

Biology 408 – Physiology Teaching Practicum Syllabus and Policies

Biology 121 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 408 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 set of keys to the anatomy/physiology lab and cadaver room from Candi. You are responsible for these keys and their use throughout the semester. These keys are to be used **ONLY** by you! No visitors of any type are allowed in the anatomy lab without prior arrangement with the Biology 121 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 408. The keys must be returned to the departmental office at the conclusion of the semester. Failure to return your keys will constitute an **AUTOMATIC** failing grade in Biology 408.

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 physiology 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 physiology 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 obtain consent forms from ALL subjects at the beginning of an experiment. 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 and grading laboratory exams and quizzes given throughout the semester. This requires a high level of professionalism at all times. **DO NOT** discuss any test questions or ideas outside of the lab. All exam preparation and grading will be completed in the lab **ONLY**. Absolutely **NO** exams are to leave the lab to be graded under **ANY** circumstances. 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. **Quizzes and exams to be approved need to be given to me during the TA meeting prior to the week of lab sessions OR via e-mail before this time.** This will give the TA coordinator and myself time to review the quizzes and exams and make necessary corrections and copies. 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 noon at the LATEST. Therefore, have all graded materials to the coldroom or my office by this time!**

I have a policy dealing with student grading concerns outlined in the Biology 121 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 408.

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. I may call on you throughout the semester to present material at the beginning of the lab. Although I anticipate doing this myself, I know of a few conflicts that may constitute my absence. In this case, I will inform you far in advance of my absence so you may have adequate time to prepare for these presentations. During my presentations of the introduction to the labs for each section, I expect you to listen intently to the presentation so that you can give reliable information to students during your session. 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 50% of your grade in Biology 408. 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 major portion of your grade in Biology 408 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 408 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 408 TA's. This creates a conflict of interest for both students and TAs and leads to partiality to certain students.

Your Biology 408 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. You are welcome to view these rubrics at anytime to keep track of your Biology 408 grade. I will have copies of your completed rubric available at the midterm and final points of the semester if you would like them.

Summary of TA Responsibilities and Learning Outcomes

- Maintain a high level of professionalism at all times.
- Check out and turn in keys.
- Assist students in all aspects of learning human physiology through experimentation.
- Follow all safety rules and policies and require students to do the same, collect consent forms from all participating subjects.
- Write and grade all lab quizzes and exams and have scores to Candi in a timely manner.
- 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 physiology. 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 students 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 students learning. "Good observation, but let's look at it this way."

Descriptions:

Professionalism: Includes those aspects of teaching described in the Biology 407 Syllabus which include: Actively assisting students during lab sessions, being proactive in your teaching, paying attention to instructor introduction, having a strong grasp of material to be covered, maintaining confidentiality of ALL material discussed among TA's and instructors, assisting in student learning, professional relationships with students and professional/appropriate dress for lab sessions.

Exam/Quiz Submission Deadline: All exams and quizzes are to be written by the TA and submitted NO LATER than 24hrs prior to assisted section. It is the TA responsibility to insure that the instructor receives the exams/quizzes for review. (Do Not always depend on technology!).

Grade Submission Deadline: All grades for exams and quizzes MUST be submitted into WebCT by 11:00am on the Friday of the weekly exercise. All students will receive scores at the same time to maintain uniformity across sections. If you have a section late in the week, plan accordingly.

Attendance/Participation in TA Meetings: A weekly TA meeting will be held to discuss problems/concerns throughout the week and to prepare for the next weeks material. Attendance is required unless TA's have notified the instructor of an absence. See Biology 407 syllabus for further details. Be prompt and on-time as there will be numerous discussions during this time.

Lab Set-up/Labeling/Clean-up: It is the TA's responsibility to have the lab set up for students, to have ID materials properly labeled for quizzes and exams, and to clean-up the lab as needed after students leave. Proper care of specimens is also required throughout the lab session. All exam/quiz materials MUST be prepared PRIOR to student arrival. Plan accordingly!

Use/Keeping of Lab Keys: TA's are responsible for checking out, using, and returning lab access keys. Keys are ONLY to be used for TA access to the lab, no visitors are allowed.

**See the Biology 407 syllabus for further descriptions of these graded components of the TA course. Since this is now a graded (not P/F) upper division course, the instructor will base your midterm and final grades on the above rubric. Records will be kept each week of TA performance by the instructor or TA supervisor.