Goals:
The goal of this class is to prepare each student to write and defend a grant proposal, which is a degree requirement. This is a half-credit class and is graded.
Your candidacy exam is designed to prepare you for thinking about and performing cutting edge research. This is the time when you dig into the literature, define a problem of your own, and articulate what you will do, what you will learn and why it’s important. This is a large undertaking and you should expect this process to be:
- **Challenging** - we expect you to do something you have likely not done before.
- **Time-consuming** – this is a lot of stimulating work.
- **Rewarding** - this will provide you with the intellectual underpinning for your graduate experience, regardless of whether your proposal focuses on your actual thesis project or not.

A major goal of this class is to teach you to think critically about a research problem and to translate this into a compelling research proposal. You will learn to do this by (1) working on the mechanics of writing the proposal, (2) reviewing past submitted fellowship proposals (in a mock study section format) to learn the do’s and don’ts about preparing a compelling proposal and (3) preparing compelling specific aims for your own proposal.

Grading:
You will have two written assignments:
1. Provide written critiques of 2 grants (due by noon on day of critiques to RM, KL, HN)
2. Write (and rewrite) your specific aims (see syllabus for specific assignments)

Grades will be based on your paragraph rewrite, written and oral critiques, written and oral presentation of your specific aims and class participation.

Syllabus
Classes will be held on Mondays (2:00-4:00 PM) and Fridays (1:00-3:00 PM) in room BRB 501 from Jan. 12th – March 16th. Classes will not be held on Jan. 15th (MLK holiday), Jan. 26th (BMB recruitment) and Feb. 9th (BMB recruitment).

*** Assignment for 1/12: Read assigned grants for Mock study section I  
[Lemmon_4 (Narayan) and Degrado_3 (Reig)]

Friday 1/12  
RM, KL, HN

*Introduction, Course Organization*
Elements of a proposal - For your candidacy exam you need to write a proposal.
- How best to communicate science? Think backwards.
- What does a proposal look like?
  - Overview: Abstract, Specific Aims, Significance, Innovation, Approach
- Abstract: Summary of the 4 sections described below.
- Specific Aims: 1 page, spell out the overall goal (hypothesis/question), describe why it is important and how you will achieve the goal.
  - How do you formulate and address a meaningful hypothesis?
  - What is the difference between a hypothesis-driven proposal (good), a technology-driven proposal (good), and a “fishing expedition” (bad)?
- Significance: ~1 page, convey why your goal is important.
- Innovation: ~1/3-1/2 page, highlight innovative features of the technical or conceptual aspects of your proposal.
- Approach: ~ 4 ½ pages, describe how you will carry out the proposed experiments.

**Mock Study Section - I**
- Discussion of how proposals are reviewed at the NIH?
- KL and RM will review the Narayan and Reig grants as examples for your own study sections
- Grants will be assigned for future Mock Study Sections

*** Assignment for 1/13: Reading assigned on technical writing (Gopen & Swan) ***

Monday 1/16 MLK Holiday – No class

Friday 1/19  HN
Writing clearly, coherently, and persuasively: from word-choice to paragraph organization

Monday 1/22  HN
Continued: Writing clearly, coherently, and persuasively: from word-choice to paragraph organization

Friday 1/26  NO CLASS (BMB Student Recruitment)

*** Assignment: Read, review and score grants that you are assigned for your mock study section. ***

**Students:** Karen Acosta (KA), Kiara Berrios (KB), Nikaela Bryan (NB), Thomas Campbell (TC), Olivia Dickens (OD), Charlotte Fare (CF), Craig Gambogi (CG), Yekaterina Kori (YK), Richard Lauman (RL), Mariel Mendoza (MM), Ashley Viera-Ortiz (AV), Burgos Zaya-Bazan (BZ)

Monday 1/29  RM, KL
Mock Study Section II (review 3 grants)
You will participate in a study section in which you will present, defend/attack, and score the proposals you were assigned.

*** Reviewers: KA, KB - Black_121013; NB, TC - Lynch_1_121113; OD, CF - Marks_121013
Written critiques emailed by noon 1/29 to RM, KL, HN. ***

Friday 2/2  RM, KL
Mock Study Section III (review 3 grants)
You will participate in a study section in which you will present, defend/attack, and score the proposals you were assigned.

*** Reviewers: CG, YK - Birnbaum_Lab_1; RL, MM - Marmorstein_1_122013; AV, BZ - MSTP_1_121113;
Written critiques emailed by noon 2/2 to RM, KL, HN. ***

Monday 2/5
Mock Study Section IV (review 3 grants)
You will participate in a study section in which you will present, defend/attack, and score the proposals you were assigned.

*** KB, NB - Kohli_010515; TC, KA - Vinogradov_101016
CF, CG - Radhakrishnan_Lab_1
Written critiques emailed by noon 2/5 to RM, KL, HN.

*** Assignment Due 2/5 by 6 pm: KA and KB email their specific aims to RM, KL, and HN for comments.

Friday 2/9 NO CLASS (BMB Student Recruitment)

Monday 2/12 RM, KL
Mock Study Section V (review 3 grants)
You will participate in a study section in which you will present, defend/attack, and score the proposals you were assigned.

*** YK, OD - Wand_Lab; MM, AZ - Lemmon_Lab_6
BZ, RL – Ferguson_Lab_2;
Written critiques emailed by noon 2/12 to RM, KL, HN.

*** Assignment Due 2/12 by 6 pm: NB and TC email their specific aims to RM, KL and HN for comments.

Friday 2/16 RM, KL, HN
Oral presentation of Specific Aims (KA, KB)
Those in Group 1 will give 15 minute presentation of their Specific Aims, with a maximum of two slides, and receive feedback from students, KL, RM, and HN.

*** Assignment Due 2/16 by noon: KA and KB email their specific aims to faculty & students.
*** Assignment Due 2/16 by 6 pm: OD and CF email their specific aims to RM, KL and HN for comments.

Monday 2/19 RM, KL, HN
Oral presentation of Specific Aims (NB, TC)
Those in Group 2 will give 15 minute presentation of their Specific Aims, with a maximum of two slides, and receive feedback from students, KL, RM, and HN.

*** Assignment Due 2/19 by noon: NB and TC email their specific aims to faculty & students.
*** Assignment Due 2/19 by 6pm: CG and YK email their specific aims to RM, KL, and HN for comments.

Friday 2/23 RM, KL, HN
Oral presentation of Specific Aims (OD, CF)
Those in Group 3 will give 15 minute presentation of their Specific Aims, with a maximum of two slides, and receive feedback from students, KL, RM, and HN.

*** Assignment Due 2/23 by noon: OD and CF email their specific aims to faculty & students.
*** Assignment Due 2/23 by 6 pm: RL and MM email their specific aims to RM, KL, and HN for comments.
*** Assignment Due 2/23 by 6 pm: KA and KB email revised specific aims to RM, KL and HN if necessary.

Monday 2/26 RM, KL, HN
Oral presentation of Specific Aims (CG, YK)
Those in Group 4 will give 15 minute presentation of their Specific Aims, with a maximum of two slides, and receive feedback from students, KL, RM, and HN.

*** Assignment Due 2/26 by noon: CG and YK email their specific aims to faculty & students.
*** Assignment Due 2/26 by 6 pm: AV and BZ email their specific aims to RM, KL, and HN for comments.
*** Assignment Due 2/26 by 6 pm: NB and TC email revised specific aims to RM, KL and HN if necessary.

Friday 3/2 RM, KL, HN
Oral presentation of Specific Aims (RL, MM)
Those in Group 5 will give 15 minute presentation of their Specific Aims, with a maximum of two slides, and receive feedback from students, KL, RM, and HN.

*** Assignment Due 3/2 by noon: RL and MM email their specific aims to faculty & students.
*** Assignment Due 3/2 by 6 pm: OD and CF email revised specific aims to RM, KL and HN for comments if necessary.

Monday 3/5 RM, KL, HN
Oral presentation of Specific Aims (AV, BZ)
Those in Group 6 will give 15 minute presentation of their Specific Aims, with a maximum of two slides, and receive feedback from students, KL, RM, and HN.

*** Assignment Due 3/5 by noon: AV and BZ email their specific aims to faculty & students.
*** Assignment Due 3/5 by 6 pm: CG and YK email revised specific aims to RM, KL and HN for comments.

Friday 3/9 RM, KL, HN
Additional discussion of specific aims if needed.
Those in Group 7 will give 15 minute presentation of their Specific Aims, with a maximum of two slides, and receive feedback from students, KL, RM, and HN.

*** Assignment Due 3/9 by noon: Presenters email their specific aims to faculty & students.
*** Assignment Due 3/9 by 6 pm: RL and MM email revised specific aims to RM, KL and HN for comments if necessary.

Monday 3/12 RM, KL, HN
*** Assignment Due 3/12 by noon: Presenters email their specific aims to faculty & students.
*** Assignment Due 3/12 by 6 pm: AV and BZ email revised specific aims to RM, KL and HN for comments if necessary.

Friday 3/16 RM, KL, HN
Additional discussion of specific aims if needed.

*** Assignment Due 3/16 by noon: Presenters email their specific aims to faculty & students.
Additional Important Deadlines:
March 21 Obtain approval of final title and specific aims from exam committee.
April 2 Distribute written proposal to the committee (at least two weeks before exam)
April 16 – May 4 Oral Exams Take Place
Friday June 4 Last date to complete any 2nd attempts of either written or oral exams.

Candidacy Exam Advisory Group (preliminary, to be confirmed)
The chair of your committee will be assigned from this group of BMB faculty members

Yair Argon Ronen Marmorstein
Paul Axelsen Mike Ostap
Ben Black Ravi Radhakrishnan
Ben Garcia Heiner Roder
Yale Goldman Brian Salzberg
Mark Goulian James Shorter
Harry Ischiropoulos Kim Sharp
Rahul Kohli Dave Speicher
Michael Lampson Greg Van Duyne
Mitch Lewis Sergei Vinogradov
Kristen Lynch Josh Wand