

**BIOL 1408.04 Contemporary Biology**  
**Course Syllabus for Lecture (CRN 20516) – TopHat course code 322631**  
**4 Credit Hours**

**Important Note:** This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Monte L. Thies  
Lee Drain Bldg. 115D  
Phone: 936.294.3746  
Email: bio\_mlt@shsu.edu  
Office Hours: TTh 11:00- 12:30 and by appointment

**COURSE LOCATION & TIME:** Lee Drain Bldg. 215, Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:50

**Course Description:** *Contemporary Biology* is an introductory biology course for non-science majors. Students will gain an understanding of important and relevant biological concepts as well “science as an approach to understanding our natural world.”

**Course Objectives:** At the very least you should learn and understand the principles of biology through the acquisition of:

1. A basic working vocabulary regarding biology,
2. The ability to ask a question and formulate a hypothesis,
3. The ability to design a scientific experiment to examine the merit of a hypothesis,
4. An understanding that life on earth is complex and diverse,
5. An understanding that the complexities of life begin at the cellular level and are not only the result of an organism’s genes but are profoundly influenced by an organism’s environment.

**Required Texts:**

*What is Life? A Guide to Biology, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition* by Jay Phelan, W.H. Freeman Publishing, ISBN 978-1-464-13595-8 (**OR** the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ISBN 978-1-464-10720-7).

*“The A Game: Nine Steps to Better Grades”* by Kenneth J. Sufka, Nautilus Publishing. ISBN 978-1-936946-02-0

*Biology 1408 Laboratory Manual for Contemporary Biology 2015-2016* by the Department of Biological Science, Sam Houston State University, Hayden-McNeil Publishers. ISBN 978-0-7380-7583-9

**Required Supplies:**

A subscription to TopHat  
Scantron 882-E for exams  
A #2 lead pencil,  
A package of 5x8 white index cards.

## COURSE EVALUATION:

4 lecture exams (100 points each)	400 points	
10 quizzes (10 points each)	100 points	
2 low quizzes dropped (max. 10 points each)	-20 points	
17 Reading Assignment Cards (5 pts. each)	85 points	
3 cards dropped (5 points each)	-15 points	
50 randomly administered participation questions (1 pt. each)	50 points	
<b>Total points in lecture</b>	<b>600 points</b>	<b>(100%)</b>

### FINAL EXAM: 9:30-11:30 Thursday, May 10

**GRADING:** The final course grade will be based on a calculation of  $(0.75 \times \text{lecture grade}) + (0.25 \times \text{lab grade})$ . For example, if you earned 460 points in lecture, your lecture percentage score would be  $(460/600) \times 100 = 77.5\%$ . Let's also say that you earned a 90% overall in lab. Your BIOL1408 course grade would be  $(0.75 \times 77.5\%) + (0.25 \times 90\%) = 58.1\% + 22.5\% = 80.6\%$  for the course. That would be a **B**.

**90-100% is a letter grade of A**

**80-89% is a letter grade of B**

**70-79% is a letter grade of C**

**60-69% is a letter grade of D**

**<60% is a letter grade of F**

**\*\*This grading scale will NOT change between now and the end of the semester.\*\***

**\*\*\*Please do not ask for "extra credit" – it does not exist in this course.\*\*\***

**Attendance and Performance:** In accordance with University policy, I expect **regular** and **punctual** attendance of each of you; however, no points will be awarded or subtracted based on your attendance. Exam questions will be taken primarily from material presented in lecture, although a few questions on each exam will come directly from your reading assignments and quizzes. The textbook is to help you with spelling, visualization, clarification, and review of what we do in lecture. In other words, the textbook can help you prepare for and understand topics covered in lecture, **but the lecture information is crucial for complete test preparation.**

I have office hours and am available by appointment at other times to answer your questions. Please remember that ***YOU PAID FOR THIS COURSE***. You hired me to teach you what I know and think is important about contemporary biology, but that means you **MUST** come to class and be an active participant in the learning process. Whether you make full use of me is entirely up to you. ***I WILL NOT PURSUE YOU OR SEEK YOU OUT IF YOU ARE NOT TAKING CARE OF YOUR OBLIGATIONS TO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE THE CLASS, NOR WILL I REPEAT LECTURES FOR YOU OUTSIDE OF CLASS TIME THAT YOU MISSED.*** If you wish to use your investment wisely you should attend all of the lectures, read your textbook, and if confused come talk to me. If you do not do well on the first exam, or feel swamped, you need to

come see me early in the semester. Early November after the third exam is **NOT** a good time to decide to pull up your grade. There will be **NO** extra credit projects for the class. If you don't have time to study for exams, how will you find time for extra credit?

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**Top Hat:** We will be using the Top Hat ([www.tophat.com](http://www.tophat.com)) classroom response system in class for attendance, in-class participation activities, and periodic quizzes. You will be able to submit answers to in-class questions using Apple or Android smartphones and tablets, laptops, or through text messaging.

You can visit the Top Hat Overview (<https://success.tophat.com/s/article/Student-Top-Hat-Overview-and-Getting-Started-Guide>) within the Top Hat Success Center which outlines how you will register for a Top Hat account, as well as providing a brief overview to get you up and running on the system.

An email invitation will be sent to you through your university email, but if you do not receive this email, you can register by simply visiting our course website:

<https://app.tophat.com/e/322631>

Note: our Course Join Code is **322631**

Top Hat will require a paid subscription, and a full breakdown of all subscription options available can be found here: [www.tophat.com/pricing](http://www.tophat.com/pricing). Should you require assistance with Top Hat at any time, due to the fact that they require specific user information to troubleshoot these issues, please contact their Support Team directly by way of email ([support@tophat.com](mailto:support@tophat.com)), the in-app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491.

**Exams:** There will be **four exams during the semester** plus a *comprehensive final exam* during the scheduled final exam period for a total of **five** exams. All exams will consist of 100 multiple choice questions and will be given during the designated lecture period. Each exam (including the comprehensive final) will be worth 100 points. When calculating your final lecture grade, I will drop your lowest exam score. If you take all four regular semester exams and are satisfied with those grades you may choose to not take the final exam and use it as your drop grade; however, if you take the final and score better on it than on your lowest regular exam I will substitute the final exam score for the lowest regular exam score in your final course grade determination.

**Quizzes:** There will be **10 unannounced quizzes** (i.e. pop quizzes) consisting of 10 multiple-choice questions each worth 1 point. Quizzes CANNOT be made up if they are missed, but I will drop your **two lowest quiz scores** when determining your final course grade. Because the quizzes are unannounced, it will be to your advantage to keep up with your studies of the material we are covering in lecture. Quizzes will be administered through TopHat at the end of class so attendance through the entire class period is expected. The TopHat app will NOT allow you to complete a quiz unless you are in the classroom: you must be **IN CLASS** in order to log into TopHat and complete the quizzes when they are administered.

**Reading Assignment Cards:** There will be **17 reading assignments** spaced throughout the

semester. I strongly encourage you to read all the assignments and complete all 17 cards, but I will **drop three** when calculating your final course grade. These assignments are identified on the course schedule that will be posted on Blackboard. For each Reading Assignment (RA), you must prepare an organized, neatly written outline of the reading on a 5x8 index card (you may use both sides if needed), **put your name in the upper right corner** of the card, date it, and turn it in **at the end of lecture on the day it is due**. It will be your responsibility to keep up with the RAs, and due dates are listed on the schedule. The RAs may be turned in early, but they will not be accepted after the due date for any reason.

**Make-Up Policy:** Because you are able to drop your lowest exam grade and your two lowest quiz grades, there will be ***absolutely NO make-up examinations or quizzes*** during the semester. If you miss a regularly scheduled lecture exam FOR ANY REASON, you will be required to take the comprehensive final. If you know in advance that you will miss an exam because of a religious event or because you are conducting official Sam Houston State University business, you may make arrangements to ***pre-take*** the test provided that you supply satisfactory **written** verification for the reason you will miss the exam.

### **COURSE POLICIES:**

**CLASSROOM RULES OF CONDUCT:** Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat faculty and students with respect. ***Students may use their cell phones in the classroom ONLY for course-related activities.*** If you are using your cell phone during class for any reason other than to access the TopHat app, you will be asked to leave. Under no circumstances are cell phones or any electronic devices to be used or seen during times of examination. If I see your cell phone during an exam, I will assume that you are cheating and award you a zero for that exam or quiz. Students may record lectures provided they do not disturb other students in the process.

Absolutely NO material from class may be posted or shared to the web in ANY form or format.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused in any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

**VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM:** Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted in the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

**RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS:** University policy states that a student who is absent from class for the observance of a religious holy day must be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence. Students must be excused to travel for observance of a religious holy day. A student who wishes to be excused for a

religious holy day must present the instructor with a written statement describing the holy day(s) and the travel involved. The instructor will provide the student with a written description of the deadline for the completion of the missed exams or assignments.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY:** It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail [disability@shsu.edu](mailto:disability@shsu.edu)). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/811006.pdf>