

# U of T Biochemistry

[Biochemistry Website](#)



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Things are starting to return to normal; research labs have been approved to return to 100% capacity (with masks) and plans for all staff, faculty, and students to fully return to campus effective January are underway. Those who are interested in adopting a hybrid model for the first 6 months, will have the opportunity to submit a request by the end of the year (more details to come). I want to take a moment to thank of all members of the University of Toronto for their dedication, commitment, and contributions that allowed us to achieve this goal.

We often don't take the time to acknowledge the accomplishments of our faculty, staff and trainees. Check out this newsletter to see a list of those graduate students that received new scholarships this year. Congrats! If we missed any awards or students, apologies but please let us know. Also, in the next and final Newsletter of the year, we are planning to provide a list of all publications from Departmental members in 2020. Please be on the look-out for an email from Shenique to assist in this effort.

Finally, it is with regret that I inform everyone that two of our faculty members, Theo Hofmann and Brian Robinson, have passed away (see obituaries later in this newsletter). Both have enriched our department in innumerable ways and their absence will be felt.

For comments and feedback on the newsletter and to provide news to include in the next issue send an email to [biochemistry.office@utoronto.ca](mailto:biochemistry.office@utoronto.ca). We are always happy to hear from you!

Liliana Attisano

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### PhD Oral Seminars/Exams

All PhD exams are held online. Interested persons wanting to attend the oral seminar should contact the Students Advisor for approval

### Matthew Bourkas' PhD Remote Online Oral exam:

**Wednesday November 10, 2021 @ 1:00 - 4:00PM**

PhD Oral Seminar: 1:00 - 1:45PM

PhD Oral Exam: 2:00 - 4:00PM

**Thesis Title:** "Cultured Cell and Knock-In Mouse Models for Studying Transmitted and Spontaneous Prion Disease"

Supervisor: Joel Watts

Supervisory Members:

Gerold Schmitt-Ulms

Simon Sharpe

### Vaibhav Bhandari's PhD Oral:

**Monday December 13, 2021**

**10:00 am - 1:00 pm**

PhD Oral Seminar: 10:00-10:45 am

PhD Oral Exam: 11:00 am-1:00 pm

**Thesis Title:** "Characterization of the RavA-ViaA chaperone complex and its association with the fumarate reductase respiratory complex"

Supervisor: Walid Houry

Supervisory Members:

Trevor Moraes

Roman Melnyk

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## Graduate Updates

### **\*NEW - 3rd committee meeting required for students who wish to Transfer\***

Beginning this year, students who wish to Transfer from the MSc to PhD program will now be required to have a 3rd Committee Meeting. This meeting should occur between the 17th - 20th month of the program - for September 2020 entrants, this would be January to April 2022. Previously this decision was made at the second committee meeting, however, at the last Graduate Committee meeting, it was decided that a 3rd meeting would be more appropriate to determine this. It was also decided that this third meeting will include a member of the Transfer / Qualifying exam chair group, who will also be the Chair for that student Transfer exam. Further details to follow.

### **Graduate Courses**

There are a few new courses being offered in the Winter 2022 session that we just posted, including two courses on Islet Biology, by Rob Sreaton and Erin Mulvihill (University of Ottawa), covering diverse topics related to diabetes research.

Here is the current list of courses.

#### **Fall 2021 Semester:**

BCH2101 Scientific Skills for Biochemists  
Course Coordinators: Alex Palazzo & Nana Lee  
Required for all incoming BCH grad students

BCH2111 Post-transcriptional Control of Gene Expression  
Course Coordinators: Craig Smibert & Julie Claycomb

BCH2114 Frontiers in Drug Discovery  
Course Coordinator: Roman Melnyk

BCH2123 Protein Structure Prediction and Homology Modelling  
Course Coordinator: Gil Prive

BCH2201 Graduate Professional Development  
Course Coordinator: Nana Lee

#### **Winter 2022 Semester:**

BCH2125 Structure and Dynamics of Biomacromolecules Using Solid State NMR Spectroscopy  
Course Coordinator: Simon Sharpe

## PhD Oral Seminars/Exams cont'd -

### **Sabrina Sen's PhD Oral exam:**

Tuesday December 14, 2021

9:00 am - 12:00 noon

PhD Oral Seminar: 9:00-9:45 am

PhD Oral Exam: 10:00 am-12:00 pm

**Thesis Title:** "Identification of novel regulators of the Hippo pathway using positive selection genome wide CRISPR screens"

Supervisor: Liliana Attisano

Supervisory Members:

Andras Kapus

Igo Staglijar

Stephane Angers

## Upcoming Seminar Schedule

### **November 2021**

**Nov. 3:** Shelley He (Charles Deber Lab) / Brandon Payliss (Haley Wyatt) – host: W. Houry

**Nov. 10:** George Connell  
Speaker – Li-Huei Tsai – host: Raphaella So

**Nov. 17:** Wilson Zheng (Regis Pomes) / Giovanni (Johnny) Mastromarco (Kate Lee) – host: W. Houry

**Nov. 24:** Yi-Ting Tim Lee (Jason Maynes) / Jing Ze Wu (Spencer Freeman & Sergio Grinstein)

### **December 2021**

**Dec. 1:** Sioban O'Brien (Stephane Angers) / Sudeshna Nag (Angus McQuibban)

**Dec. 8:** George Connell  
Speaker – Agata Smogarzewska

**Dec. 15:** Maxine Ty (John Parkinson) / Yu-Qian (Katie) Mao (Walid Houry)

### Winter 2022 Semester cont'd:

BCH2135 Mitochondria and Metabolism in Human Health and Disease

Course Coordinator: Angus McQuibban

BCH2119 Advances in Epigenetics

Course Coordinator: Carol Schuurmans

BCH2120 Studies of Tissue Barriers: Regulation of Phenotype and Transport Across the Epithelium and Endothelium

Course Coordinators: Warren Lee & Andras Kapus

BCH2112 From Chaperones to CRISPR-Cas: the Incredible Genius of Phages

Course Coordinators: Karen Maxwell & Alan Davidson

BCH2203 Intro programming in Python

Course Coordinator: TBA

BCH2200 Design Thinking for Scientists

Course Coordinator: Nana Lee

BCH2139 Islet Biology I: Gene to Cell to Organ to Disease

Course Coordinators: Robert Screaton & Erin Mulvihill

BCH2140 Islet Biology II: Beyond Glucose Control: Molecular Targets, Diagnostics and Cutting-edge Technologies

Course Coordinators: Robert Screaton & Erin Mulvihill

JBB2025 Protein Crystallography (1/2 Credit)

Course Coordinator: Jim Rini

### U of T COVID Update

The deadline for providing proof of being fully vaccinated in [UCheck](#) (October 29) has now passed.

Check out the following links for the latest information regarding vaccinations, social distancing, masking and any other policy changes.

Guide to Fall 2021: [U'Together - Your guide to fall 2021 at U of T](#)

UCheck: [UCheck - Your guide to fall 2021 at U of T](#)

FAQs for Students: [COVID-19 – Undergraduate Student FAQs](#)

## Post-doc Updates

**November Postdoc Social:** We plan to get together during the week of Nov 15th for an afternoon tea and snacks with holiday cookie exchange! Please look out for an email from Biochemistry Postdocs for more information and to sign up.

**Join the Biochemistry Postdoc Listserv:** Join the listserv to get all the up-to-date information on professional development, mentoring, and networking opportunities. If you've already joined, let us know how we can improve using the same form. [U of T Postdoc Group Sign-Up](#)

**Polanyi Prizes for postdocs:** This annual award from the Ontario government will be granted to up to five early career researchers, each valued at \$20,000. Please learn more at [John Charles Polanyi Prizes](#)

**Writing and publishing your science:** On Thursday November 25, 2021, from 3-5pm, Dr. April Pawluk, former editorial board member at the journal Cell (PhD, Biochemistry, UT 2016) will be presenting "Writing and Publishing Your Science: for Postdocs." This session deals with how scientific editors at top journals evaluate manuscripts, how to write a great manuscript and sell your story as well as innovations and trends in the publishing world. Dr. Pawluk is currently the Strategic Program Manager, Harvard Chan School of Public Health. To register, please click here [Writing and Publishing Your Science: for Postdocs](#). Once you register, you will receive a confirmation email with the Zoom information.

**Postdoc survey - a chance to win \$50:** Please fill out our TFOM Postdoctoral Fellowship Survey [Temerty Faculty of Medicine Postdoctoral Fellowship Survey](#). The survey takes 7-8 minutes to complete and at the end, you can enter your email for a draw of either one \$50 gift certificate or one of two \$30 gift certificates.

## Job Posting.

The laboratories of Drs. Hyun Kate Lee and Ji-Young Youn (Hospital for Sick Children) are seeking an enthusiastic postdoctoral fellow to investigate the role of biomolecular condensates in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and its related disease, frontotemporal dementia (FTD). The aim of this funded project is to understanding protein interactions that regulate FUS mislocalization and aggregation in these diseases. Youn lab specializes in using proteomics and genetic approaches and Lee lab specialize in cell biology and biochemistry. Candidate will be working in both labs to learn cutting edge techniques in proteomics, neuronal cell biology and biophysics during this term.

Directly contact Hyun Kate Lee ([hyunokate.lee@utoronto.ca](mailto:hyunokate.lee@utoronto.ca)) or Ji-Young Youn ([jiyoung.youn@sickkids.ca](mailto:jiyoung.youn@sickkids.ca)).

## BGSU News

Hello Biochem!

Last month, the new BGSU executive team held their first meeting of the year. If anyone is still interested in joining the executive team or helping with future events, please don't hesitate to let us know at [yourbgsu@gmail.com](mailto:yourbgsu@gmail.com).

We also held out our pumpkin carving contest in October. Thank you everyone for participating and voting and hope you enjoyed the experience! Check out the side photos for these great submissions.

Lastly, we appreciate everyone for filling out the future monthly event interest poll. Our highest interest events are board games, ice skating and pub night/potluck. Stay tuned for something athletic this month.

Have a Happy November!

Your BGSU

Facebook: U of T Biochemistry Graduate Student Union – BGSU

Twitter: @yourbgsu

Email: [yourbgsu@gmail.com](mailto:yourbgsu@gmail.com)



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## Transcripts News

Hey Biochem!



This month we have a new piece on the site plus an announcement for a new ongoing series on Transcripts!

We have put out a new biochem cartoon -- bacteria and yeast have risen to protest forced labour in research labs. Make sure to check it out! [BIOCHEMISTRY CARTOON SERIES: BACTERIA AND THEIR EUKARYOTIC BUDDIES PROTESTING AGAINST FORCED LABOUR IN THE LAB!](#)



Tired of staring at your to-read list of journal articles? Transcripts is launching a new book club article series featuring reviews of fun, non-academic science-related reads. If you have recently come across an interesting book and you'd like to recommend it to the department, email me the book title to [emily.miraglia@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:emily.miraglia@mail.utoronto.ca). One of our writers may read and review the book, but we also encourage you to reach out if YOU would like to write a book review yourself!

Keep up with our newsletter column each month and follow us on Twitter @transcriptsblog for more updates on our work!

## Tips for Undergraduates

Are you interested in information on Undergrad courses and applying to grad school?

Recently graduated Biochemistry student, Zhuqi (Flora) Wang has prepared some useful tip sheets available through the links below:

[Transitioning to third/fourth year](#)

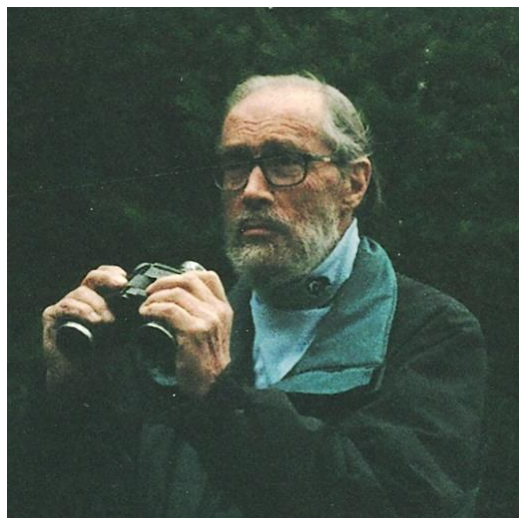
[Graduate School Applications](#)



## Student Awards (2021 – 2022)

Student Name	Supervisor	Award Name
<b>Abhimanyu (Avi) DasGupta</b>	Karen Maxwell	NSERC CGS M
<b>Mikaela Palandra</b>	Grant Brown	NSERC CGS M
<b>Jennifer Allott</b>	Roman Melnyk	CIHR CGS M
<b>Sheryl Nguyen</b>	Lynne Howell	NSERC CGS M
<b>Camila Aprosoff</b>	Haley Wyatt	NSERC CGS M
<b>Sarah Moldaver</b>	Stephane Angers	CIHR CGS M
<b>Elaine Thai</b>	Jean-Phillipe Julien	CIHR Vanier
<b>Yangyang (Kate) Jiang</b>	Grant Brown	OGS
<b>Nicholas Demers</b>	Peter Kim	OGS
<b>Brandon Payliss</b>	Haley Wyatt	OGS
<b>Yi-Ting Tim Lee</b>	Jason Maynes	OGS
<b>Quynh Huong Nguyen</b>	Trevor Moraes	OGS
<b>Marim Barghash</b>	Walid Houry	OGS
<b>Alison Mao</b>	Joel Watts	OGS
<b>Natalie Au</b>	Trevor Moraes	OGS
<b>Pramalkumar Patel</b>	Karen Maxwell	OGS
<b>Christopher Chin Sang</b>	Kate Hyun Lee	OGS
<b>Siobhan O'Brien</b>	Stephane Angers	OGS
<b>Sophia Hailemariam</b>	Jean-Philippe Julien	OGS
<b>Ian Lee</b>	Rotation student	OGS
<b>Ian Lee</b>	Rotation student	Dorothy Sterling Dow Walsh award

# Theodor Hofmann

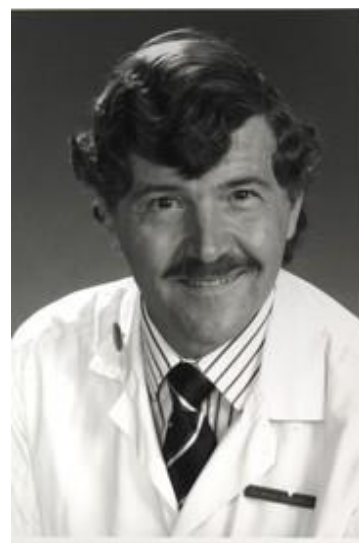


Professor Theo Hofmann, Professor Emeritus, in the Department of Biochemistry, passed away on Oct 5th at the age of 97.

Theo grew up in a small farming village in Switzerland, obtained his PhD in Switzerland and then moved to the UK in 1950 to undertake a post-doctoral fellowship. In 1964, Theo became a faculty member in the Dept. of Biochemistry at the

University of Toronto where he taught and conducted research, primarily on proteases. Dr. Hofmann was president of Toronto Biochemical and Biophysical Society and served as Associate Editor for the Canadian Journal of Biochemistry. Upon his retirement in 1989, the Annual Theo Hofmann Biochemistry Lecture was established, which, as many of you know, he enthusiastically attended for many years thereafter. As for hobbies, Theo was an avid skier, mountain climber and birder.

# Brian Robinson



Professor Brian H. Robinson, Professor in the Department of Biochemistry, passed away this weekend.

Dr. Robinson obtained his BSc and PhD (1968) and the University of Bristol, undertook post-doctoral studies at the University of Toronto and then the University of Sheffield. He joined the Dept. of Biochemistry in 1975 and had his research lab in mitochondrial metabolism located at The Hospital for Sick Children. Throughout his research career, he accrued over 16,000 citations and supervised many trainees with our current faculty member Dr. Nana Lee being one of them.

He was known for his infectious laughter, bringing donuts to the lab for his team, kind and superb mentorship and the most enjoyable holiday parties with his entire lab as actors in different short skits every year.