

Biology 405 – Anatomy Teaching Practicum Syllabus and Policies

Biology 120 is a unique course in that it allows undergraduates to participate in teaching assistant positions. You have been chosen as a teaching assistant for this course because you have previously received high marks in the course and have demonstrated the desire to receive upper level teaching credit. For your work as a teaching assistant, you will receive two credits in Biology 405 through the Department of Biological Sciences. In order to successfully complete this course, you must adhere to a strict set of policies outlined in this syllabus.

Your first responsibility will be to check out a key to the anatomy/physiology lab and cadaver room. You are responsible for the key and its use throughout the semester. The key is to be used **ONLY** by you! No visitors of any type are allowed in the anatomy lab without prior arrangement with the Biology 120 instructor. If you allow anyone other than yourself into the lab and storage areas, you will **IMMEDIATELY** be dropped from the course and receive a failing grade in Biology 405. The key must be returned to the departmental office or the course instructor at the conclusion of the semester. Failure to return your key will constitute an **AUTOMATIC** failing grade in Biology 405.

As a teaching assistant, it is your responsibility to assist students during the lab sessions. This includes helping students with laboratory procedures, answering questions and assisting students in problem areas. Therefore, TAs need to have a **THOROUGH** understanding of the material to be presented **PRIOR** to the lab sessions. Spend time outside of scheduled lab sessions to review the material to be presented. If you need to use the anatomy lab for review, you are welcome to do so, in groups with other TAs for the course if you wish. You will have access to the lab and all teaching materials, models, cadavers, equipment, etc. at anytime and may review the material at your convenience.

If you do not know the answer to a student question, **DO NOT GUESS!** Consult another TA or myself if you have a problem. You should not be embarrassed that you don't know an answer. Students in the course will learn just as much by having you help them look up the information in their text or lab manual. I don't expect you to know everything about anatomy or anticipate all the outcomes of an experiment, but I do expect you to take the time and use resources to find the answers to student questions.

As a TA, it is important that you follow all safety rules and regulations of the anatomy lab. Become familiar with these policies and set an example to the students by abiding strictly to these policies. It is your responsibility as a TA to require ALL students to follow the same rules and regulations and to assist them in doing so. Specifically, you will need to keep close observation of the lab exercises and specimen. At the beginning of the course, you will be required to read all lab safety policies outlined in a student handout as well as those safety policies outlined in the Department of Biological Sciences T.A. Safety Manual. After reviewing these documents, you will be required to sign a release form indicating that you understand and can follow all safety rules.

You will be responsible for writing laboratory exams and quizzes given throughout the semester. This requires a high level of professionalism at all times. Therefore, you will be required to complete a FERPA Training module and exam online the first week of the semester. Please go to the human resources webpage to complete this short course and inform the course instructor when you have done so. Print out your completion page and return it to the course instructor during the first week of the semester.

DO NOT discuss any test questions or ideas outside of the lab. All exam preparation will be completed in the lab or secure facility ONLY. All assigned grades are CONFIDENTIAL and are not to be discussed. Failure to follow any of these confidentiality policies may constitute your removal as a TA and immediate failure of the course. All exams and quizzes need to be pre-approved by the TA coordinator AND myself BEFORE they are administered. Please e-mail your materials to other TA's as well so that you can share materials. Grades for quizzes and exams will be entered in Blackboard for the course within two days of the quiz or exam or by Friday at 11:30 at the LATEST. This will be done by the TA coordinator or the course instructor. Therefore, ALL graded materials must be submitted to either of us by the above deadline.

I have a policy dealing with student grading concerns outlined in the Biology 120 syllabus. Refer to this policy in the syllabus and adhere to it throughout the semester. Grading concerns are not allowed for lab quizzes, but can be submitted for lab exams. These concerns are to be submitted to you and I will discuss how to handle these concerns prior to the first lab exam. DO NOT entertain argumentative behavior about exams or quizzes during lab sessions.

All TAs, the TA coordinator, and I will meet once a week to discuss the upcoming labs and procedures, prepare for lab exams and quizzes and address any problem areas that you may have encountered in the previous week. Attendance is required for these meetings. If you need to miss a weekly meeting, you must contact me prior to the meeting to discuss your lab section. You are allowed two absences for these meetings. Further absences will constitute you receiving a failing grade in Biology 405. These meetings are CONFIDENTIAL!! Any topic and/or individual discussed during these meetings must not be discussed outside of the meeting!!

You are responsible for lab set up and clean up each week. Plan on arriving 15-20 minutes early for your lab section and staying the full three hours. I understand that you are taking courses outside your TA responsibilities and I will assist you as much as possible. However, I have several time constraints that will not permit me to attend all three hours of every lab section, so be prepared to be busy during your scheduled lab section. You are required to give the introduction discussion at the beginning of each lab session during the course of the semester in order to succeed in Biology 405. During exam time, plan on spending at least one hour prior to your lab section for exam set-up and approximately one-half hour after your section for exam clean up. Attendance is required for all lab sessions of your scheduled sections. Not attending puts an enormous strain on the students and myself. Strive to be prompt and on time for your section. If you must be absent for your section, you **MUST** notify me at least one day prior to your section so alternative plans can be developed.

Being a teaching assistant is a major responsibility and places you in a position of authority over students in the course. I expect you at ALL TIMES to maintain the level of professionalism indicated by this position. Professionalism constitutes 60% of your grade in Biology 405. This includes following professional ethics when dealing with students and peers. This is a broad topic, so use your discretion. I will not tolerate any disrespect towards myself, the TA coordinator, or students in the course. Abide by the rules, policies and responsibilities outlined in this syllabus. You must maintain a strict level of confidentiality in this course, show a strong respect for lab materials so students will follow your example, behave and dress appropriately for this position and maintain professional relationships with the students at all times. Professional conduct is a major portion of your grade in Biology 405 and failure to maintain this professionalism may earn you a failing grade.

I hope that you have a wonderful experience as a teaching assistant in this course and gain a respect for teaching at the college level. It is my objective for this course to allow you the freedom to learn and develop your own teaching styles and philosophies while guiding you in your teaching experience. If you have ANY problems or concerns throughout the semester, PLEASE contact me ASAP.

I have often been approached about tutoring opportunities for Biology 405 teaching assistants. Although I encourage you to work one-on-one with your students during the lab sessions and to visit outside of class, I do NOT allow any private outside tutoring to be done by Biology 405 TA's. This creates a conflict of interest for both students and TAs and leads to partiality to certain students.

Your Biology 405 grade is based on the attached rubric. Although I try to eliminate as much subjectivity from your grade as possible by the use of this rubric, understand that the nature of an "education" based course leads to some subjective grading, especially in the assessment of professionalism. Either the TA coordinator or myself (whomever you are directly working with during a particular week) will fill out your rubric at the conclusion of the week at your request. Please bring these rubrics to your lab session if you would like them completed each week. Otherwise, a copy of this rubric will be kept in a confidential file in the instructor's office for grading purposes. You are welcome to view these rubrics at anytime to keep track of your Biology 405 grade. I will have copies of your completed rubric available at the midterm and final points of the semester if you would like them.

Learning Outcomes for Teaching Assistants Enrolled in Biology 405:

- **Learn and Integrate:** Teaching assistants will be able to integrate their prior knowledge of anatomy into their lab curriculum while learning educational pedagogy.
- **Think and Create:** TAs will be able to critical think and make responsible decisions about their curriculum and the exams and grading they will completing as part of their teaching responsibilities.
- **Communicate:** TAs will be able to effectively communicate by written and oral means with their peers and their instructors through techniques gained in their practicum experience.

- **Clarify Purpose and Perspective:** Teach assistants will be able to clearly present introductory content to the anatomy students within their sections through the preparation and presentation of weekly material. These experiences will prepare students in this course for real life public speaking endeavors.
- **Practice Citizenship:** TAs will be able to apply the principles of ethical leadership and socially responsible behavior by actively interacting with their peers in a teacher/student environment.

Summary of TA Responsibilities

- Maintain a high level of professionalism at all times.
- Present at least one lab introduction discussion.
- Check out and turn in keys.
- Assist students in all aspects of learning human anatomy.
- Follow all safety rules and policies and require students to do the same.
- Write all lab quizzes and exams and submit to supervisors.
- Attend all scheduled lab sessions for your section.
- Attend all weekly TA meetings for lab development and problem solving.
- Set up and clean up lab materials for your assigned section.

Teaching Tips

- Take pride in your teaching, show your students that you care.
- Try to avoid talking down to your students.
- Get to know your students; identify those that have difficulty with material.
- Have more than one approach to the material that you teach to accommodate different learning skills.
- When in the teaching lab, give 110%. Forget about your own schedule and projects that are due. Your students will sense that you would rather be some place else.
- Know your lab exercises inside and out before you try to teach it.
- Look for students that need assistance but are not asking for it. Remember that several of your students are freshman and may not be clear about what is expected of them.

- Show students that you are excited about human anatomy. Don't sit at the front desk and look important, walk around the lab and interact with students.
- It is OK to think out loud in front of students and to not know the answer to a question. This helps students understand that they can learn material in several ways, including looking information up in texts or lab manuals.
- Tactfully correct answers so that students aren't inhibited from trying again. Look for something positive in each student's learning when giving an answer to a question. Don't always tell the student that they are wrong, but look for other methods to correct student learning. "Good observation, but let's look at it this way."