

Elements of Biology II (BIOL 102) Spring 2008 - Course Policies

Problems/Issue/Case Studies: In this course we will work collaboratively to learn about fundamental biological concepts as we explore real world societal and environmental issues and topics. Through this exploration you will come to understand essential connections between different areas of biology and between economics and the environment, between social values and genetics, between politics and pollution and a host of other connections. This kind of learning will require that you develop and become more comfortable with finding and evaluating sources of biological information, using this knowledge to inform a deeper understanding of societal and environmental issues/problems, and to effectively support and communicate your ideas. In short, you will be immersed in biology in the context of critically important issues that we face as citizens of this planet. I see my role as your instructor as being a facilitator in which I will help to guide your efforts to learn biology and to think critically, contextually, and connectedly!

We will be working on 4-5 problems or case studies during the semester. Each will last around 2-3 weeks, at the end of which you will be expected to present your solutions or recommendations in written or oral format. The format for the assignments will be explained at the beginning of each problem/case study.

Expectations for problem/case study assignments:

1. All assignments are due on the due date **in class**.
 - **NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED THROUGH EMAIL unless I otherwise give you permission to do so.**
 - Late papers will be reduced one letter grade for each day received past the due date.
2. **ALWAYS consult assignment guidelines, grading rubrics, and starting research resources posted on the course web page before you start writing a paper.** Grading rubrics and assignment guidelines provide the criteria I will be using to grade your progress in this course.
3. When using information, ideas, facts, quotes etc. that are not your own, you must cite your sources in the body of the paper and provide a list of references at the end of the paper (unless otherwise specified in the assignment). If you do not do this it is plagiarism which is an honor code violation at the college!
4. **Back-up your work on a jump drive or disk.** A last minute computer crash is NOT a reason to submit a late paper.
5. **RECYCLE AND REUSE** – I am happy (in fact ecstatic!) to accept work that has been printed on the back of already used paper. 1 bonus point on the assignment for doing so!

Attendance: This class involves working in teams on problems and case studies during class. It will mainly be an active and participatory dialog about biology which will occur both through small team activities and whole class discussion. Moreover, much of what you learn will come from individual research you do outside of class that will then be shared and elaborated on with the help of your teammates during class. In other words, what we learn in this course cannot simply be found in a textbook, or by reviewing a friend's lecture notes! Instead we will be relying on each other to learn biology and explore connections of this knowledge to real-world issues. **For this reason attendance is simply...mandatory!**

- **Unexcused absences.** If you miss more than 3 classes for unexcused reasons, you will be dropped from the course. Moreover, we will frequently have in-class assignments and quizzes. These range in point values from 10-30 points. If you miss a class for an unexcused reason on one of these days, you will receive a zero (0) on that assignment.
- **Excused Absences:** The following is a list of the only acceptable reasons for missing a class or exam:
 - Illness or other medical emergencies. You must go to CofC Health Services or your doctor to have these absences excused.
 - Family emergencies.
 - Family or religious engagements/celebrations - You must make me and your teammates aware of these BEFORE you miss class.

- C of C athletics travel conflicts - I will require a list of conflicting travel dates from the athletics office within the first 2 weeks of class.
- If you miss a class for an excused reason visit the CofC Student Affairs web site (http://www.cofc.edu/studentaffairs/general_info/absence/) to have an excused absence memo sent to your professor. Additionally you must complete this course's online **Excused Absence Form** which is available on the class web page.
- Most importantly, if you miss a class (excused or unexcused) it is your responsibility to inform your teammates, and to find out from them what your responsibilities are to the team for the next class period.

Readiness Assessment Tests (RATs)



Your progress on your preparation for class by doing the assigned readings and research will be periodically assessed through what I call Readiness Assessment Tests (RATs). RATs are short (5-10 minute) quizzes scheduled throughout the semester. The purpose of RATs is to 1) check your knowledge of biological concepts from the reading assigned for that day's class; 2) give **both you and I** feedback on your learning throughout the course; 3) engender discussion on biological concepts and applications to real-world biological issues; 4) help me determine what concepts from the reading you need help with in the class. **Some RAT's will first be taken individually, and then in your teams.** Therefore you will receive both an individual

grade and a team grade on each RAT. Some RATs will be activities done as a team, and you will receive a team grade on these. **Most RATs are scheduled on the syllabus, but the dates for these may change as the syllabus "evolves".** Additionally there may be some unscheduled RATs (not on the syllabus). **THERE ARE NO MAKEUPS FOR RATs...** You will be able to drop your lowest RAT score including a 0 from an excused absence (unexcused absence 0's cannot be dropped). We'll talk more about RATs in class.

Peer Evaluation: Much of what we do in this class will be done collaboratively, working and discussing ideas in teams. Part of the grade you receive in this class (about 20%) will be determined by work that is done together with your teammates. In order to help insure that everyone is contributing to this team effort, each member of every team will be asked to complete a peer evaluation form after each problem. Peer evaluation forms and instructions for completing the form, along with how peer scores influence team grades can be found on the class web page and can be completed on-line. If you do not complete the Peer Evaluation form after each problem, you will receive a 0 for any of the team assignments/RATs during that problem.

Progress Reports (aka Exams):

- I want to be clear about why I give "exams" in this course!
 - I do not give exams simply to assign grades, or penalize students for not trying, or as an incentive to "force" you to learn in this course. The purpose of the exams are to let you know to what extent you understand the underlying biological concepts that emerge through problem discussions, class activities and lectures, and your ability to use those concepts to evaluate evidence and make decisions about biology-related issues. In short, they are meant to inform **you** of **your** learning progress in this course!
 - There will be many opportunities prior to exams for you to assess your understanding (RATs, class activities, writing assignments, class discussions etc...). If you find that you are struggling on these, your first course of action is to come see me and get extra help...right away! Best time to come see me is during office hours, which are posted on the course web site! But you are also welcome to make an appointment to see me outside of office hours!
- Make-ups for end-of-problem progress reports will be given only to students who have documented, legitimate excuses. If you know you are going to miss one ahead of time, see me before the exam and we will schedule a make-up. Otherwise, you must contact me no later than 24 hours after the exam to schedule a make-up.

Grade Scale	Final Grade Computation
A 93 -100 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Problem/Case Study Exams – 50 pts each • Final Exam – 100 pts (over last 2 problems) • Problem Assignments ~ 300 pts • RATs (drop lowest individual score) ~100 pts • Homework/other in-class work/class participation ~ 50 pts • <u>Class participation – 50 pts</u> <p style="text-align: center;">Approximate Total pts. - 700 pts</p>
A- 90-92 %	
B+ 87-89 %	
B 83-86 %	
B- 80-82 %	
C+ 77-79 %	
C 73-76 %	
C- 70-72 %	
D+ 67-69 %	
D 63-66 %	
D- 60-62 %	
F 0 – 59 %	

Lecture Notes/Problems/Class Activities: These materials will often be posted ahead of time on the course web page. It is your responsibility to print these materials and bring them with you to class each day. I will generally NOT provide copies in class. These materials will be posted at least 24 hours in advance of each class so you'll have ample opportunity to get them for each class. **So be sure to check the web page each evening before EVERY class!**

Textbook: The textbook is ALWAYS your starting resource for basic biological concepts related to problems/case studies we work on in class. It is up to you to keep up with the assigned readings. The biology department has adopted *Biology: Concepts and Applications* by Cecie Star - 6th edition. The textbook should have a CD Interactive Study Partner. This can be a useful supplement to the text book. The text should also provide instructions for logging on the text's web site. This will also provide you with excellent resources that will supplement this course. The textbook also comes with full access to InfoTrak, an on-line library database that has access to thousands of full-text science journal articles. InfoTrak will be very useful when doing background research on problems we will be addressing in class. Information on how to access InfoTrak can be found on the course home page.

Labs will begin the 2nd week of classes (week of Jan. 14). Labs meet on the 3rd floor of the Lightsey Conference Center. Lab manuals MUST be purchased from SAS-E INK which is at 79 Wentworth Street (located on Wentworth St. across the street from Andolini's Pizza). Check your course schedule to determine the day and time of your lab.

Reminder: Remember, Biol 102 and lab (Biol 102L) are corequisites. If you are registered for one, you must be registered for the other (unless you have already completed it). If you drop one, you must drop the other. Lab is a separate course and as such you will receive a separate grade for lab. Additionally you must have taken and passed Biol 101 and 101L to be enrolled in this course.

Honor Code: Student discipline will of course be governed by the contents of the College of Charleston Honor Code.