

Course Title: Biomedical Ontology
Course Subject Code: BMI **Course Number:** 508
Type of Instruction: SEM **Class Number:** 17373
Semester: Fall 2026 **Delivery mode:** Remote (exam in person)

Version July 23, 2026

1. COURSE INFORMATION	2
2. COURSE DESCRIPTION.....	2
3. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLO)	2
4. COURSE REQUIREMENTS	4
5. GRADING POLICY	5
6. COURSE FEES	6
7. COURSE ORGANIZATION / SCHEDULE	7
C1. AUG 26 / COURSE INTRODUCTION – ONTOLOGY AND REPRESENTATIONAL SYSTEMS / SLO 4, 5	7
C2. SEP 2 / WHAT IS AN ONTOLOGY? / SLO 4, 5	7
C3. SEP 9 / LOGICS FOR ONTOLOGY DEVELOPMENT AND AXIOMATIZATION / SLO 1, 2, 9.....	8
C4. SEP 16 / BASIC FORMAL ONTOLOGY: CONTINUANTS / SLO 1, 2	8
C5. SEP 23 / BASIC FORMAL ONTOLOGY: OCCURRENTS / SLO 1, 2.....	9
C6. SEP 30 / GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR REALISM-BASED ONTOLOGY DEVELOPMENT / SLO 1, 2	9
C7. OCT 7 / RELATIONS IN BIOMEDICAL ONTOLOGIES / SLO 1, 2, 4, 7.....	10
C8. OCT 14 / USING THE PRINCIPLES OF REFERENT TRACKING FOR ONTOLOGY DEVELOPMENT / SLO 1, 4, 7	10
C9. OCT 21 / REALISM-BASED FOL-AXIOMS APPLIED TO STUDENT ONTOLOGIES / SLO 7, 9	10
C10. OCT 28 / ONTOLOGY FOR GENERAL MEDICAL SCIENCE / SLO 3, 6	11
C11. NOV 4 / PRINCIPLES FOR CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN ONTOLOGIES / SLO 8	11
C12. NOV 11 / EVALUATION OF ONTOLOGIES I / SLO 4, 6	11
C13. NOV 18 / EVALUATION OF STUDENT ONTOLOGIES AND WRAP-UP / SLO 7, 9	12
Nov 25 / NO CLASS.....	12
C14. DEC 2 / STUDENT PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS / SLO 1, 2, 5	12
C15. FINAL EXAM: DEC 9	12
8. ATTENDANCE POLICY	12
9. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY.....	12
10. CLASSROOM DECORUM.....	13
11. ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES.....	13
12. PROTECTION OF COURSE MATERIAL	13
13. UNIVERSITY SUPPORT SERVICES	13
14. TECHNOLOGY RECOMMENDATIONS	14
15. COURSE MATERIALS.....	14

1. Course Information

- Date(s)/Time(s): Wednesdays 10AM – 12.50/1PM
- Delivery Mode: Remote, real-time. Students must register for the Zoom sessions by visiting the [registration invitation link](#). Upon registration, students will receive the link to connect to all sessions. For their attendance to count, students are required to authenticate by logging into Zoom and keep their camera on at all times. Webcams should be at eye level and students should refrain from multi-tasking while in class. Final exam is in person except for attendants being US citizens, Green Card holders or students enrolled in an online degree program!
- Number of Credits: 3
- Course director/instructor: Werner Ceusters, MD
contact: wceusters@gmail.com
- Office hours: There are no fixed office hours. Students may however request a meeting by sending an email to the instructor thereby indicating dates and times they are available. When sent to the email address above between 8am and 5pm on weekdays, a same-day response will be provided.

2. Course Description

- This course provides an introduction to biomedical ontology. It will review how data and information are generated through biological and biomedical experiments and through patient care, and show how ontologies are used in accessing, maintaining and exploiting the results. We will describe how biomedical ontologies are developed and evaluated and provide a comparative critical analysis of the principal current ontology resources. We will also review the major theories, methods and tools for the development of ontologies, and illustrate how these are being used in different areas of biomedical research and healthcare. The methods and tools for applied ontology as well as the management and maintenance of biomedical ontologies will be discussed in detail including the principles of ontological realism and the implementation thereof in the Basic Formal Ontology (BFO).
- As part of the course, students will develop a very small ontology that falls within their domain of interest, ideally useful towards their final MSc or PhD degree requirements. Though small, it must satisfy all quality requirements discussed in the course. It will be gradually developed during the course and presented in a final oral presentation.
- Most classes in the course consists of a theoretical and practical part. The practical parts consist of tests, guided exercises or group work.
- Course prerequisites: none. This course is itself a prerequisite for BMI708.

3. Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)

Institutional Learning Outcomes (UB ILO) mapped to individual classes and assessments

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. Critical Reasoning: | C1 – C13; A1, T1, A3, A4, A5, A6, T2, final exam |
| 2. Literacy Skills: | C14; A1, A2, A7, A8 |
| 3. Ethics and Responsibility: | applied attendance, participation and assignment policies for this course |
| 4. Local and Global Diversity: | not applicable |
| 5. Collaborate Positively: | collaboration on assignments allowed as specified below |
| 6. Personal Skills: | C1 – C14; A2, A8 |
| 7. Service Engagement: | not applicable |

Course and program learning outcomes

Course Learning Outcomes; students will be able to:	BMI Program Outcomes / Competencies	Class	Instructional Method(s)	Assessment Method(s)
1. Understand and apply the principles of ontological realism	O1: Ontological Realism, the Basic Formal Ontology (BFO), and the Ontology of General Medical Science	C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, C8, C14	• Lit.: R3, R4, R5, R6, R7 • Lecture • Discussion • Guided exercise	• T1, T2 • A2, A3, A4, A5, A7, A8 • Final exam
2. Understand and apply the Basic Formal Ontology in ontology design	O1: Ontological Realism, the Basic Formal Ontology (BFO), and the Ontology of General Medical Science	C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, C14	• Lit.: R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9 • Lecture • Discussion • Guided exercise	• T1, T2 • A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8 • Final Exam
3. Understand and apply the Ontology of General Medical Science in biomedical ontology design	O1: Ontological Realism, the Basic Formal Ontology (BFO), and the Ontology of General Medical Science	C10	• Lit.: R10, R11 • Lecture • Guided exercise	• Final Exam
4. Understand the strengths and weaknesses of prevailing biomedical data, information and knowledge management paradigms	O2: Methods of data representation, manipulation, storage, analysis and mining in healthcare and biomedical research databases O3: Information retrieval and critical analysis skills	C1, C2, C7, C8, C12	• Lit.: R1, R2, R8, R9, R13 • Lecture • Discussion • Guided exercise	• A1, A2 • T1, T2 • Final Exam
5. Identify opportunities, risks and challenges to current biomedical data, information and knowledge management paradigms	O2: Methods of data representation, manipulation, storage, analysis and mining in healthcare and biomedical research databases	C1, C2, C14	• Lit.: R1, R2 • Lecture • Discussion • Guided exercise	• A1, A2, A7, A8 • T1, T2
6. Assess the quality of existing clinical research data repositories and ontologies using ontological principles	O3: Information retrieval and critical analysis skills O4: Technical approaches to acquiring, modeling, representing and managing healthcare and biomedical research knowledge O5: The evaluation of biomedical ontologies and the published	C10, C12, C13	• Lit.: R11, R13 • Lecture • Guided exercise	• T2 • Final exam

	biomedical ontology research literature			
7. Develop ontology-based solutions for quality improvement of biomedical and clinical research data	O4: Technical approaches to acquiring, modeling, representing and managing healthcare and biomedical research knowledge O6: Advanced methods and tools for managing biomedical ontologies	C7, C8, C9, C13	• Lit.: R5, R8, R9 • Lecture • Guided exercise • Discussion	• A3, A4, A5, A6, A8 • T2
8. Understand and apply the principles for life cycle management for biomedical ontologies	O8: The principles for change management and upgrades to biomedical ontologies	C11	• Lit.: R12 • Lecture • Guided exercise	• A5, A7, A8 • Final exam
9. Be able to use first-order logic for ontology development and axiomatization	O2: Methods of data representation, manipulation, storage, analysis and mining in healthcare and biomedical research databases	C3, C9, C12, C13	• Guided exercise	• A5, A6, A7, A8 • Final exam

4. Course Requirements

- Students must attend all classes and must participate in class discussions. This include also students who are registered for a completely online graduate program. Class recordings will be provided, but watching such recording does not count as having attended that class. Although no grade points are awarded for mainly attending (see section 5), 1% of the final score will be subtracted for each class not attended. For exceptions, see attendance policy regulations (section 8, on page 12). Classes are online through Zoom, while the final exam is in person.
- There are 12 papers and book chapters listed in section 15 below, indicated either as required or suggested in the course schedule. Reading materials will not exhaustively be covered in class, but students can at the beginning of the class ask for clarifications where needed. The content of required readings may be the topic of final exam questions while that is not the case for suggested readings unless the material is explicitly covered in class. BMI students with an orientation in Ontology are strongly suggested to also read the suggested papers.
- Some classes will include an in-class test, i.e. a test during the scheduled class time. Students absent for these classes will receive a 0% score for these tests unless the instructor has been informed through email about a valid reason for absence prior to the beginning of the class. When notified of absence in due time, the instructor may propose for that student an alternative test or assignment, or transfer the allocation of earnable points to a later assignment or the final exam.
- All assignments need to be completed prior to the deadline specified in the course schedule and uploaded as documents in the format specified for the assignment to the [assignment upload folder](#). No Google doc links or any other links to a cloud server are allowed. The filename before the file extension should be formatted as this: BMI508-[number of the assignment]-[your UBIT name]. For example, if the course director were a student and the dedicated format for the assignment would be MS Word, the name would be: "BMI508-A1-ceusters.docx".
- The first line in the document should always be your full name (first and last name) unless otherwise specified.

- The 'upload' date and time in the metadata header of the uploaded file will be taken for assessment of in-time delivery.
- When assignments are delivered past the due date, a penalty of *5% of the final score the student obtained for this assignment* will be applied for every 24 hours of delay. When such assignment is not delivered at all, the penalty will be equal to the % for which the assignment counts towards the final grade. Students unable to meet the deadline must inform the instructor by email and provide a valid reason prior to reaching the deadline. An alternative assignment and/or due date can then be agreed upon, be it entirely to the discretion of the instructor.
- To send email to the instructor, only use wceusters@gmail.com. Mails to ceusters@buffalo.edu will be ignored. You may email the instructor at any time. Mails related to the class should in the subject line be prefixed with 'BMI508' (without quotes), otherwise they will be ignored and not answered.

5. Grading Policy

- Grading follows [UB's standard graduate policies](#).
- Counts towards the final score:
 - Two in-class tests (T1, T2): 11%
 - Seven post-class assignments (A1 to A7): 44%
 - Final oral presentation (A8): 7%
 - Final exam: 38%
 - TOTAL: 100%
- Assignments will be graded based on rubric criteria and weighted according to the following detailed break-down. If the final results for all students are outside the expected range, curve grading might be used at the discretion of the course director. When applied, a student's grade will never be lower than the original grade.

Class	Date	Pre-class readings	Assessments	Due dates	Final Score weight
C1	26-Aug	R1			
C2	02-Sep	R2 (R2b, R2c)	Post-class assignment A1	07-Sep - noon	3%
C3	09-Sep		Post-class assignment A2	14-Sep - noon	4%
C4	16-Sep	R3	In-class open book test T1		4%
C5	23-Sep	R4	Post-class assignment A3	28-Sep - noon	5%
C6	30-Sep	R5	Post-class assignment A4	05-Oct - noon	6%
C7	07-Oct	(R6), R7			
C8	14-Oct	(R8), R9			
C9	21-Oct		In-class open book test T2 Post-class assignment A5	26-Oct - noon	7% 14%
C10	28-Oct	(R10), (R11)	Post-class assignment A6	09-Nov - noon	8%
C11	04-Nov	(R12)			
C12	11-Nov	R13			
C13	18-Nov		Post-class assignment A7	30-Nov – noon	4%
No class	25-Nov				
C14	02-Dec		In-class presentation A8		7%
EXAM	09-Dec		In-class open-book exam		38%
					100%

Scoring per student learning outcomes and assessments

SLO	Tests		Assignments								Exam	Totals
	T1	T2	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8		
1	1%	1%		1%	2%	3%	5%		1%	1%	10%	25%
2	1%	1%		1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	11%	20%
3											5%	5%
4	1%	1%	1%	1%							1%	5%
5	1%	1%	2%	1%								5%
6		2%									3%	5%
7		1%			2%	2%	2%	2%		3%	3%	15%
8							2%		1%	1%	1%	5%
9							4%	5%	1%	1%	4%	15%
Totals	4%	7%	3%	4%	5%	6%	14%	8%	4%	7%	38%	100%

Final Grades:

Grade	Quality Points	Percentage
A	4.0	93.0% -100.00%
A-	3.67	90.0% - 92.9%
B+	3.33	87.0% - 89.9%
B	3.00	83.0% - 86.9%
B-	2.67	80.0% - 82.9%
C+	2.33	77.0% - 79.9%
C	2.00	73.0% - 76.9%
C-	1.67	70.0% - 72.9%
D+	1.33	67.0% - 69.9%
D	1.00	60.0% - 66.9%
F	0	59.9 or below

The following F-grades might be assigned:

- F1 (for a student who participated beyond the 60% point of the class)
- F2 (for a student who started participating, but stopped prior to the 60% point of the class)
- F3 (for a student who did not participate in the class)

An interim grade of Incomplete (I) may be assigned if the student has not completed all requirements for the course. An interim grade of 'I' shall not be assigned to a student who did not attend the course. The default grade accompanying an interim grade of 'I' shall be any of the standard grades from the table above, including F1 and F2. The default grade shall become the permanent course grade of record if the 'I/x' grade is not changed through formal notice by the instructor upon the student's completion of the course.

An incomplete grade can be assigned only if successful completion of unfulfilled course requirements can result in a final grade better than the default grade.

6. Course Fees

Standard UB tuition and fees. No other fees specifically for this course.

7. Course Organization / Schedule

C1. Aug 26 / Course introduction – Ontology and representational systems / SLO 4, 5

Pre-class assignments:

a) required reading:

R1 [Introduction \(pages xix to xxiv\)](#) to: Arp, R., B. Smith, and A.D. Spear, *Building ontologies with basic formal ontology*. 2015, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. p. 1 online resource (245 p.) [1]
(Freely accessible with UB login)

b) After reading **R1**, reflect on the extent to which the issues discussed therein might be applicable to the research and developments you intend to carry out for your future MSc or PhD thesis or project. Be prepared to present and discuss your thoughts informally in class **C1**. No prior submission needed.

Class structure:

- a) Participant and instructor introduction
- b) Course introduction, housekeeping rules, expectations, course project work, final exam.
- c) Traditional lecture on the basics of representational systems
- d) Guided exercise on on-line available resources
 - a. SNOMED CT <https://browser.ihtsdotools.org/?>
 - b. Medical Subject Headings <https://meshb.nlm.nih.gov/search>
 - c. WHO Classification systems <https://www.who.int/classifications/en/>
 - d. BioPortal 'ontologies' <https://bioportal.bioontology.org/>
- e) Students will report on pre-class assignment (b) and explain their ideas, each presentation followed by discussion.

Post-class assignment:

Required reading:

R2 [What is an ontology? \(pages 1-26\)](#) in: Arp, R., B. Smith, and A.D. Spear, *Building ontologies with basic formal ontology*. 2015, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. p. 1 online resource (245 p.) [1]
(Freely accessible with UB login)
This paper describes ontology from a realism-based perspective, the paradigm that students have to follow for their assignments.

Suggested readings:

R2b: Guarino, N., D. Oberle, and S. Staab, [What Is an Ontology?](#), in Handbook on Ontologies, S. Staab and R. Studer, Editors. 2009, Springer Berlin Heidelberg: Berlin, Heidelberg. p. 1-17. [2]
This paper focuses on the logical aspects of ontologies. Although the authors take a conceptualist stance, the logical principles they describe are equally applicable to realism-based ontologies.

R2c: Rector, A., et al., [On beyond Gruber: "Ontologies" in today's biomedical information systems and the limits of OWL](#). J Biomed Inform, 2019. 100s: p. 100002. [3]
This paper clarifies the many confusions about the various artifacts that are nowadays called 'ontologies', most of them unwarranted.

C2. Sep 2 / What is an ontology? / SLO 4, 5

Required reading pre-class: see post-class assignments of **C1**

Class structure:

Traditional lecture on what an ontology is, key elements of an ontology, realism-based ontology, what ontologies are useful for.

Post-class assignment:

- **A1:** Reading **R1** contains on the [pages 17 to 19](#) several explicit examples of what went wrong in certain representational systems and explains why they are mistakes. Of these examples, pick three mistakes, each one being of a distinct type, and do for each of these examples the following:
 - (1) copy the example
 - (2) explain in 1 sentence what the type of mistake is,
 - (3) find a similar mistake in one of the demonstrated representational systems of which the links are provided in class **C1** that has not been discussed in class **C1**
 - (4) use what you learned from **R2** and the **C1** and **C2** lectures to propose a correction.
- Upload your work in a Word doc to the [assignment folder](#).
- Name of the file: 'BMI508-A1-[your ubitname].docx'
- Assessment:
 - Three concrete and distinct examples identified: 20%
 - Mistakes correctly explained: 20%
 - Similar mistakes found in representational system of your choice and explained why: 40%
 - Soundness of proposed corrections with argumentation and motivation from **R2** and lecture carried out: 20%.
- **Due date: Sep 7 – noon.**

C3. Sep 9 / Logics for ontology development and axiomatization / SLO 1, 2, 9

Class structure: Traditional lecture

Post-class assignment:

- a) Required reading: see **C4**
 - b) **A2:** prepare a short powerpoint presentation (maximum 5 minutes for presentation during the class) in which you describe in what area and how you intend to develop a small realism-based ontology useful for your final MSc or PhD project/thesis.
 - Required content: precise description of domain, motivation, examples of terms to be represented, challenges you see, intended application with concrete indication of the sort of topic entities it will be applied to. For students in BMI or Biomedical Sciences, the topic entity must be within the domain of biomedical informatics. Other students may select another topic type (pieces of equipment, plants, environmental entities, ...). Use previous classes, slides and readings as a guide.
 - Upload your work in a PowerPoint file to the [assignment upload folder](#). Name of the file: 'BMI508-A2-[your ubitname].pptx'
 - Assessment: extent to which the material discussed in classes **C1** to **C3** is appropriately applied.
- Due date: Sep 14 – noon**

C4. Sep 16 / Basic Formal Ontology: continuants / SLO 1, 2

Required reading pre-class:

- R3** [Introduction to Basic Formal Ontology I: continuants](#). (pages 85-120) in: Arp, R., B. Smith, and A.D. Spear, *Building ontologies with basic formal ontology*. 2015, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. p. 1 online resource (245 p.) [1]

Class structure:

- a) Student presentations of assignments **A2**
- b) Traditional lecture
- c) **T1:** in-class (time permitting, otherwise post class) test (open book) on the application of material discussed thus far in classes **C1** through **C3**

Post-class assignment:

required reading see **C5**

C5. Sep 23 / Basic Formal Ontology: occurrents / SLO 1, 2

Required reading pre-class:

- R4** [*Introduction to Basic Formal Ontology II: occurrents*](#). (pages 121-130) in: Arp, R., B. Smith, and A.D. Spear, *Building ontologies with basic formal ontology*. 2015, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. p. 1 online resource (245 p.) [1]

Class structure:

- a) Discussion of answers to **T1**
- c) Traditional lecture

Post-class assignment:

- a) Required reading see **C6**
- b) **A3**: Create a first version of your ontology consisting of at least 5 continuants and 3 occurrents satisfying the following requirements:
 - 1. they belong to your selected research domain presented in **A2**,
 - 2. they have not been discussed in class as part of **A1**, although they might have been mentioned,
 - 3. they are *not* terms from BFO,
 - 4. they are *not* all present in one single ontology published on the BioPortal or anywhere else,
 - 5. each entity type you selected must differ in at least one BFO universal it is subsumed by from all other selected entity types,
 - 6. no selected entity type may be subsumed by another selected entity type.
 - 7. for each selected entity type, the most specific BFO-term by which it is subsumed must be provided.
 - 8. create a scenario by providing for each selected entity type a particular and describe informally (in plain language) how in that scenario the 8 particulars are related so as to form one graph.

Upload your work in a word document to the [upload folder](#).

Name of the file: 'BMI508-A3-[your ubitname].docx'

- c) Assessment:
 - 1) The 8 terms satisfy requirements 1 to 6: 40% (1% loss for each requirement not satisfied)
 - 2) The 8 terms satisfy requirement (7) in that they are correctly classified in BFO at the appropriate level according to Fig 5.1 (p. 88) in **R3** for the continuants, and the terms listed in **R4**: 40% (% loss for magnitude of the difference between selected level and correct level)
 - 3) Motivation for your decisions re requirement (7): 10%. A motivation which is plausible or for which reasonable arguments are provided may be positively scored, despite the wrong classification of the term.
 - 4) Extent to which the scenario (requirement 8) is plausible in reality.

Due date: Sep 28 – noon

C6. Sep 30 / General principles for realism-based ontology development / SLO 1, 2

Required reading pre-class:

- R5** [*Principles of best practice I and II*](#). (pages 43-84) in: Arp, R., B. Smith, and A.D. Spear, *Building ontologies with basic formal ontology*. 2015, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. p. 1 online resource (245 p.) [1]

Class structure:

- a) interactive lecture
- b) discussion of issues with **A3**
- c) application of **R5** to a few terms from the students' ontologies.

Post-class assignment:

- o **A4**: Apply the principles for term selection, replacement, formatting and definitions, discussed in class and in **R5** to all the terms in your ontology so as to create version 2. Do this by amending your file for **A3**.

- [Upload your work](#). Name of the file: 'BMI508-A4-[your ubitname].docx'.
- **Due date: Oct 5 – noon.**

C7. Oct 7 / Relations in biomedical ontologies / SLO 1, 2, 4, 7

Suggested reading (for sure for students with concentration in Biomedical Ontology):

R6 Smith, B., et al., [Relations in biomedical ontologies](#). Genome Biol, 2005. **6**(5): p. R46. [4]

Required reading pre-class:

R7 [The ontology of relations](#). (pages 131-150) in: Arp, R., B. Smith, and A.D. Spear, *Building ontologies with basic formal ontology*. 2015, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. p. 1 online resource (245 p.) [1]

Class structure:

- a) Traditional lecture
- b) Guided exercise

Post-class assignment:

- b) required reading see **C8**

C8. Oct 14 / Using the principles of Referent Tracking for ontology development / SLO 1, 4, 7

Suggested reading (for sure for students with concentration in Biomedical Ontology as well as PhD students):

R8 Ceusters, W., [The Place of Referent Tracking in Biomedical Informatics](#), in Terminology, Ontology and their Implementations, P.L. Elkin, Editor. 2023, Springer International Publishing: Cham. p. 171-218. [6]

Required reading pre-class:

R9 Ceusters, W. and B. Smith, [Tracking referents in electronic health records](#). Stud Health Technol Inform, 2005. **116**: p. 71-6.[5]

Class structure:

- a) Traditional lecture
- b) Guided exercise

C9. Oct 21 / Realism-based FOL-axioms applied to student ontologies / SLO 7, 9

Class structure:

- a) **T2**: in-class open book test on material from **C1** to **C8**
- b) Guided exercise on adding axioms to student ontologies

Post-class assignment:

- a) **A5**: For each entity type in your ontology, write:
 1. An axiom that anchors the entity in the BFO in the appropriate place.
 2. One or more axioms reflecting the textual definitions provided (corrected from **A4**). All relations used must either have been taken from a realism-based source in which the relation is formally defined, OR you create a relation and define it appropriately in an additional axiom.

Upload your work to [the assignment folder](#).

Name of the file: 'BMI508-A5-[your ubitname].docx'

Assessment:

- (1) Definitions appropriately corrected in Aristotelian form and jointly complete: 40%
- (2) BFO relations correctly applied or new ones correctly axiomatized: 40%
- (3) FOL-axioms correctly crafted: 20%

Due date: Oct 26 – noon

b) required reading see **C10**

C10. Oct 28 / Ontology for General Medical Science / SLO 3, 6

Suggested readings:

- R10** Scheuermann, R.H., W. Ceusters, and B. Smith, [Toward an ontological treatment of disease and diagnosis](#). Summit Transl Bioinform, 2009. **2009**: p. 116-20. [7]
- R11** Smith, B. and W. Ceusters. [Aboutness: Towards foundations for the information artifact ontology](#). in *CEUR Workshop Proceedings*. 2015. [8]

Class structure:

- a) Interactive lecture
- b) Guided exercise: correcting inadequacies in **A5**

Post-class assignment:

A6: finish correcting your axioms based on **A5** and the guided exercise in class. Assemble them all in one CLIF file fully compatible with the BFO2020-FOL axiom template as demonstrated. Do this by using a text-editor – not a Word processor! – such as [NotePad++](#) or any other advanced editor capable of balancing parentheses.

Upload your work to [the assignment folder](#).

Name of the file: 'BMI508-A6-[your ubitname].**ont**'

Assessment:

- (1) All axioms included: 20%
 - (2) Adequate indentation exactly as demonstrated: 20%
 - (3) No BFO2020-FOL template requirements violated: 60%.
- Each violation on any of these three criteria will reduce the score by 2%.

Due date: Nov 9 – noon

C11. Nov 4 / Principles for change management in ontologies / SLO 8

Suggested pre-class reading:

- R12** Seppälä, S., B. Smith, and W. Ceusters, [Applying the Realism-Based Ontology-Versioning Method for Tracking Changes in the Basic Formal Ontology](#), in *Formal Ontology in Information Systems (FOIS 2014)*, P. Garbacz and O. Kutz, Editors. 2014, IOS Press. p. 227-240. [9]

Class structure:

- a) Traditional lecture.
- b) Guided exercise

Post-class assignments:

Required reading: see **C12**

C12. Nov 11 / Evaluation of ontologies I / SLO 4, 6

Required pre-class reading:

- R13:** Amith, M., et al., [Assessing the practice of biomedical ontology evaluation: Gaps and opportunities](#). J Biomed Inform, 2018. **80**: p. 1-13. [10]

Class structure:

- a) Traditional lecture

- b) Demo on how to use theorem provers for ontology evaluation

C13. Nov 18 / Evaluation of student ontologies and wrap-up / SLO 7, 9

Class structure: Discussion and guided exercise.

Post-class assignment:

A7: prepare a PowerPoint presentation of your ontology. The presentation must contain all elements discussed during this course, including the axioms in CLIF format. The instructor will present a specific format in class, including setting a maximum number of slides for presentation during **C14**. The maximal time for presentation will be determined by the number of students able to present.

Upload your work in a PowerPoint file to [the assignment folder](#).

Name of the file: 'BMI508-A10-[your ubitname].pptx'

Due date: Nov 30 – noon.

Nov 25 / NO CLASS

C14. Dec 2 / Student presentations and discussions / SLO 1, 2, 5

Each student will present his PP slides (**A7**) in the time for presentation allotted, followed by 10 minutes discussion and questions (**A8**).

Presentations might be public.

Quality of oral presentation and readiness to answer questions will be assessed independent of quality of the slides which will be assessed as part of **A8**.

C15. FINAL EXAM: Dec 9

8. Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend *all* lectures and exercises. For religious observances, university sanctioned events, athletic commitments and family/work obligations/emergencies, absences may be granted upon request but can have an effect on the finally obtained grade (see grading policy)

For course cancellation/emergency planning, see [UB's emergency website](#) for cancellations or delays due to weather or other unforeseen events.

9. Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a fundamental university value and critical to the learning process. Through the honest completion of academic work, students sustain the integrity of the university while facilitating the university's imperative for the transmission of knowledge and culture based upon the generation of new and innovative ideas. It is your responsibility as a student to complete your work in an honest fashion, upholding the expectations your individual instructors have for you in this regard. The ultimate goal is to ensure that you learn the content in your courses in accordance with UB's academic integrity principles, regardless of whether instruction is in-person or remote. Thank you for upholding your own personal integrity and ensuring UB's tradition of academic excellence. See [Graduate Academic Integrity Policy](#) and [Graduate Academic Integrity Procedures](#).

Specific for this course:

- **Collaboration:**

- If the class is attended by more than 2 students, at most two students may develop an ontology together. In that case, all requirements which involve a specified number of elements to be added, need to be

doubled (e.g. starting with 16 terms instead of 8 as required for **A3**). This type of collaboration must be agreed upon by the instructor prior to assignment **A3**. All submitted materials must then be clearly labeled as such, with the names of the two collaborating students. In case students who collaborate cannot come to a consensus for certain parts of the work, alternate solutions proposed by individual students should be clearly marked as such. Grading of individual students will take into account such alternatives which may lead to different scores for these students on these assignments.

- Collaboration is not allowed for scored tests and the final exam.
- For the final presentation, twice the number of slides are allowed, and double the allotted time for presentation. Students must address different aspects of the work.

• **Substantive Use of Generative AI:**

- Any use of Generative AI (GenAI) that influences or contributes to intellectual content, including generating arguments, literature synthesis, writing sections, coding for analysis, or data interpretation are considered substantive use of GenAI. Students have for this course the explicit approval to use this sort of technology, and it is even encouraged, specifically for the development of axioms related to the ontology they develop. However! The results obtained must be carefully checked and all principles and requirements discussed must be adhered to. Furthermore, students are required to be able to motivate the choices they made, and cannot use GenAI as an excuse for why the result is flawed.

10. Classroom Decorum

Students are expected to log on in due time for each class. Video must be active, sound must be muted. Only when the instructor asks questions, students who wish to respond may unmute and talk. Additional rules of conduct, when applicable, will be explained by the instructors prior to the class.

11. Accessibility Resources

If you have any disability which requires reasonable accommodations to enable you to participate in this course, please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources in 60 Capen Hall, 716-645-2608 and also the instructor of this course during the first week of class. The office will provide you with information and review appropriate arrangements for reasonable accommodations, which can be found on [the office's webpage](#).

12. Protection of course material

All materials prepared and/or assigned by me for this course are for the students' educational benefit. Other than for permitted collaborative work, students may not photograph, record, reproduce, transmit, distribute, upload, sell or exchange course materials, without my prior written permission. "Course materials" include, but are not limited to, all instructor-prepared and assigned materials, such as lectures; lecture notes; discussion prompts; study aids; tests and assignments; and presentation materials such as PowerPoint slides, or transparencies; and course packets or handouts. Public distribution of such materials may also constitute copyright infringement in violation of federal or state law. Students who violate this policy will be required to complete an educational sanction about the value of intellectual property. More serious and/or repeat violations of this policy may be treated as acts of "academic dishonesty" and/or subject a student to disciplinary charges under the "[Student Code of Conduct](#)."

13. University Support Services

Students are often unaware of university support services available to them. For example, the Center for Excellence in Writing provides support for written work, and several tutoring centers on campus provide academic success, support and resources.

Other vital support for graduate students include counseling services and sexual violence resources. A support service section of your syllabus might include information about those. Feel free to add the following text in your syllabus as you see fit.

counseling services:

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. These might include strained relationships, anxiety, high levels of stress, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, health concerns, or unwanted sexual experiences. Counseling, Health Services and Health Promotion are here to help with these or other issues you may experience. You learn can more about these programs and services by contacting:

Counseling Services

120 Richmond Quad (North Campus), 716-645-2720
202 Michael Hall (South Campus), 716-829-5800

Health Services

Michael Hall (South Campus), 716-829-3316

Office of Health Promotion

114 Student Union (North Campus), 716-645-2837

sexual violence:

UB is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and stalking. If you have experienced gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), UB has resources to help. This includes academic accommodations, health and counseling services, housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and assistance with reporting the incident to police or other UB officials if you so choose. Please contact UB's Title IX Coordinator at 716-645-2266 for more information. For confidential assistance, you may also contact a Crisis Services Campus Advocate at 716-796-4399.

Please be aware UB faculty are mandated to report violence or harassment on the basis of sex or gender. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I will need to report it to the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. You will still have options about how the situation will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Please know that if you do not wish to have UB proceed with an investigation, your request will be honored unless UB's failure to act does not adequately mitigate the risk of harm to you or other members of the university community. You also have the option of speaking with trained counselors who can maintain complete confidentiality. UB's Options for Confidentially Disclosing Sexual Violence provides a full explanation of the resources available, as well as contact information. You may call UB's Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at 716-645-2266 for more information, and you have the option of calling that office anonymously if you would prefer not to disclose your identity.

14. Technology Recommendations

To effectively participate in this course, regardless of mode of instruction, the university recommends you have access to a Windows or Mac computer with webcam and broadband. Your best opportunity for success in the blended UB course delivery environment (in-person, hybrid and remote) will require these minimum capabilities.

15. Course Materials

- Slides and other learning resources used in class will be made available to students after each class in the [class material directory](#) set up for this course on UB Box. Students need to authenticate in order to have access. Neither the link or any resource therein may be further distributed.
- This course requires the following papers and electronic publications, all of which are available publicly or through the UB Libraries:

1. Arp, R., B. Smith, and A.D. Spear, *Building ontologies with basic formal ontology*. 2015, The MIT Press,: Cambridge, Massachusetts. p. 1 online resource (245 p.
2. Guarino, N., D. Oberle, and S. Staab, *What Is an Ontology?*, in *Handbook on Ontologies*, S. Staab and R. Studer, Editors. 2009, Springer Berlin Heidelberg: Berlin, Heidelberg. p. 1-17.

3. Rector, A., et al., *On beyond Gruber: "Ontologies" in today's biomedical information systems and the limits of OWL*. J Biomed Inform, 2019. **100s**: p. 100002.
4. Smith, B., et al., *Relations in biomedical ontologies*. Genome Biol, 2005. **6**(5): p. R46.
5. Ceusters, W. and B. Smith, *Tracking referents in electronic health records*. Stud Health Technol Inform, 2005. **116**: p. 71-6.
6. Ceusters, W., *The Place of Referent Tracking in Biomedical Informatics*, in *Terminology, Ontology and their Implementations*, P.L. Elkin, Editor. 2023, Springer International Publishing: Cham. p. 171-218.
7. Scheuermann, R.H., W. Ceusters, and B. Smith, *Toward an ontological treatment of disease and diagnosis*. Summit Transl Bioinform, 2009. **2009**: p. 116-20.
8. Smith, B. and W. Ceusters. *Aboutness: Towards foundations for the information artifact ontology*. in *CEUR Workshop Proceedings*. 2015.
9. Seppälä, S., B. Smith, and W. Ceusters, *Applying the Realism-Based Ontology-Versioning Method for Tracking Changes in the Basic Formal Ontology*, in *Formal Ontology in Information Systems (FOIS 2014)*, P. Garbacz and O. Kutz, Editors. 2014, IOS Press. p. 227-240.
10. Amith, M., et al., *Assessing the practice of biomedical ontology evaluation: Gaps and opportunities*. J Biomed Inform, 2018. **80**: p. 1-13.
11. Ceusters, W., *Towards a realism-based metric for quality assurance in ontology matching*. Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence and Applications. Vol. 150. 2006. 321-332.
12. Pengput, A. and W. Ceusters, *Setting the Scene to Link SNOMED CT to Realism-Based Ontologies* in *19th World Congress on Medical and Health Informatics (MEDINFO)*. Sydney, Australia.