MCB4422: Probiotics (3 credits)  
Spring 2024

MCB4422 is an upper division course on probiotics. This course will cover the use of microorganisms to promote a health status in the animal and human host. This course will provide a conceptual background in microbiology and immunology for the use of microorganisms for the prevention or treatment of animal and human diseases.

**Student Learning Outcomes** – After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the history of probiotics
- Compare and contrast the use of lactic acid bacteria, *Bifidobacterium* and *Propionibacterium* as probiotics
- Understand the range of proposed probiotics and the challenges in ensuring their safety and efficacy
- Compare and contrast the mechanisms used by probiotic microorganisms to modulate the host immune responses in the animal and in the human host
- List the proposed uses of probiotic microorganisms for the prevention or treatment of animal and human diseases
- Compare and contrast the applications of prebiotics, probiotics, postbiotics and symbiotics
- Discuss current research efforts and proposed applications of probiotics for animal and human health

**Lectures:** Online through Canvas

**Instructor:** Dr. Graciela L Lorca

**Office:** Genetics Institute, Room 307

**WebPage:** Canvas ([https://ufl.instructure.com/](https://ufl.instructure.com/)). Please select MCB4422

**On line help with classroom technology:** http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/

**Pre-requisite:** MCB3020 or MCB3023

**Communication:** for questions regarding class and textbook content use the Discussion Board, for issues on Homework Assignments, class organization check first the syllabus, the announcements and calendar on Canvas, then post your questions on the discussion board. For all other issues contact Dr. Graciela Lorca.
Office hours: Tuesdays 2-3 PM through ZOOM Conferences, IN PERSON (Genetics Institute Rm 307) or By appointment: (only if you cannot make it to office hours) send an e-mail with three suggested times and I will choose one for us to meet.

VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS: will be available every week through the ZOOM tool in Canvas. To participate go to ZOOM Conferences in the left of your screen and join! You will receive a weekly remainder by email.

Contact Information: Use emails through Canvas ONLY (personal emails should only be used in a case of real emergency)

Dr. Graciela L Lorca:

Email (the most efficient): ONLY use Canvas e-mail (If you do not have access to the e-learning platform and need to contact me for an emergency, use glorca@ufl.edu)

Phone: 273 8090 (please leave a message).

- Discussion Board: A discussion board is available in Canvas. It is very useful, please post and answer your questions on class content and organization there. Postings and answers are monitored by the instructor to make sure no mistakes get propagated. There are several discussion themes. Please post your questions in the adequate section.

Material

- Textbook: textbook is NOT required, this course is based on peer reviewed papers either available for free through the links provided or through the UF library (ejournals).

- Suggested readings: For each module, suggested readings will be posted as pdf documents on Canvas or as links to download them from PUBMED (see working list at the end of the document). Remember to connect to UF through VPN (if outside campus) before accessing the journals (https://connect.ufl.edu/it/wiki/pages/glvpn.aspx).

Assessment of learning

1. Activities (220 points): Activities will be assigned by Unit.
   • Assignments 1 to 4 (30 points each). These assignments include online research on diverse topics such as "Introducing my favorite putative probiotic microorganism", “Cell wall homeostasis in LAB”, “Microbiome based therapeutics”, and “Market claims: is there scientific evidence?". These activities are mandatory and count towards the final grade. They should be completed by the deadline indicated on Canvas.
LATE SUBMISSION POLICY: a 5% deduction will be applied per day that the assignment is late.

- **Weekly activities “Main concepts that I should know” (9 points each).** The goal of these assignments is that the student keeps up with reading of the material on a weekly basis. To achieve this goal, you are required to design questions that will assess the main concepts of this unit. The activities are mandatory and count towards the final grade. **They should be completed by the deadline indicated on Canvas.**
  
  **LATE SUBMISSION POLICY:** a 5% deduction will be applied per day that the assignment is late.

2. **Exams (780 points):** Exams will assess your knowledge of the concepts covered during the lectures. Students must sign up on ProctorU at least 72 hours in advance. You will have to start the exam before 9 PM ET for test 1-3 and before 7 PM ET for test 4 (to allow time for system check up and completion of the test before it closes at 11 PM ET).

   The assessment will be performed in **Three Mandatory Mid-term exams.** The student will be given the option to take a final cumulative exam to improve the grade obtained through the mid-term exams.

   - **Mid-terms (780 points):** There will be three 50 minutes proctored mid-term exams (260 points each) with multiple choice questions, match and/or true/false type of questions. **All exams are mandatory and will count towards the final grade.** Exams will test learning and understanding of material presented in lectures, assigned readings and in assignments.
   - **Optional Final to replace ONE test (with the lowest grade) will be available during Finals Week.** The students MUST have taken all three tests to qualify for the Optional Final. This cumulative test will include all the content included in Units 1 to 5 and will be worth 250 points.

*Make-Up policy:* Make-up exams will ONLY be allowed with a VALID justification. If one exam is missed, it will result in a score of 0 for the test (see below for “Excused absences”).

*Excused absences:*  

Documentation MUST be provided for absences caused by serious illness, accident, jury duty, or death in the immediate family. You must contact the instructor **as soon as possible** of the missed exam and I will arrange an alternative time for the exam.

*After the exam:* The grades will be available on Canvas five days after the exam, unless notified by an announcement. Test questions will be made available through personal meetings. After the scores release the student will have **two weeks** to submit questions about the test or claim mistakes in grading. No claims will be considered after that time.
Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work are consistent with university policies that can be found at: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx.

**Grades and Grade Points**

For information on current UF policies for assigning grade points, see https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/

**Grading:** Straight scale

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>900 or above</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>860-899</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>750-789</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>720-749</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>690-719</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>660-689</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D-</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>560 or below</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Module. Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08-Jan *</td>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>Probiotics: definitions, history and classification</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Definitions and History</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2. Classification and physiology: Lactic acid bacteria (LAB)</td>
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<td>3. Classification and physiology: <em>Bifidobacterium</em> and <em>Propionibacterium</em></td>
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<td>4. Impact of genomics on the characterization of probiotics_LAB part 1</td>
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<td>4. Impact of genomics on the characterization of probiotics_LAB part 2</td>
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<td>26 Jan</td>
<td>Unit 2</td>
<td>Biotechnological applications of Lactic acid bacteria</td>
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<td>5. The uses of LAB in food fermentation -part 1</td>
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<td>5. The uses of LAB in food fermentation -part 2</td>
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<td>6. Antimicrobials components of LAB</td>
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<td>7. Bacteriophages from LAB</td>
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<td>8. Nutraceutics and high value metabolites produced by LABs</td>
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<td>05 Feb</td>
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<td>Assignment 2 due</td>
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<td>9-10 Feb</td>
<td>Test 1 (Units 1 and 2, Modules 1-8)</td>
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<td>01 Mar</td>
<td><strong>Unit 3</strong> Interactions of probiotics with the host immune system</td>
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<td>9. Overview on the adaptive and innate immune response - Part 1</td>
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<td>9. Overview on the adaptive and innate immune response - Part 2</td>
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<td>10. Immunomodulatory properties of probiotics: bacterial surface proteins</td>
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<td>11. Immunomodulatory properties of probiotics: interactions with the immune system</td>
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<td>12. Engineering LAB and <em>Bifidobacterium</em> for mucosal delivery of health-associated molecules: Genetic tools</td>
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<td>12. Engineering LAB and <em>Bifidobacterium</em> for mucosal delivery of health-associated molecules</td>
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<tr>
<td>01 Mar</td>
<td>Assignment 3 due</td>
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<td>8-9 Mar</td>
<td>Test 2 (Units 3 and 4, Modules 9-17)</td>
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<td>5 Apr</td>
<td>Assignment 4 due</td>
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<td>19-20 Apr</td>
<td>Test 3 (Unit 5, Modules 18-23)</td>
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<td>28-29 Apr</td>
<td>Optional Final (Units 1-5, Modules 1-23)</td>
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*Release date for the Unit on Canvas*

**University of Florida Policies**

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Attendance and Make-Up Work

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Services for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center (https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Campus Helping Resources

Health and Wellness

- U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website (https://umatter.ufl.edu/) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

- Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website (https://counseling.ufl.edu/) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

- Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website (https://shcc.ufl.edu/).

- University Police Department: Visit UF Police Department website (https://police.ufl.edu/) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies). UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website (https://ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center).

- GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website (https://gatorwell.ufsa.ufl.edu/) or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources
• E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
• Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services (https://career.ufl.edu/).
• Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources (https://uflib.ufl.edu/).
• Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring (https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/).
• Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers (https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/).
• Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information (https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-%20code-student-conduct-code/).
• On-Line Students Complaints: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process (https://distance.ufl.edu/state-authorization-status/#student-complaint).

Course Evaluation
Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via https://ufl.bluerai.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

Class demeanor
Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all.

Netiquette guide for online courses
It is important to recognize that the online classroom is in fact a classroom, and certain behaviors are expected when you communicate with both your peers and your instructors. These guidelines for online behavior and interaction are known as netiquette.

Academic Honesty
As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.” You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission for you to collaborate on course tasks (e.g. assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is your
individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information regarding the Student Honor Code, please see: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code.

Additional comments regarding academic integrity:

Students are encouraged to discuss material with each other from the course, help each other understand concepts, study together, and even discuss assessment questions with each other once the quiz window is closed. However, the following is considered academic dishonesty, and I expect that no student will ever do any of the following:

- Have another person complete a quiz in this course
- Copy another student’s quiz in this course
- Collaborate with anyone during a quiz in this course
- Discuss the questions and answers of a quiz with other students while the quiz window is still open
- Manipulate and/or distribute any materials provided in this course for any purpose (including course lecture slides).
- Use any materials provided by a previous student in the course

Software Use

All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

Microsoft Office 365 Software is free for UF students

http://www.it.ufl.edu/gatorcloud/free-office-365-downloads/

Other free software is available at:

http://www.software.ufl.edu/

To check for availability of the media and technical requirements, contact the UF Computing Help Desk at (352)392-HELP(4357).

University of Florida Complaints Policy and Student Complaint Process

Most problems, questions and concerns about the course will be resolved by professionally communicating with the instructors.

The University of Florida believes strongly in the ability of students to express concerns regarding their experiences at the University. The University encourages its students who wish to file a written complaint to submit that complaint directly to the department that manages that policy.

If a problem really cannot be resolved by communicating with the instructor or the TAs you can contact

• Online Course:  http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process.

This said, professionalism is a two-way-street. Unprofessional behavior of students includes, among other things: lack of communication, blaming other people or external factors, lying, affecting others negatively in a group or in the class, not accepting criticism and not being proactive in solving problems or seeking help. Furthermore, faculty often have family and other obligations to tend to. Over the weekend, replies to your inquiries or questions maybe delayed.

If a student is lacking professionalism repeatedly, the instructor has the rights to file formal complaint against the student through the Dean of Student office.

Suggested Readings and Sources

Unit 1. Probiotics: definitions, history and classification

Module 1. Definitions and History

Module 2. Classification and physiology: Lactic acid bacteria (LAB)


Module 3. Classification and physiology: Bifidobacterium and Propionibacterium


Module 4. Impact of genomics on the characterization of probiotics


Unit 2. Biotechnological applications of Lactic acid bacteria

Module 5. The uses of LAB in food fermentation


Module 6. Antimicrobials components of LAB

Module 7. Bacteriophages from LAB


Module 8. Nutraceutics and high value metabolites produced by LABs


Unit 3. Interactions of probiotics with the host immune system

Module 10. Immunomodulatory properties of probiotics: bacterial surface proteins


Module 11. Immunomodulatory properties of probiotics: interactions with the immune system


**Module 12. Engineering LAB and *Bifidobacterium* for mucosal delivery of health-associated molecules**


**Unit 4. Probiotics safety and efficacy**

**Module 13. FAO/WHO Guidelines on Probiotics**


**Module 14. Safety considerations on probiotics**


Module 15. Environmental factors influencing the efficacy of probiotic bacteria

Module 16. Efficacy of probiotics in Human Subjects


**Module 17. Probiotics in Animal Production and Health**


**Unit 5. New frontiers in probiotic’s development**

**Module 18. Overview on the microbiome**

• Workshop Slides - JCVI Blog - J. Craig Venter Institute


• Human Microbiome Project https://commonfund.nih.gov/hmp/initiatives

Module 19. Manipulation of the microbiome by probiotics


Module 20. Microbiome research to identify new probiotic microorganisms


Module 21. Fecal transplants as probiotics


Module 22. Probiotics, prebiotics, symbiotics and postbiotics


Module 23. Psychobiotics: manipulation of bacteria–gut–brain signals


