Bi 8 General Policies, Winter term 2016

General policies

Bi8 is a course that you take because **you** want to do so – either because you are really interested in the subject for your own curiosity, or because you have chosen a biology-intensive major as your option. No one has to take Bi8. We therefore consider all of you to be scientists in training and will try to provide assignments and feedback that help you gain all the skills and knowledge you will need to follow your own desire.

You are expected to come to all the lectures and to the meetings of your section. Participation will be counted as part of the grade,up to 5%. People who contribute strongly in class and sections will also get special consideration if their cumulative grade falls on a borderline. Nonparticipation and nonattendance will definitely tilt the balance against you if your grade is on the borderline.

You're expected to know everything about the course that is announced or discussed in lecture, whether or not it's included in lecture outlines that are posted on the class web site. The textbook is useful for reference and for some reading during the class, but much of the material in the course will come from other sources and be organized according to the lectures rather than the book.

You are expected to speak up in class.
This class isn't for people who will spend their lives "in the audience". It's for people who want to become leaders. You cannot have a significant career in science if you are too shy to ask questions, answer questions, or help to frame the subject with your own interest and curiosity.

COPYING FROM OTHER SOURCES – NEVER THE RIGHT ANSWER

No matter what the form of the assignment is, the "right answer" in this class will never be words that you copied from another source. Copying text from a review article, a textbook, an article that is assigned, or Wikipedia is **plagiarism**. That is a crime, not a right answer. It doesn't matter how well something is described in Wikipedia – if you are answering a question, the point is to explore how well YOU understand it, not the anonymous corps who evolved the Wikipedia entry.

Plagiarism from published or on-line sources and copying of other students' answers are both violations of the Honor Code. In the professional world, these would also be clear examples of "scientific misconduct" that could cost you a grant, a job, or the next five years of your professional future. If we find that your answer in any assignment is substantially copied from online sources, from the textbook, or even simply from the

article you are commenting on, you will automatically get zero on that question. In addition, you may also be reported to the BoC.

Collaboration cannot include copying from each other or "community writing" Copying from each other is not legitimate collaboration but fundamental cheating. It will be reported to the BoC automatically for consideration of penalties. Your answer at the end of the day has to be YOURS, not someone else's. If you have questions about the boundary, ask the teaching staff …**before** you cross it.

Exams, Quizzes, and Problem Sets: very different collaboration policies

The course will have two exams, two quizzes in class, four problem sets, and two required oral presentations by each member of the class. If you skip any two assignments, including the class presentations, or get <50% of points on them, then you will flunk the class.

The exams, both midterm and final, are CLOSED BOOK, CLOSED NOTES, CLOSED INTERNET, NO CONSULTATION. You are not to consult with anyone else (or anyone else's written materials) about the material from the time you open the exam till you are finished writing. The exams are take-home, written exams with a time limit between 3 and 5 hr, depending on the exam. The time limit is to level the playing field and to indicate the scope and degree of detail that is expected in the answers.

The quizzes are short CLOSED BOOK, CLOSED NOTES, CLOSED INTERNET, NO CONSULTATION exams that you will take in class during the first ~20 min of a specific class period. Blue books will be handed out at the door and collected from everyone when the time is up, so that we can then proceed to the lecture. They should be useful to give you feedback about what you should be mastering by these points in the term.

The homework problem sets are designed to encourage you to work with primary research material on a continuing basis throughout the term. There are two problem sets before the midterm and two after the midterm. They are all open book, open notes, and you are welcome to discuss the material with other students and TAs in order to come to your conclusions about the questions. **However, when you actually compose your answers, they must be written independently and in your own words**. You also cannot ask the TA's to answer the homework questions for you.

Oral Presentations in Sections

Each student will give two oral presentations per term. Each student will explain some aspect of the course material to the other members of the section, in the context of explaining the answer to a short "challenge question" from a list that is posted the week

before the presentations. Each list of challenge questions for the week will be given out in advance, and you can pick the one you will present on a first come, first serve basis. All students will sign up for one presentation date before the midterm and one in the second half of the course. We expect that at least the second one will be excellent.

Each presentation can take up to five minutes followed by 3-5 min for answering questions. Presentations should be chalk talks done from memory. What you write on the board should not be copied from notes or a tablet, though you can have a sheet of notes to consult later if you need them to help answering questions. All members of the section, students, TAs, and faculty, will ask questions. Both the quality of your presentation and the quality of your discussion in section will add to your grade.

Using TAs for advice

The TAs are dedicated, knowledgeable, and hard working members of a team that exists to help you learn molecular biology. None of the teaching staff of the course is an expert on everything, but every one is truly interested in helping you learn. TAs will have office hours posted and will hold several free-standing review/clinic sessions throughout the term to help. You are encouraged to consult the TAs for advice about how to think about problems that are confusing you, or to explore some exciting idea that you may have. However, a TA's job is NOT to tell you the answer to a question on a problem set or for your oral presentation. It's to help you think about it in clearer terms. You should NOT recycle the TA's suggestions automatically as though they are your answers. You should instead use the advice to come up with your own solution which you can explain and defend.