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

For 2023, study sections will be in person
Study Section and research proposal critiques

I will send you:
- Your study section assignment (May 8, 9 or 10, from 1pm until finished (~3:30pm) and location
- 2 proposals for you to write critiques
- The Abstract/Specific Aims page for the other proposals in your study section

Prior to study section: You will email your 2 critiques to the 2 faculty facilitating your section and cc me - see instructions on website including how to label the file and contents with the proposal writer’s ID and your ID
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
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 is out of bounds - you are too close to the situation.
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 (without your name) 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 investigator's 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.
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 2023 we are meeting in person.

• 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.
Study Section and research proposal critiques

At the Study Section, continued

• As happens at a real Study Section, if you believe that you’ve read a very strong proposal, 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 bring up areas that have not been brought up in the oral presentation.

• It typically takes ~30 min to fully discuss a proposal.
Study Section and research proposal critiques

At the Study Section, continued

• Each study section 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.

- 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 you may 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 19.

- 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.