that you reach out to the faculty member for these points.