

# Welcome to A.P. Biology!

I can't imagine studying anything more interesting than the living world. For this reason, I am excited to be teaching all of the intricate details of life processes to such an intelligent and motivated group. While some of the topics that we investigate are tedious and detailed, the beauty of how they all work together to create such complex organisms makes it all worthwhile. This should be a rewarding year for you, whether you are preparing to earn college credit by taking the A.P. Exam in May, or not.

As you must be aware, the A.P. courses are some of the most challenging ones you can take. This class is taught as an introductory, college freshman course for biology majors. This does not mean it will be over your head or that you should not take the class if you do not plan to major in biology. It just means that the class is rigorous, requires you to work and study, and that it will prepare you for further biology courses should you decide to choose biology as a major course of study in college.

The A.P. Biology course has a laboratory component. The College Board (the organization that decides the A.P. curricula and gives the tests in May) has established several laboratory exercises that are inquiry-based and will be completed throughout the year. The labs in A.P. Biology tend to be bigger and longer in scope. Some can take two or perhaps three days to complete, others could run over weeks. Given the nature of our schedule, some of the lab period days will be used for classroom purposes other than doing labs. This will help us accomplish all of the goals needed for the course. Since general experimental design, and laboratory components will appear on your A.P. Exam in May, it is important that you keep all of your notes and labs from which to study when the time comes. Keep all assignments and materials for the whole year.

Because we have so much material to cover in such a short time, the reading assignments will be extensive. It is vital that you keep up with the reading assignments so you can actively participate and ask questions during classroom discussions.

Please understand that I am here to help you learn biology. I will do whatever I can do to help you. I am here to teach you, not to watch you suffer, add to your suffering, or to have a power trip at your expense. I want our classroom to have a comfortable feel, where everyone in the room is empowered to ask questions and learn.

## GRADING

I follow the standard grading system of the district. Your grade will be based on many different forms of evaluation, including...

Exams	often about 80-150 points each
Lab Reports	often about 20-60 points each
Homework	often about 5-30 points each
Other	announced

Your grade is based on a total point system. You earn a certain number of total points on each assignment, lab report, or exam. Your grade is determined by dividing the sum of all of the points you received during the semester by all of the points possible to earn in a semester. The grading scale is

A	93-100%
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D+	67-69%
D	63-66%
D-	60-62%
E	0-59%

A student's semester grade is determined by counting the ongoing cumulative Q1/Q2 grade as 80% and the final exam as 20%. Please note that the grades entered will be cumulative over the entire semester, so even though I will post a Q1 grade for you, you will not start fresh at Q2; your grade will continue where it left off in Q1.

The final exam in the spring semester is typically comprised of all essay questions. Students can avoid taking the final exam (in the spring semester only...everyone takes the final exam in the fall semester) if the student has met the requirements regarding attendance (see the Student Handbook) and maintained at least a B- average for the semester. In other words, if the ongoing Q3/Q4 grade is 80% or higher, and you do not have too many absences, then you will be exempt from taking the spring final exam, and the ongoing Q3/Q4 grade will be the final semester grade. If you have any questions regarding this, please ask Mr. Esgar. When letter grades are assigned, numerical grades ending in 0.50 or higher will be rounded up, while those of 0.49 and below would round down. For instance, an 89.50 would round up to an A-, but an 89.49 would round down, and remain a B+.

## **Exams**

Exams will typically cover topics addressed during class. They also will include topics that were covered within reading assignments, but not addressed during class. Exams will make up a large percentage of one's grade. I try to run my class as a hybrid between a high school and college class. In many universities, a student's entire semester grade may be based on just three exams. In my class, a student will typically have about 5-6 exam grades per semester.

To do well on exams...

1. attend class regularly and take complete notes.
2. do all of the reading assignments on time
3. take any additional notes that you feel are helpful from the reading
4. ask questions during class, and participate in discussions
5. study your notes regularly... not just the day before an exam
6. never start studying the day before an exam...
7. get any notes from days you miss and seek help from Mr. Esgar

## **Homework**

Homework to turn in is de-emphasized in my class. Homework is largely to help prepare you for the exams. Instead of giving a lot of daily homework assignments, I expect you to use your time to study your notes and keep up with the reading assignments. Students should plan to spend several minutes each day reading, studying, etc. even if there is no written homework assigned. Making study aids is also helpful. Handwritten note cards for definitions and “concept sheets” (see Mr. Esgar) are very helpful. Using electronic study materials can also be helpful.

## **Late Assignments**

There really is no reason why assignments should ever be turned in late. Most of the time, you are given plenty of time to finish the work. Deadlines are important. Please get all work in on time.

All assignments are due on the due date given.

Any assignments can be turned in one class day late, if needed.

- the first late per quarter is without penalty (a “free late”)

- any other late assignments will receive a 20% reduction

Assignments will not be accepted beyond one day late, unless the student has missed school (authorized absences) and has talked with Mr. Esgar to establish a new due date.

## **When will collected work be graded and returned, and grades posted online?**

When student work or tests are collected, they do not just get set aside and graded at some arbitrary time. I grade student work each day, but on some days I have more time to grade than other days depending on which cycle day it is, if I have appointments to meet with students or other school personnel, etc. Depending on the scope of the assignment, some may be returned within a day or two, but often the collected work involves lab work, which requires far more time to check student calculations, graphs, etc. I will work as diligently as possible to get them graded as soon as possible. Please keep in mind that grading tests takes priority over grading labs, etc. so when you take a test, it goes to the front of the line. Typically tests are returned about 1 week after taking the test, as each test often has several written-response problems, and there are several sections of the course to grade at the same time. As soon as tests, labs, and assignments are done being graded, I enter them immediately into the online grading program, so posting will be done on an ongoing basis as student work gets graded.

## **Unauthorized Absences**

Never skip class. Unauthorized absences will lower your grade by 3% for each day unauthorized. Occasionally a student will be listed as “unauthorized” when in reality, an error has occurred. If you believe an error has occurred, it is your responsibility to clear it up with the attendance office. Missing class, even when authorized, can harm a student’s performance. Get notes from a friend and see me asap to get caught up.

## **Responsibilities of Students who are absent from class...**

If you miss class due to illness, field trips, or for any reason, it is your responsibility to...

Turn any assignments in that were collected in your absence.

Copy the notes that you missed from a friend.

Find out if any assignments were given in your absence.

See Mr. Esgar if you need more time to finish an assignment because of your absence.

Make up any labs done in your absence. Do this ASAP.

## **Students who are absent on days exams are given...**

I reserve the right to give you a make up test that was not the same as the test given to other students. It may be a different format, contain different questions, etc. Students who are repeatedly absent on test days must meet with me. Please note, I keep track of students who miss on test days to see if a disturbing pattern emerges. Please try to take the tests on the same day as the rest of the class. Absent students will often have to take the make-up test in the Testing Center, but not always. Please check with me.

## **Academic Honesty**

Please do not compromise your integrity by cheating or plagiarizing. I will follow the district policy by giving a 0% to anyone involved... whether giving or receiving answers, copying, or allowing someone else to copy your work, etc. If you have any question as to whether “group work” is allowed, and what constitutes acceptable work, please ask Mr. Esgar for clarification, and/or consult the handout I have prepared for you specifically dealing with issues of academic honesty.

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

**My classroom for EB/1<sup>st</sup> period ONLY is E-114.**

**My classroom for 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> period is X-125**

I am NOT the only teacher in X-125, so please do not assume that and disturb other classes when looking for me.

**My office is X-127.**

If I am not in my room, I may be in the office. It is best to make an appointment by email if you need to see me, but feel free to stop by the office if I am not in my room. Since I share the office with other teachers, it is important to respect that they also have to get work done. Please be aware that in order to see if I am in my office, you must enter the room fully. My desk is not visible from the window in the office door.

**It is best to email me to request times to stop by for help, or to make up tests, etc.** I will reply to emails asap, but almost always within 24 hours of receiving them. Please be advised that emails sent on weekends, holidays, etc. may not get read until I return back to school. If your parents need to call me and leave a message, I will return phone calls as soon as I can, but no later than 24hours after the message is left.

**I often arrive to school early.** Please feel free to drop by the room or office if you have questions. You do not need to make an appointment to see me, but it is best to make one in advance to assure that I will be available to help.

**Times in which to seek help:** I am often more likely to be free during 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> period, but I am also sometimes free during off-lab 3<sup>rd</sup> period. There is no set schedule for my free periods, so it is best to email me with times you are free and let me find one that matches my schedule.

### **Be Organized**

Bring your notebook, writing utensils, etc. to class every day.  
Keep your notes in order and organized. You will need them to study.  
Don't throw away returned assignments, labs, etc. until the course is over.  
Check your grade regularly on the online Schoology grading program.  
Get assignments made up asap after an absence.

### **Coaching Model**

It is often helpful to think of me as a coach. To be a top athlete, you have to push yourself. You need to work hard to overcome any areas of weakness, all the while “conditioning” and still practicing in all areas of the sport. As your coach, I will do everything to help you perform at a higher level and to be successful, but ultimately, you have to be fully invested. That is true of academic subjects, too. You need to develop your academic skills the way you would athletic ones. You cannot give up. If you go into a sporting competition thinking you are going to lose, you almost certainly will. The same is true in a class.

**ASK QUESTIONS**  
**ASK FOR HELP WHEN NEEDED**  
**PARTICIPATE !!!**