BIOS 10130 1 - Principles of Biology - Instructor(s): Alison Hunter

Project Title: **College Course Feedback - Autumn 2023**

Number Enrolled: **42**
Number of Responses: **22**

Report Comments

Opinions expressed in these evaluations are those of students enrolled in the specific course and do not represent the University.

Creation Date: **Friday, February 2, 2024**

The learning objectives of the course were clear and I understood how to achieve them.

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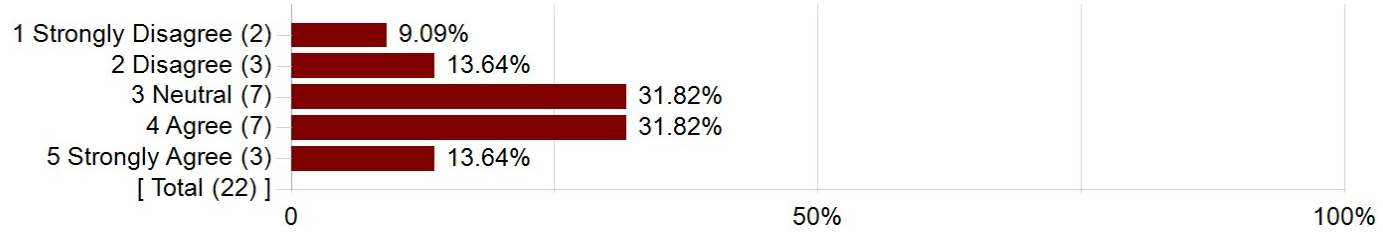

Statistics	Value
Response Count	22
Mean	3.27
Median	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.16

The course helped me to make important progress toward the stated objectives.

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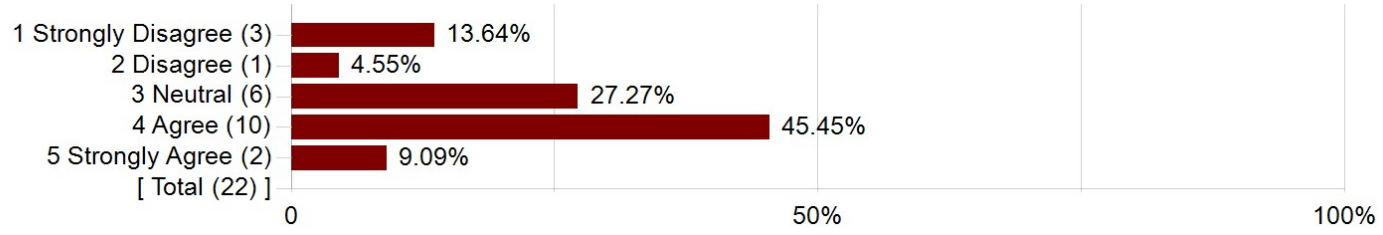

Statistics	Value
Response Count	22
Mean	3.32
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	1.17

The graded elements of the course were directed toward assessing my progress toward the stated course objectives.

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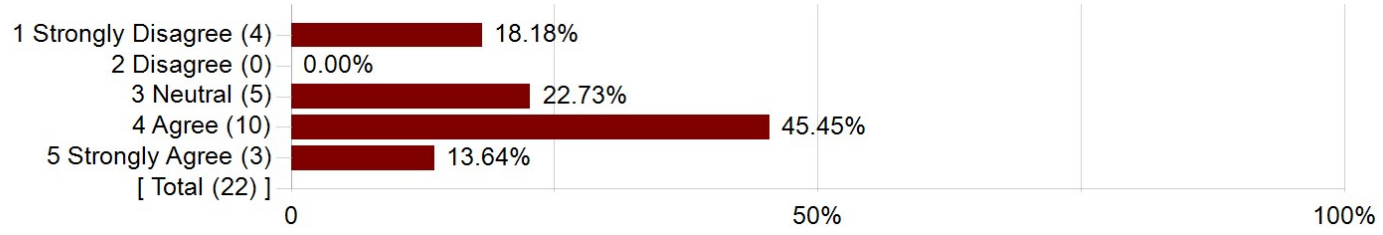

Statistics	Value
Response Count	22
Mean	3.36
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	1.29

This course had more than one instructor and they connected well with each other.

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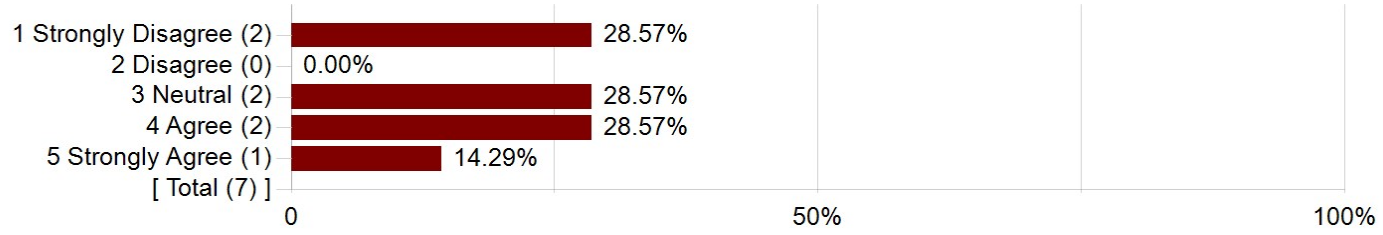
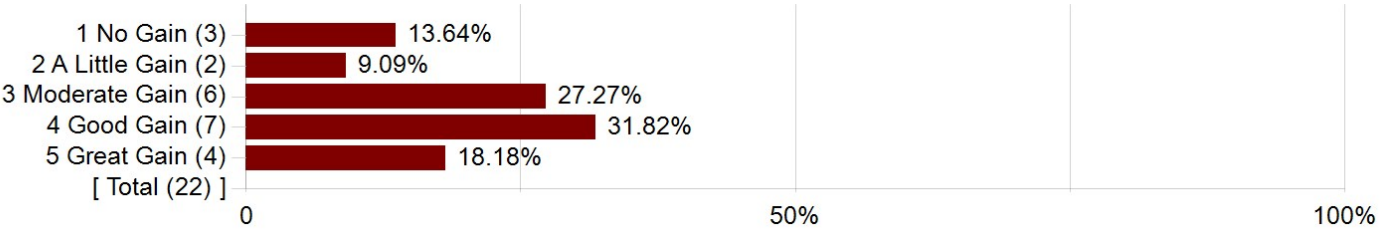


Statistics	Value
Response Count	7
Mean	3.00
Median	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.53

How much did the following elements of the course contribute to your learning gains?

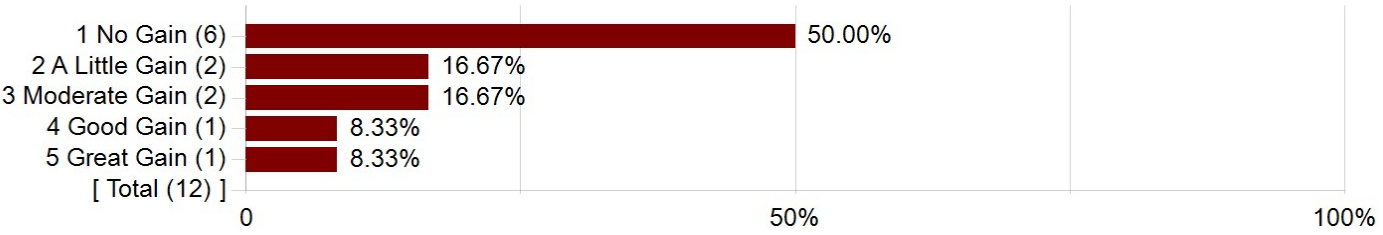
1. Classroom Lectures



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
No Gain	1	3	13.64%
A Little Gain	2	2	9.09%
Moderate Gain	3	6	27.27%
Good Gain	4	7	31.82%
Great Gain	5	4	18.18%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	22
Mean	3.32
Median	3.50
Standard Deviation	1.29

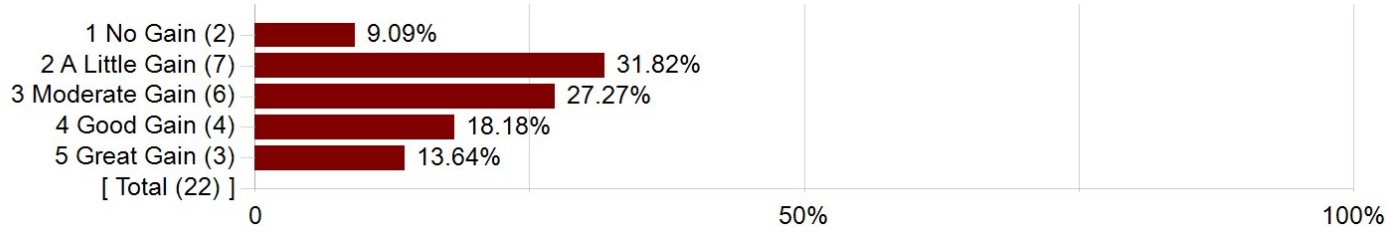
2. Classroom Discussions



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
No Gain	1	6	50.00%
A Little Gain	2	2	16.67%
Moderate Gain	3	2	16.67%
Good Gain	4	1	8.33%
Great Gain	5	1	8.33%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	12
Mean	2.08
Median	1.50
Standard Deviation	1.38

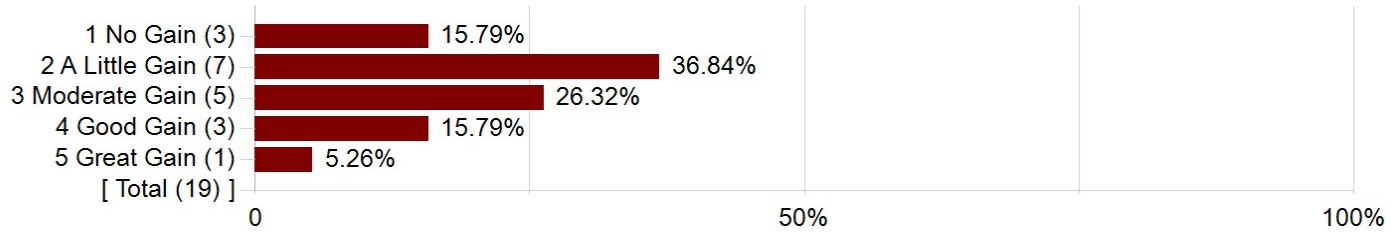
3. Assigned Readings



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
No Gain	1	2	9.09%
A Little Gain	2	7	31.82%
Moderate Gain	3	6	27.27%
Good Gain	4	4	18.18%
Great Gain	5	3	13.64%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	22
Mean	2.95
Median	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.21

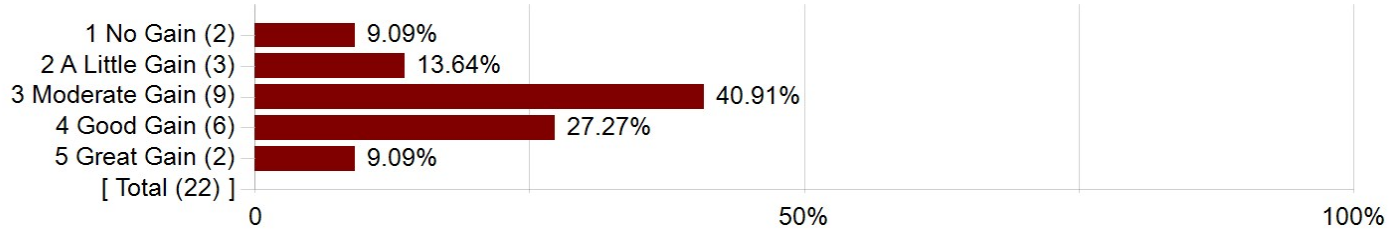
4. Homework Exercises



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
No Gain	1	3	15.79%
A Little Gain	2	7	36.84%
Moderate Gain	3	5	26.32%
Good Gain	4	3	15.79%
Great Gain	5	1	5.26%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	19
Mean	2.58
Median	2.00
Standard Deviation	1.12

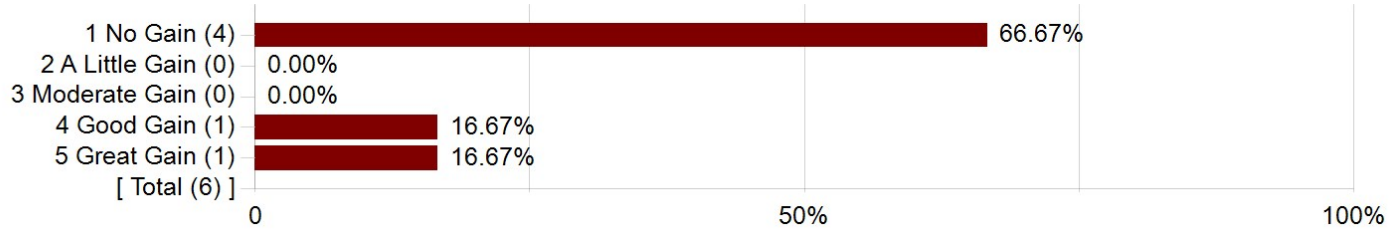
5. Lab Experiences



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
No Gain	1	2	9.09%
A Little Gain	2	3	13.64%
Moderate Gain	3	9	40.91%
Good Gain	4	6	27.27%
Great Gain	5	2	9.09%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	22
Mean	3.14
Median	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.08

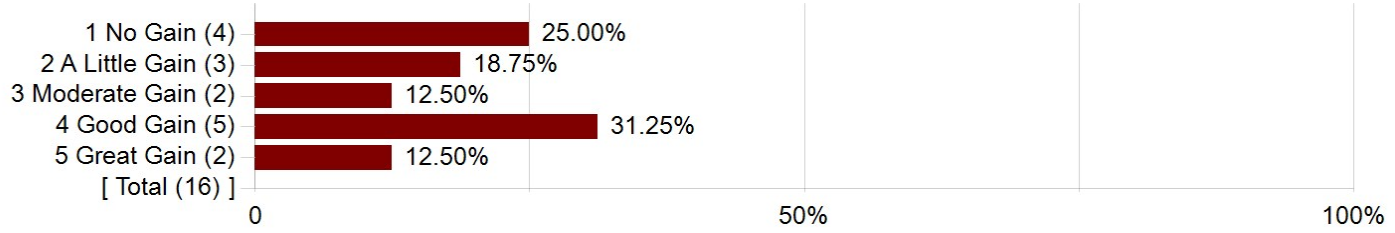
6. Discussion Sessions



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
No Gain	1	4	66.67%
A Little Gain	2	0	0.00%
Moderate Gain	3	0	0.00%
Good Gain	4	1	16.67%
Great Gain	5	1	16.67%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	6
Mean	2.17
Median	1.00
Standard Deviation	1.83

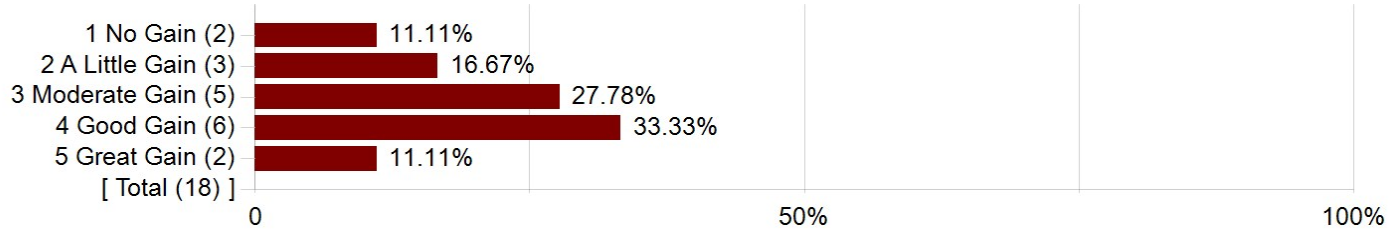
7. Review Sessions



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
No Gain	1	4	25.00%
A Little Gain	2	3	18.75%
Moderate Gain	3	2	12.50%
Good Gain	4	5	31.25%
Great Gain	5	2	12.50%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	16
Mean	2.88
Median	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.45

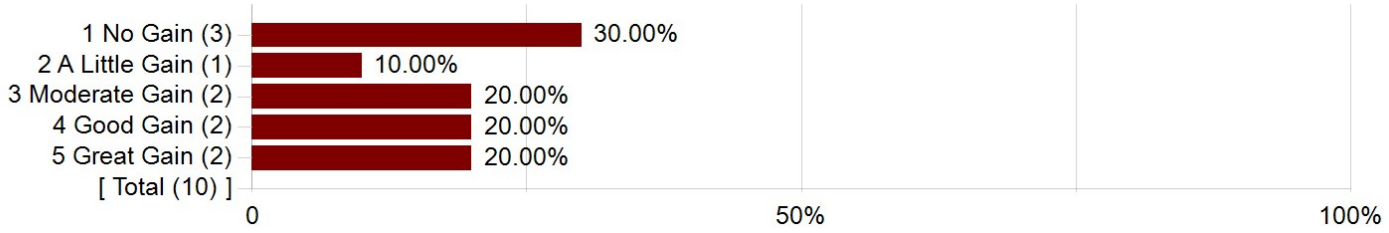
8. Interactions with Other Students



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
No Gain	1	2	11.11%
A Little Gain	2	3	16.67%
Moderate Gain	3	5	27.78%
Good Gain	4	6	33.33%
Great Gain	5	2	11.11%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	18
Mean	3.17
Median	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.20

9. Faculty Office Hours

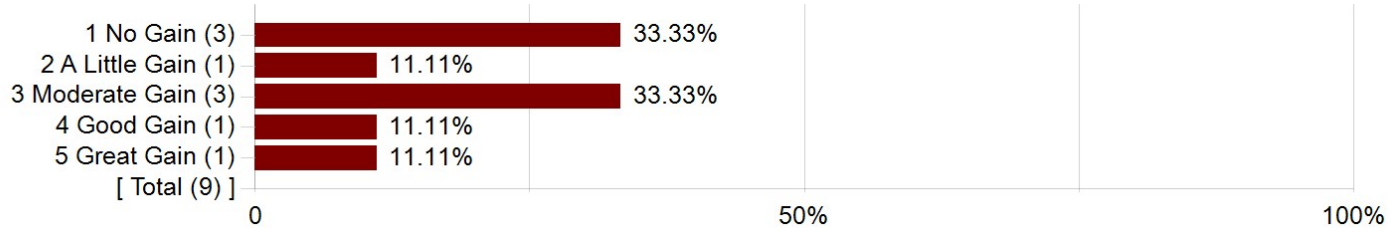


Options	Score	Count	Percentage
No Gain	1	3	30.00%
A Little Gain	2	1	10.00%
Moderate Gain	3	2	20.00%
Good Gain	4	2	20.00%
Great Gain	5	2	20.00%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	10
Mean	2.90
Median	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.60

How much did the following elements of the course contribute to your learning gains? (continued)

10. Teaching Assistant Office Hours



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
No Gain	1	3	33.33%
A Little Gain	2	1	11.11%
Moderate Gain	3	3	33.33%
Good Gain	4	1	11.11%
Great Gain	5	1	11.11%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	9
Mean	2.56
Median	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.42

What was the most important thing (to you) that you learned in this course? What aspect of the material is still unclear for you, that you wish you could have learned better?

Comments
I learned nothing. I wish studying for this course led to good grades and good understanding of everything, but it doesn't. So for the love of G–d, please cancel this course.
I learned more about biology through my labs and readings.
everything was a bit rushed and the structure made little sense
The most important thing that I learned is the correct definition of evolution, the forces that govern it, and how mutations occur.
For me, the most important thing I learned in the course is some forms of statistical analysis that we did during the lab sessions. I do not have a particular issue with any specific aspect of the material, but I do not believe that I have fully understood any of the material, either. It feels like I have an equally incomplete understanding of everything I was taught in the course.
I learned a ton from the readings. They were unequivocally the best part of this course. They were interesting and motivating. The most important thing I got from them is the critical process of scientific discovery that went into all these biological concepts, principles, and theories I took for granted. Seeing the debates about how evolution developed, and how specific discoveries in genetics at first hindered that development, then reinforced it, was really interesting to see. I think a lot of the chemistry and molecular biology aspects were just skipped over—in part because it's really difficult to make them clear in the extremely short time allotted to them.
Human body mechanics
The material itself was fairly broad, I don't think there is a particular thing that I really though was more important. I think the most important thing I learned in this course outside of the course material was self control and remaining calm and focused despite how frusturating a lot of the course's assignments and unclear grading policies.
The most important thing I learned in this course was to look more closely at the course evals before registering for core classes.
It's hard to pick one thing that is "most important" when this course did a good job of giving a quick overview of many topics in biology. Maybe understanding the dangers of antibiotic over–prescription has some unique importance in a "civic good" sense.
I learned about a rigorous approach to biology I was unfamiliar with, as well as some concrete debunking of basic falsehoods within biology.
The labs are very interesting
The mechanisms of natural selection. The basics of cell biology, and specialized cells like neurons, are still confusing to me.
I learned minimally through this course. Most of my knowledge still stems from my high school biology course.
Speciation

How many hours per week outside of attending required sessions did you spend on this course?

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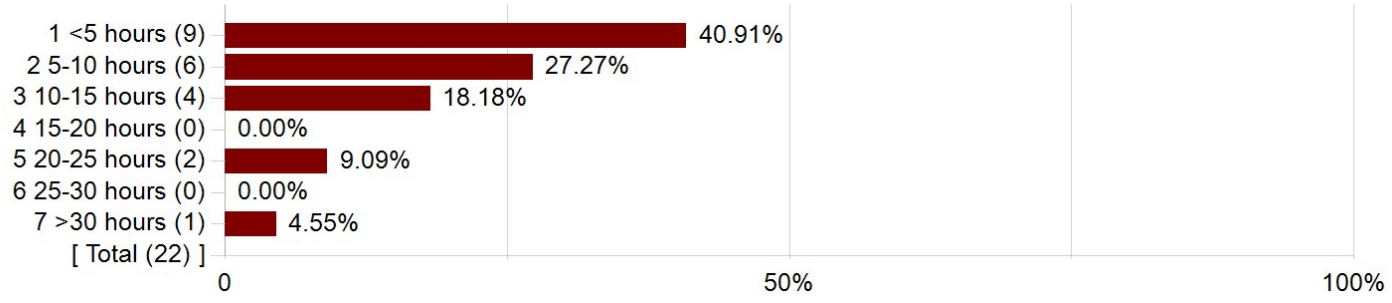
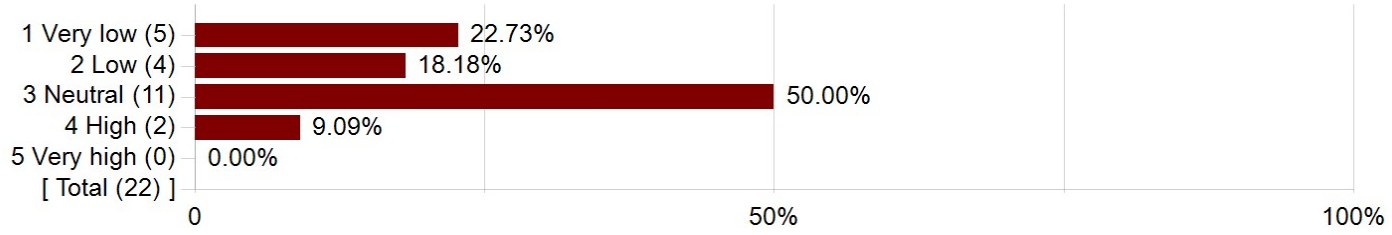


Statistics	Value
Response Count	22
Mean	2.27
Median	2.00
Standard Deviation	1.61

Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?

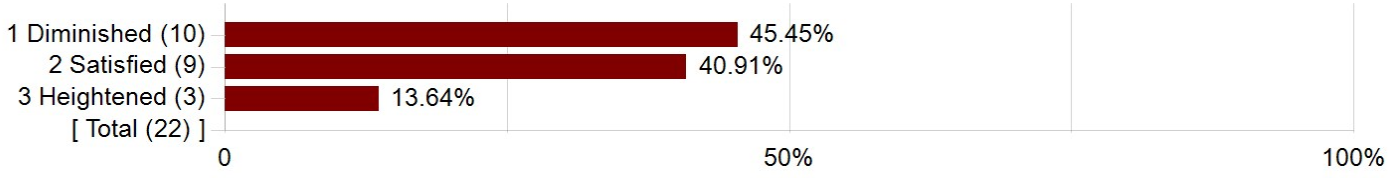
Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?



Statistics	Value
Response Count	22
Mean	2.45
Median	3.00
Standard Deviation	0.96

Now that this class is over, your interest is?

Now that this class is over, your interest is?



Statistics	Value
Response Count	22
Mean	1.68
Median	2.00
Standard Deviation	0.72

Overall, this was an excellent course.

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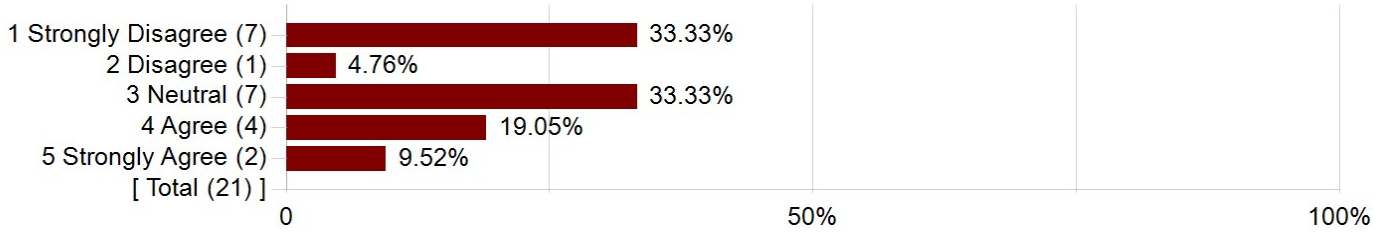


Statistics	Value
Response Count	21
Mean	2.67
Median	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.39

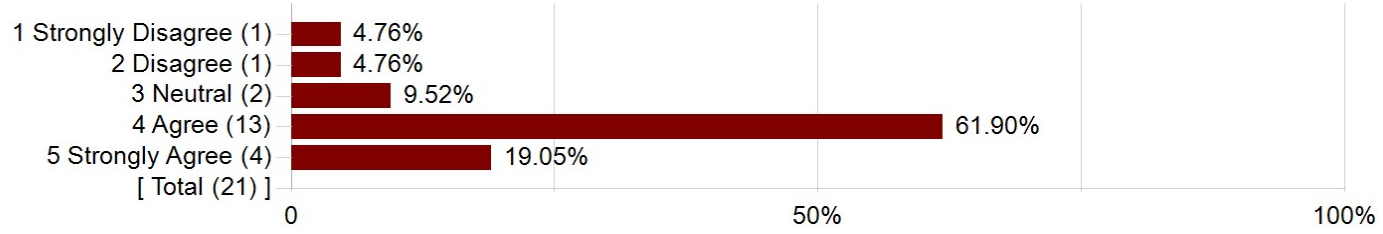
Please share any advice you have for students who are considering taking the course.

Comments
DO NOT TAKE THIS. DO NOT TAKE THIS.
its hard but necessary
Maybe choose a different section with a different professor and you'll have a better experience.
The exams were unreasonably difficult. The only reason I didn't fail the class was because Dr. Hunter dropped a bunch of assignments and the lowest exam at the end of the course.
While the overall grading scheme is fairly lenient (you get 1 dropped quiz out of 4, 1 dropped lab out of 9, 6 dropped reading quizzes out of 21, and 5 dropped in–class exercises out of 15), the individual assessments are generally pretty hard. While you would think that reading quizzes would be an easy boost, since they are done before class with no time limit and open access to the readings, there was often one or two questions that were worded vaguely, otherwise unclear, or could not be answered solely from the reading without guesswork or additional research/googling. As such, the typical average was between 8–8.5/10. Similarly, the mean for in–class exercises typically hovered around 8/10. While lab grades were higher, the quizzes/midterms were difficult, as they often tested even the most minute details from the readings, labs, lectures, and in–class exercises. The averages for the first three midterms were about 68%, 66%, and 69%. There is some kind of curve, as the class average is currently roughly a B+, but the details are unclear. Overall, it's not a terribly difficult class, but you will have to study harder than you expect for the quizzes.
If you have not taken biology in a long time, say 3–4 years, then please consider a different course altogether. Also, some basic statistics would be useful for the labs. Lastly, always be alert while going through the course material, as anything can fall on any quiz.
I would recommend that if you're not super into bio, take the class with a prof who is more lenient in grading especially for quizzes.
I think this is a pretty easy course overall. It feels a lot like a high–school course. Not just in terms of the level of depth of the content, but also in the way the course is approached. For me taking this as a 4th year who's used to upper–level STEM classes, it was a bit of a letdown. But people at this school tend to come out of high school with the skills to game a high–school style system. Those skills are very useful in this course.
Trust your professor and start early in reviewing the exam
The overarching issue with this class, from start to finish, and on all the assignments, was the horrible question formulation/writing. While I understand how difficult it is to write good test/homework questions, it feels like the questions in this course are intentionally written in such a way that they are vague/confusing/difficult to understand, not as a result of the course material being hard (it isn't particularly complicated) but rather because of the way she phrases questions/her desired answer. It feels like for most questions, because the course material isn't difficult, to create some separation in the grading of the course, she writes clear questions about the course and then decides to change a few words around to make it confusing or less direct, often making it difficult to completely avoid losing points. This has consistently frustrated me throughout the course because it often felt when losing points, that I would lose a majority of them as a result of a misunderstanding of the problem/question being asked as opposed to an actual misunderstanding of the material. When combined with the unclear/vague grading policies, it made the class very frusturating because often I felt there was an argument to be made for one answer over the other, but I wasn't sure whether I should spend the time arguing about it if my grade was solidly in the center of a grade band or not.   The above being said, the course itself was pretty painful, and I would recommend that you take basically any other core bio course before you decide to take this one (and even after that I would strongly consider taking core bio another quarter instead of this class).
I strongly recommend that you take another section of standard core bio or IBL bio.
Study material outside of the class work.
Do not take this course.
If you get this teacher I recommend dropping the class and switching to someone else. She gives unnecessarily difficult quizzes that often have little emphasis on your understanding of the core material but focus more on random oddly specific details.

Laboratory Meetings

For each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement.

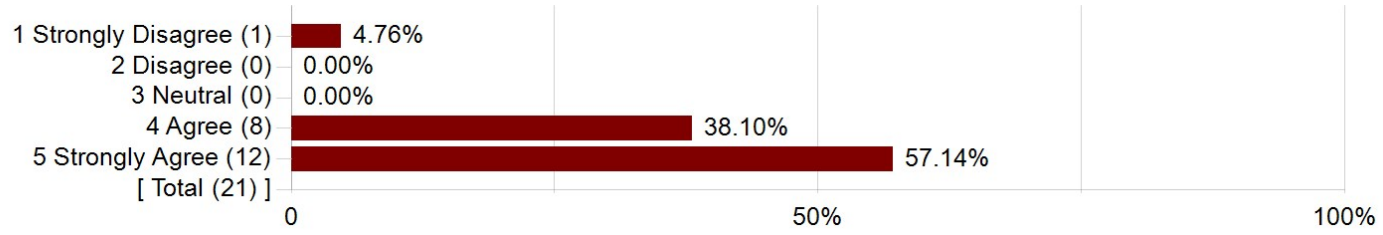
1. The laboratory protocols and instructions were clear and well organized.



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	1	1	4.76%
Disagree	2	1	4.76%
Neutral	3	2	9.52%
Agree	4	13	61.90%
Strongly Agree	5	4	19.05%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	21
Mean	3.86
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	0.96

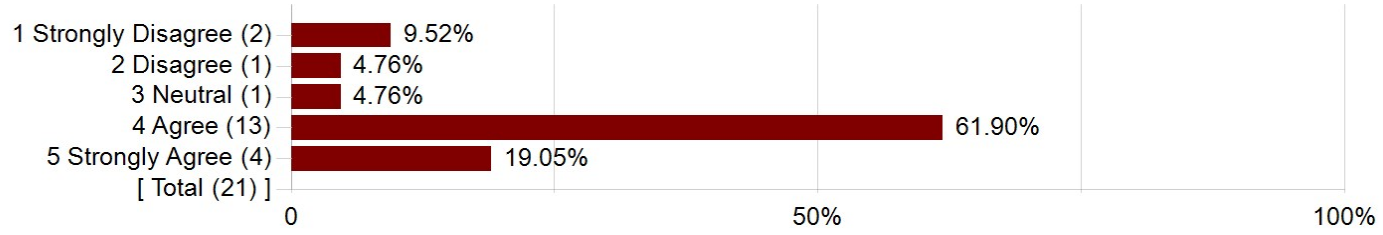
2. Materials and equipment needed for performing the exercises were readily available.



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	1	1	4.76%
Disagree	2	0	0.00%
Neutral	3	0	0.00%
Agree	4	8	38.10%
Strongly Agree	5	12	57.14%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	21
Mean	4.43
Median	5.00
Standard Deviation	0.93

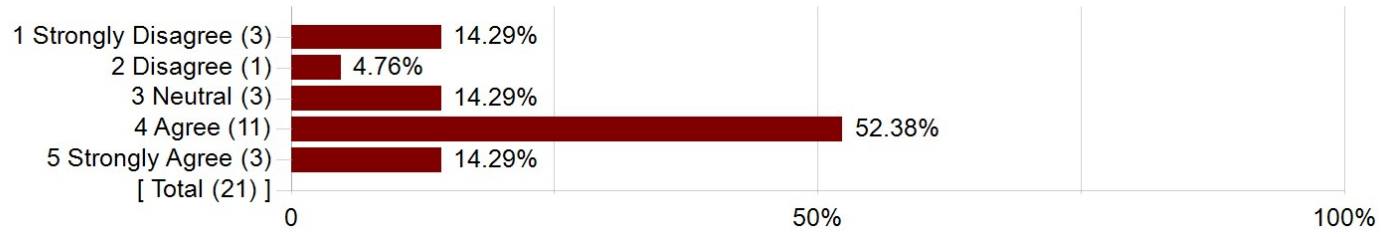
3. The lab exercises had clear educational goals.



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	1	2	9.52%
Disagree	2	1	4.76%
Neutral	3	1	4.76%
Agree	4	13	61.90%
Strongly Agree	5	4	19.05%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	21
Mean	3.76
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	1.14

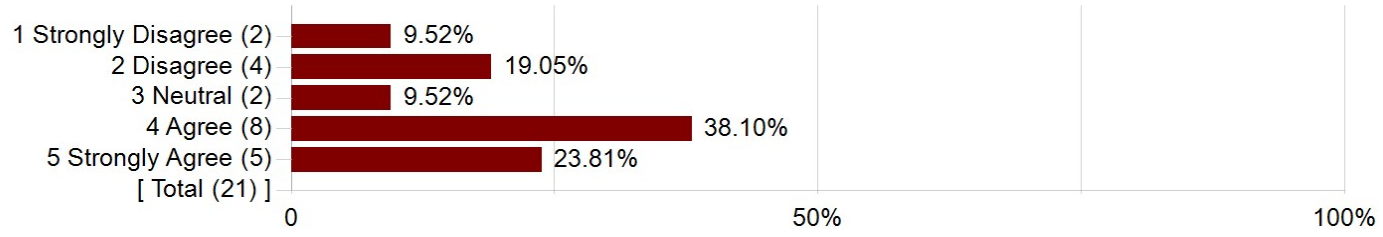
4. The goals of the lab exercises were well integrated with the overall objectives of the course.



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	1	3	14.29%
Disagree	2	1	4.76%
Neutral	3	3	14.29%
Agree	4	11	52.38%
Strongly Agree	5	3	14.29%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	21
Mean	3.48
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	1.25

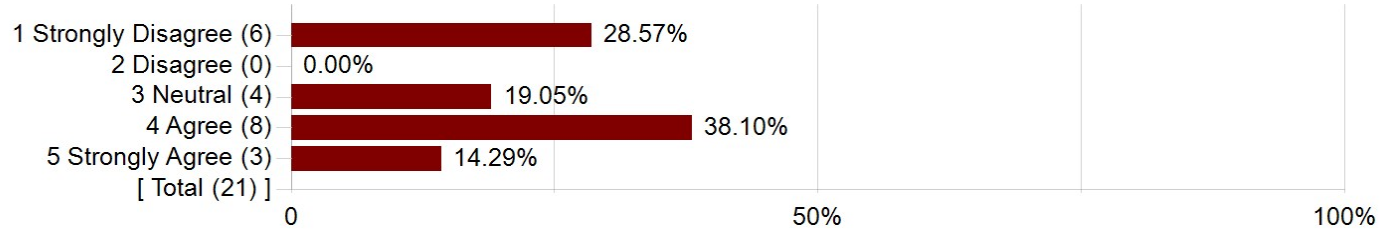
5. The lab exercises explored course topics in ways that could not have been accomplished in lecture or discussion.



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	1	2	9.52%
Disagree	2	4	19.05%
Neutral	3	2	9.52%
Agree	4	8	38.10%
Strongly Agree	5	5	23.81%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	21
Mean	3.48
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	1.33

6. Overall, this was an excellent laboratory experience.

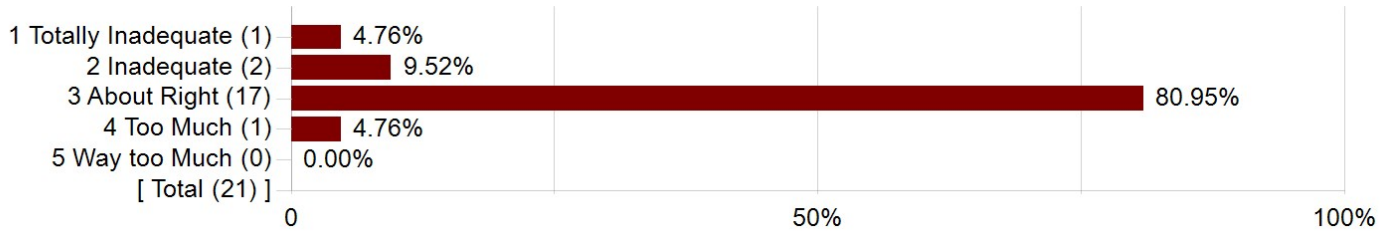


Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	1	6	28.57%
Disagree	2	0	0.00%
Neutral	3	4	19.05%
Agree	4	8	38.10%
Strongly Agree	5	3	14.29%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	21
Mean	3.10
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	1.48

The time allocated for completing the lab was:

The time allocated for completing the lab was:



Statistics	Value
Response Count	21
Mean	2.86
Median	3.00
Standard Deviation	0.57

What observational, analytical, or technical skills did you gain during the laboratory exercises that enhanced your understanding of how biologists answer questions in this particular field?

Comments
Nothing.
learned the basics of working in a laboratory.
I learned how to use pipets as well as how to use spreadsheets and create graphs of data
The most important skills I learned during the labs concerned statistics, and how to use tools such as Excel to come up with experimental results.
Absolutely none. I think the labs were very focused around completing the objectives in as little time as possible. The quiz format strongly discouraged any kind of real learning or skill–development.
I learned a good bit about how to use Excel and Google Sheets. If you do not have these skills already, prepare to spend a lot learning them.
There was a lot of statistical analysis and Excel content that was probably useful in a sense far beyond just biology. Really, there was very little "lab" to any of the labs; they mostly consisted of sitting in the lab room answering questions. Really the only things we "did" were fruit flies and ABR.
Analyzing data and putting it into Excel.
While these labs improve my statistical understanding for evaluating data sets, the complete domination of short–response and multi–choice questions that are poorly worded led to much confusion and lack of understanding. It did not provide me any understanding on how to write a formal lab report that I would expect from a university. Rather, this lab is much more akin to labs required in a Freshman biology course in high school.
Pivot tables, excel. Nothing major though

Please share any recommendations to improve the laboratory learning experience.

Comments
NA
I would appreciate a change in the lab content, so that labs that are based on answering questions from a reading are removed, and are replaced with more labs that actually involve handling living organisms, or at least involving any sort of work that is not really like the reading quizzes we already have besides the labs.
The best lab course I have taken at this university (coming as a 4th year physics major) is the experimental physics undergraduate course. In that course, you have to figure out how a physical system is actually operating and give a firsthanded account of your experience with it. If you're dealing with reality, there shouldn't be "expected" answers that you get—you should be developing biological principles in order to explain what you're seeing. A good lab feels like an inductive journey, not a checklist.
Similar problems with the lab assesments as with the questions for the rest of the course
Please make the questions easier. Many times, the only feasible way to answer them is to ask for help from the TA or to Google the answer.
Consider changing the assignment for the lab to require more in–depth lab report that include introduction, data, analysis, conclusion, and other considerations.