

# BIOL 1100: Biology Freshman Seminar

## Spring 2012 Course Syllabus, Valdosta State University

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**Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday 1:00-2:00**

Please feel free to call my office or use VSU email to schedule a convenient time for an appointment.

I would be more than happy to speak to students anytime the office doors are open.

**Course Description:** BIOL 1100 is required as a co-requisite for all incoming freshmen biology majors before or during enrollment in BIOL 1107. This is an introduction to college-level biological science with an emphasis on skills that will be needed for success in upper level courses including: note-taking, learning for conceptual understanding, exam preparation, scientific writing, basics oral presentation skills, use of primary literature, and professional ethics. Other topics will include: the nature of science, sub-disciplines within the life sciences, potential professional careers, and the structure of the biology degree programs.

**General Course Objectives:** BIOL 1100 will address parts of the following departmental & university goals:

From the Department of Biology's Educational Outcome #1:

1. ...present the results and conclusions in both written and oral formats used in peer-reviewed journals and at scientific meetings.

From VSU General Education Outcomes #3, 5, 7, & 8:

3. Students will use computer and information technology... They will be able to find information using computer searching tools.

5. Students will demonstrate knowledge of scientific principles... They will understand the basic concepts and principles underlying scientific methodology, learn a body of scientific knowledge, and be able to judge the merits of arguments about scientific issues.

7. Students will demonstrate the ability to analyze, to evaluate, and to make inferences from oral, written, and visual materials. They will be able to acquire and evaluate relevant information, analyze arguments, and synthesize facts and information.

8. Students will demonstrate knowledge of principles of ethics... They will recognize and understand issues in applied ethics, understand their own value systems in relation to other value systems, and judge values and practices in a variety of disciplines.

**Specific Learning Outcomes:** By the end of this course, students will:

1. Recognize the rigorous nature of this field of study and the skills and discipline needed to be successful.

2. Connect the requirements of the Biology major to the foundations of Life Science and possible careers.

3. Write a paper based on research conducted in primary scientific journals.

**Academic Honesty:** Members of the class are expected to maintain high standards of integrity. Always cite any source of original information. Never copy text from a classmate, book, or website and represent it as personal work. The VSU Biology Department Statement on Plagiarism is included as part of this syllabus to clarify common types of academic misconduct. Students are expected to read this carefully and sign the Student Information Sheet to indicate that this is understood. Dishonesty will not be tolerated; evidence of cheating will result in no credit for the assignment or depending on the case, a grade of "F" for the course and a report will be sent to the Dean of Students. By taking this course, you agree that all required course work may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to SafeAssign, a tool within BlazeVIEW. For more information on the use of SafeAssign at VSU see SafeAssign for Students (<http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/SafeAssignforStudents.shtml>).

**Special Services:** Students requiring classroom accommodations or modifications because of a documented disability should discuss this need at the beginning of the semester. Students should contact the Access Office in Farber Hall 1115, 245-2498.

**Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act:** Grades cannot be posted by Name, Social Security Number, or other Personal Identifiers. Grades and student work will not be given over the telephone, by email or to another student.

## Course Requirements for BIOL 1100

### Expectation:

Come to Class Prepared - Read the Syllabus to Know What & Where the Lesson Will Be

**Attendance:** Each absence will reduce the attendance grade by 25% unless a make-up assignment is approved by the instructor. These will only be allowed when class is missed for a good reason. These will be 1 single-spaced page (500-600 words) with 2 properly cited references. Entering a classroom late on more than one occasion is unacceptable. Each student is responsible for all material missed regardless of the reason for absences. Do not call or email and ask if you missed anything important. Assume that you did! This information should be obtained from another student.

- 1) Students who miss four classes (20%) will receive an automatic failing grade for the course.
- 2) Students who miss 20% (10 minutes) of class on a given day will be counted as absent for that day.
- 3) Students who are late 3 times will be given one unexcused absence.

**Department:** Active participation is expected of all students. Everyone should be involved in the discussions that are part of this course. Failure to become involved, thoughtless/rude behavior, or anything that detracts from the learning experiences of other students will hurt your grade. No disruptive behavior of any kind will be tolerated. Students should restrict talking and sidebar discussions toward the instructor. Any student disrupting class meetings will be required to leave the classroom and considered absent. Use of cellular telephones, pagers, or any similar remote communication device is prohibited during class time.

**Assignments:** Homework is due at the start of class and will not be graded if they are late. NO EXCEPTIONS! Written assignments should be typewritten and single-spaced. Grades will be out of 10 points as (10 = Excellent, 8 = Good, 6 = Adequate, <5 = Deficient). If you miss the description of the assignment in class, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate (Do Not Email Me).

**Online Activities:** The publisher of the textbook has developed several new web-based study innovations that we will be trying in this course. One is an interactive study module which allows you to self-assess your understanding of the material in your biology course. There is also a system of quizzes that will be open-book and done on your own time.

**Class Notebook:** Throughout the term, you will be expected to keep a collection of all of your work in a one-inch loose-leaf notebook. This will contribute to your grade and is an important way to demonstrate your efforts and understanding of the scientific content. Nothing is to go in this document except your own original work. Any class handouts must have considerable notations to indicate how you used them. Do not copy anything off the web except images and any images must have evidence of your own thinking (either handwritten or typed). These should be sequenced in the order the lessons are covered. Your notes should be presented with any graded assignments and additional information you assemble on each topic.

### Assessments:

Attendance & Department	25%
Assignments	25%
Paper	25%
Final Exam	25%

**Biology Tutoring at the Student Success Center:** The SSC is located in Langdale Residence Hall and provides free peer tutoring in core curriculum courses, including biology, chemistry, math, writing, and foreign languages for all VSU students. There is also free professional academic advising and on-campus job information. Visit the website: [www.valdosta.edu/ssc](http://www.valdosta.edu/ssc) or call 333-7570 to make an appointment.

## Monday BIOL 1100 Sections A & C: Tentative Class Schedule

(Subject to Change)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Class Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Jan 9	Science and the Natural World	Student Information Sheet
16	No Class in Honor of the Memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.	
23	Strategies for Note Taking	Note Taking Reflection
30	Active Learning (Bring your 1107/1108 notebook to class)	Paper Topic
Feb 6	Reading to Learn Science (Bring your textbook to class)	Textbook Analysis & Book Notes
13	Meet @ the Library (back entrance) Tour & Online Searching	3 Scientific Papers
20	Reading a Scientific Paper	Synopsis of Scientific Paper
27	Biology Curriculum: Plan for Advising & the Future	Semester Plan for Major
Mar 1	<b>Midterm: Last day to drop a class without failing</b>	
5	The Style of Scientific Writing	Background on Organism
12 - 16	<b>SPRING BREAK – No Classes</b>	
19	Paraphrasing that Avoids Plagiarism	Reference List
26	Biology Test (Bring your brains to class)	Paraphrased Paragraphs
Apr 2	Meet @ the Student Success Center	Introduction & Conclusion
9	The Evolution/Creationism Controversy	Full Paper Due
16	Presenting Yourself through Public Speaking	Paper Revision Due
23	What You Can Do with a Bio Major	Career Slide Due (24 Hours Before)
30	The Breadth of the Life Sciences	Individual Concept Map
May 2	Final Exam: 12:30-2:30	

## Welcome to the Real World!

### School = Your Job, Grades = Your Pay

### Now Earn Them!

## Wednesday BIOL 1100 Section B: Tentative Class Schedule

(Subject to Change)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Class Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Jan 11	Science and the Natural World	Student Information Sheet
18	The Breadth of the Life Sciences	Concept Map
25	Strategies for Note Taking	Note Taking Reflection
Feb 1	Active Learning (Bring your 1107/1108 notebook to class)	Paper Topic
8	Reading to Learn Science (Bring your textbook to class)	Textbook Analysis & Book Notes
15	Meet @ the Library (back entrance) Tour & Online Searching	3 Scientific Papers
22	Reading a Scientific Paper	Synopsis of Scientific Paper
29	Biology Curriculum: Plan for Advising & the Future	Semester Plan for Major
Mar 1	<b>Midterm: Last day to drop a class without failing</b>	
7	The Style of Scientific Writing	Background on Organism
12 - 16	<b>SPRING BREAK – No Classes</b>	
21	Paraphrasing that Avoids Plagiarism	Reference List
28	Biology Test (Bring your brains to class)	Paraphrased Paragraphs
Apr 4	Meet @ the Student Success Center	Introduction & Conclusion
11	The Evolution/Creationism Controversy	Full Paper Due
18	Presenting Yourself through Public Speaking	Paper Revision Due
25	What You Can Do with a Bio Major	Career Slide Due (24 Hours Before)
May 2	Final Exam 12:30-2:30	

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# Writing Guidelines

## Objective

These assignments have been designed help you to learn, outside the classroom, through your own writing. Papers are an opportunity to display your knowledge through more than just exams or what you might or might not say in class. These assignments also allow you to show your own style of expression and personal interests, so you should take pride in them.

## Focus

Well-crafted writing always has a specific purpose. Every paper should have a distinct thesis or central idea. Your thesis should directly address the nature of the writing assignment. Decide on the topic and a specific case you want to make before you start writing. Write the thesis down and check back throughout the writing process to be certain that the work supports it.

## Organization

Before you begin to write, think through how you plan to develop your thesis and use an outline to structure the paper. An Introduction and Conclusion will be the first and last paragraphs of your paper. Start paper with something catchy to interest the reader. Make it perfectly clear, in this introductory section, what your point or central idea will be. Support that concept throughout the body of your paper. Paragraphs in the middle will be the Body of your text. Subheadings are an effective way to support and indicate the organization of longer papers. Any paper over 3 pages probably needs subheadings. Avoid using phrases such as "In this paper I will discuss..." since it is much more sophisticated to avoid this type of "crutch statement."

## Paragraphs

Divide the paper by major themes and make each of these a distinct paragraph. You should have at least 3 paragraphs on a 1-page paper. The first sentence of each paragraph is a topic sentence that shows what the paragraph cover. ONE SENTENCE IS NEVER AN ENTIRE PARAGRAPH because there should be at least 3 sentences elaborating any significant idea.

## Format

Your papers are to be typed using something comparable to 12-point Times New Roman type, single-spacing, and reasonable (1-1.5 inch) margins. Other professors often expect double-spacing, but to save paper, I require single-spacing. The lengths of these papers are stated in the assignments. After you draft your ideas, if the paper is too long, go back through and shorten it up by taking out the less important aspects. If it is too short, go back and incorporate more support or add more detail to what you are saying. When I say 1 page, that means one sheet of paper that is full of text. Put your references and heading on that sheet. Use the word counting function on your word processor to be sure your text is 600-800 words per assigned page when single-spaced.

## Requirements

Each paper should have a creative title identifying the approach to the assignment. For long papers, the title is centered on the title page and followed by the student's name, ID number, and full course information. For short papers, the information should be in the upper right corner and the title should be centered on the first line. That course information should include the name, number, instructor, and the university. Number all pages starting with the first page of the text, but do not number the title page. Staple your papers, do not fold the corner or use a paper clip.

## References

Be very careful about giving appropriate credit to the sources of any outside information that you use. You should have properly formatted references at the end of the paper that include: Author (Last name, Initials), Year (In parentheses), Title, Place & Name of Publisher, Pages. Use the APA or American Psychological Association style. For WWWeb sources, use as much information about the author or site along with the WWWeb address. When you include information that is general knowledge, it does not require a citation in the text. If you can find the same information in 2 or 3 books, it does not require a citation in the text. Be sure to reword or paraphrase text from your sources to avoid plagiarism. Paraphrasing means changing more than 1 word in a sentence. Think about what something says and completely restate it in your own words. Avoid making your paper look like a mosaic of other people's ideas by using as few direct quotes as possible. The best idea is to quote someone only when the wording is extremely original and/or it can't be stated differently. A direct quote always requires a citation in the text with the page where the quote was found.

## Grading

*Short papers* will each be worth 10 points and longer assignments will be 100 points. Assignments will be described in detail in class, so listen carefully and be sure that you know what is expected or ask about anything that is unclear. Focus on the objective of the assignment and address it clearly in thesis of your paper. You can dramatically improve your work if you critique your own rough draft and revise it at least once. Outside feedback can also make a difference. Proofread to avoid careless errors. Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar do effect our impression of the quality of your presentation. These papers will be graded on Effort, Quality, Organization, Content, Proper citations and whether or not you followed these directions. I will look specifically at extent of your coverage of the topic and the clarity in your presentation of the material. Be sure to support general statements and do not use hypothetical examples. Papers are due at the start of class and late work will be docked 10% each day.