

August 26, 2013

Dear AP Biology Students,

Welcome to AP Biology. This course is about the study of living systems. This includes everything from the molecules that make up cells, to the way entire organisms and ecosystems work. There is nothing more fascinating than studying life (although I am a little biased). We will be looking at everything from the molecules that make up our cells to ecosystems.

AP Biology is designed to be a two semester course for Biology majors in college. To that end, the expectations of the class might be more rigorous than you have had previously. Students that usually do well have to put in a lot of time and effort. In this class, you will be assessed on your understanding of the material, not just your ability to memorize (although that does not mean memorization will not be a part of this course). You will have to think, read, write, and develop models to describe common sets of ideas. Many times you will just be told an idea. While memorization is a part of this course, so is thinking and understanding. Memorizing something you don't understand is not very useful. While I will help as much as possible it is important that you take ownership of your learning.

Attendance: AP Biology is a very fast paced course. As such, your regular attendance should be a priority. You should get contact information (email or phone #) from at least two classmates who will fill you in on what you missed if you are out. If you are absent the day before a quiz or a test, but there was advanced warning for it, you will still be expected to take it with the class. If you are absent on the day of a test/quiz, you are expected to take it immediately upon your return before or after school. In cases of extended absences, I may not expect you to make up a test immediately. It is your responsibility to discuss this with me immediately upon return to class. Missed labs may be hard to make up, if it requires a special set up or time sensitive materials, thus you might not be able to make them up.

Turning in Work: I expect you to turn in your own work, when it is due. If you are going on a field trip, or will be out of class for an activity, the day that an assignment is due, please drop it off in my mailbox or classroom that morning. This is to ensure that you will be prepared for class if the event is cancelled. It also makes it fair to classmates who had to meet the deadline. If you are absent the day an assignment is due, I expect it to be turned in as soon as you return to class. I might not ask you for it, because keeping track of your work is part of your responsibility. I reserve the right to not accept late work for credit, but may wave that right for partial credit on occasion. If you receive a ZERO for any assignment, please do not ask me to give you an extra assignment to make up the credit, because I will not. If you submit any work via e-mail, I recommend that you use the receipt option on your email program to ensure that I do have it. I have had students tell me that they sent it to me, but I never got it. I will not accept that excuse. I also recommend keeping a hard copy and computer backup of any papers that you turn in.

Homework: Homework serves several purposes. It can help you review, and to look for weaknesses that you need more help with, or it may be to prepare you for a class or lab. I do not give many homework grades, because if you are not doing homework, your other grades will reflect it. Occasionally I do check homework for grades, especially if I feel that students are not coming to class prepared. If I do not give an assignment, then you

should pre-read the materials I am about to cover, or review on your own. In many college classes, homework is not often “checked” or graded, but if you do not do it, you will not do well on the exams, and your grades will suffer.

Tests: You should always have a pencil for class, but definitely have one on test days. Tests will often take an entire period, and I do not give extra time. Therefore it behooves you to be ready to take the test as soon as class begins. My tests are often a mixture of formats, and they frequently include:

1. Multiple Choice Questions.
2. Free Response Questions. Ranging from short answers to essay questions
3. Lab Practical/Lab quizzes. Questions based on an understanding of a recently performed lab, may include identification of specimens and slides.

Make-Up Exams: If you miss class on the day of an exam, you will not be given the same exact exam that the rest of the class took. It will cover the same material and concepts, but it is likely to be very different. Almost all make-up exams are free response questions. If you are not comfortable with the format, I suggest you do everything possible to avoid missing class on test days.

Textbooks: Each student will have a textbook checked out to them and you will be responsible for that text book for the year. I have been asked to conduct periodic book checks to assure that each student still has the book assigned to them. You will need this book for reading assignments and as a resource for completing other work.

Labs: Lab Notebooks are required. They will be hard bound-composition notebooks, and the only time you may use pencil is for sketching/ drawing observations. Some labs will come directly from the AP Board recommended lab manual, some will not. Appropriate behavior and dress is always required. Lab time is valuable and it should never be wasted, therefore I expect students to do any pre-lab work that I assign to ensure that no time is wasted and that the lab runs safely. Students will often work with each-other during a lab, but when it is time to answer questions, or analyze the results each student must do his or her own work. Even if you discuss the results with lab partners, **I want your work in your own words.** This is the only way that I will know if you understand the lab. If you and a partner turn in identical labs do not expect any grade higher than a **Zero**.

Dissections: Dissection skills are an important part of this course. No simulations can give you the same experience. We have some photos, videos, computer software, and diagrams, which are all great supplements, but they are not substitutes.

Academic Integrity: Over the last few years I have caught students cheating, copying or plagiarizing other work. I have a **ZERO Tolerance** policy on this. **I want to evaluate your work not the results of your collaboration.** I will give a zero, and write up any students who step over the line of academic integrity. While there are many forms of cheating, below are two of the most common forms of cheating that I have seen in recent years:

Plagiarized work: Plagiarism is the passing off of another’s work as your own. This could be a paragraph or image that is copied and pasted in both cases without citation or permission from the author. Too often, student’s just copy paragraphs from websites or encyclopedias, and insert them into essays or reports, without proper references. When in doubt cite it, and if you need help ask a teacher. Plagiarism is also the copying of information

(verbatim or not) from another student when the assignment is not meant to be collaborative, even if you have permission from that student. While these are not the only examples of plagiarism, the consequences of handing in such work will be the same; zero credit.

Discussions/sharing of exams: With multiple AP Biology classes, it is easy for students to discuss the content of a test with others that have yet to take the assessment. This is a form of cheating. Do not discuss exams or quizzes until everyone has completed them. If you suspect or know that someone is passing information to others that have not completed an assessment please let me know. If you are aware of exam content that is being passed electronically (by e-mail, facebook, text message or other means) or outside of class that pertains to recent assessments please let me know.

Grades are assigned to assess your understanding of material, and I put a lot of effort into giving you a fair and honest assessment. If there is suspected cheating, I reserve the right to take actions necessary to make sure that assessment and assignments accurately reflect a students understanding.

Please sign on the next page.

Please, sign and have your parents/guardian sign, and turn in the following Contract by Wednesday, August 28, 2013.

Student:

I _____(print your name) have read, and understand, the AP Biology Class Expectations. If I did not understand something in the expectations I have had the opportunity to contact Mrs. Ford at feleciaford@misdmail.org for clarification.

I agree to give my best effort in this class, and I will uphold the tenants of Academic Integrity.

Student Signature: _____

Parents or Guardians:

Your signature acknowledges that you have also read my AP Biology Class Expectations, and you understand that your child has decided to undertake a rigorous and demanding course with high expectations. This is not just another class to take for AP credit; it is designed for science majors, which is significantly more difficult than college classes for non-majors. Students taking multiple AP classes are going to have to work very hard, and become effective time managers.

Parent Signature: _____