

## A.P. Biology Course Description and Summer Assignment

**To: A.P. Biology students and their parents or guardians**  
**From: Mark Moses, A.P. Biology Instructor**  
**Date: June, 2011**

A.P. Biology is an intense college-level course that will greatly challenge even the brightest and most motivated of students. This course is a very high homework class and it is the expectation of the instructor that the students will study, take and review notes, analyze data, etc, on a nightly basis. A course such as this requires constant attention. **It is impossible to “cram” before a test and do well since students will be asked to complete test questions that focus on conceptual understanding and analysis of material rather than the recall of memorized facts.** Therefore, students must allot study time daily so that they might gain a deep understanding and comprehension of the material being covered.

It is important that parents and students understand that this course is designed to maximize the potential of students. Grades may start lower earlier in the year if students are not prepared to efficiently cover the material. As the year progresses and study skills improve, students often use the interrelationships of scientific concepts to better understand the material. Often test-taking skills improve and with this talent there is an improvement in grades. To maximize performance, students should study in groups and individually. **Class discussions, assignments and review are meant to expand upon what the student is completing in their own personal readings, research, and study.** As an instructor, I can help students understand concepts, but the actual learning is accomplished through a lot of personal effort on the student's part. That will make the final difference in grades and achievement of learning goals.

The class is designed to have students take and do well on the A.P. Exam in May of each school year. Students who maintain an “A” or “B” average are expected and encouraged to take the test. Students with a “C” average will take the test only under the recommendation of the Assistant Principal of Instruction and me. This recommendation will be based upon the student's performance on tests during the school year. Students will be responsible for the cost of each A.P. test (currently about \$89.00 per test). A score of 4 or 5 is now usually needed for college credit.

Besides success on the A.P. Exam, another major class goal is that students leave their senior year more “college-ready”. The increased level of expectations and the increased workload should give these students an advantage when they encounter a full college schedule and workload the following year.

Attached you will find a copy of the summer assignment, a quarterly class syllabus of topics, a grading policy and rules sheet, a copy of the concepts that The College Board has stressed for the A.P. Biology curriculum, and a sheet giving tips on how to read for understanding in a high-level science course. Please read over these many times so that you can integrate their importance into your approach to this class. Students will be analyzing data either through lab work, computer simulations, or classroom-provided data streams. In addition to the text, students will also be assigned some fiction and non-fiction scientific literature that will strengthen concepts being covered in class.

It will be a challenging year. I commend you for your willingness to push yourself in such a rigorous and time-consuming class. The end results, I am confident, you will find to be worth the effort. I am excited about seeing each of you in September. Have a great summer.

NOTE: In an emergency, my cell phone number is 282-8817. I do not accept text messages. Please feel free to reach me at my school e-mail address. I will check my e-mail about once per week.  
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