

Biol 1 – General Biology

Course Information

- Semester and Year: Fall 2025
- Course ID and Section number: Biol 1 V9325
- Instructor's name: Michel Best
- Day and time of required meetings: Asynchronous Online Canvas Modules
- Location: Remote online lecture and lab
- Course units: 3 Lecture + 1 Lab = 4

Instructor Contact Information

- Office Online: Michael Best Zoom Room (Meeting ID: 536 438 6623; Password: 6Zqm73)
- <https://redwoods-edu.zoom.us/my/michaelbest?pwd=YmtJRU8zOE1JUExNM2g4dm1jU3RuQT09>
- Office hours: By Appointment
- Phone number: 315 657 3830
- Email address: Michael-Best@Redwoods.edu
- Other method (Canvas In-box): Michel Best
- Other method (Personal Email): Best.Michael.707@Gmail.com

Required Materials:

- Textbook: Free online: OpenStax.Org: Concepts of Biology
- Kitchen Labs have required materials to purchase, please see digital lab handouts

Catalog Description

An introductory course in life science dealing with basic biological concepts including molecular and cell biology, metabolism, heredity, evolution, ecology, natural history, and biodiversity.

Course Student Learning Outcomes

- 1. Apply the process of science to critically evaluate observable phenomenon.
- 2. Describe attributes of life and explain how cells fulfill these characteristics.
- 3. Relate the mechanisms of evolutionary change to the production of biological diversity.

Evaluation and Grading Policy

Your performance in the course will be assessed based on your execution of the following requirements.

- Muddy Fun Discussions (10%)

There will be a MUDDY FUN discussion board for EVERY SINGLE video lecture you watch. Most weeks, that means you'll have TWO or THREE of these discussions. Contribute to the board in a meaningful and constructive way and you'll get full credit on these assignments. This is meant to simulate a traditional lecture setting, where questions can be asked and conversation takes place. The purpose of this board is to clarify the CONFUSING concepts in the day's video, as well as celebrate the COOL ones.

There are two parts to these discussions. FIRST- you must post an original thought, with a meaningful title, talking (briefly- 200 words or less) about something CONFUSING or COOL about the lecture. This original post is due by 11:59am- this is just before noon! Once you publish your original thoughts, the rest of the board will be unlocked, and you will find some PRACTICE QUESTIONS that I've posted. You'll also find the original posts of your classmates. By the final due date (11:59pm- just before midnight!), you must engage in a meaningful and constructive way by adding 4 more posts to the board. You can answer my questions, or respond to your classmates, or both. Make the board helpful for you!

For full credit, you must generate a total of 5 posts to add to the board. In total, you must:

- submit an original post that is interesting and generates conversation
- submit the original post by the due date
- submit at least one response that meaningfully and constructively engages with classmates
- come back to the board and participate at least two separate times (not all at the same time)

- Labs (20%)

Each week, there will be 1-2 LABORATORY activity to complete. Lab will be accomplished at home using easily acquired supplies you can purchase from your local supermarket.

- Weekly Check-in (5%)

Each weekend (due Saturday night at 11:59pm), you will have some sort of metacognitive check-in assignment. Most weeks this will be a simple (and very BRIEF- 1 minute or less) video in which you answer some sort of question I pose. This is just an easy way for us to stay connected, which is an important ingredient that helps me support your success in this class.

- Weekly Online Quizzes (15%)

Administered through Canvas, these weekly quizzes will cover ALL lab and lecture material for the week. Every week, quizzes will be posted in MODULES. Quizzes will be due Saturday night by 11:59pm. No late quizzes will be accepted so it is not advised that you wait until 11:58 pm to complete the quiz. You may take the quiz twice, and I will keep the higher score. These are excellent practice for your exams. **BE AWARE: There are no make-up quizzes!**

- Exams (50%)

There will be four midterm exams and 1 comprehensive final throughout the semester that cover material from both lecture and lab. IF your score on the comprehensive final is higher than ANY of your other midterm scores, the lowest midterm score will be dropped and replaced with the final. BE AWARE: There are no make-up exams of any type, unless you have a verifiable, unavoidable and extreme circumstance.

Prerequisites/corequisites/ recommended preparation

Recommended Prep: English 150

Educational Accessibility and Support

College of the Redwoods is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for qualified students who could benefit from additional educational support and services. You may qualify if you have a physical, mental, sensory, or intellectual condition which causes you to struggle academically, including but not limited to:

- Mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, or bipolar disorder
- Common ailments such as arthritis, asthma, diabetes, autoimmune disorders, and diseases
- Temporary impairments such as a broken bone, recovery from significant surgery, or a pregnancy-related disability
- Neurodevelopmental disorders such as a learning disability, intellectual disability, autism, acquired brain injury, or ADHD
- Vision, hearing, or mobility conditions

Available services include extended test time, quiet testing environments, academic assistance and tutoring through the [LIGHT Center](#), counseling and advising, alternate formats of course materials (e.g., audio books, braille, E-texts), assistive technology, learning disability assessments, approval for personal attendants, interpreters, priority registration, on-campus transportation, adaptive physical education and living skills courses, and more. If you believe you might benefit from disability- or health-related services and accommodations, please contact [Student Accessibility Support Services \(SASS\)](#). If you are unsure whether you qualify, please contact Student Accessibility Support Services (SASS) for a consultation: sass@redwoods.edu.

SASS office locations and phone numbers

Eureka campus

- Phone: 707-476-4280
- Location: Learning Resource Center (Library)

Del Norte campus

- Phone: 707-465-2353

- Location: main building, near the Library

Klamath-Trinity campus

- Phone: 707-476-4280



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Open Door Policy

I am available for student success office hour before class: Tue/TH 1PM

I am also available by appointment: Ask me how you are doing or what you can do to improve your grade, I am here to Help!

Academic dishonesty

In the academic community, the high value placed on truth implies a corresponding intolerance of scholastic dishonesty. In cases involving academic dishonesty, determination of the grade and of the student's status in the course is left primarily to the discretion of the faculty member. In such cases, where the instructor determines that a student has demonstrated academic dishonesty, the student may receive a failing grade for the assignment and/or exam and may be reported to the Chief Student Services Officer or designee. The Student Code of Conduct ([AP 5500](#)) is available on the College of the Redwoods website. Additional information about the rights and responsibilities of students, Board policies, and administrative procedures is located in the [2024-2025 College Catalog](#) and [CR Board and Administrative Policies](#).

Required Materials

1. **You must have a textbook for this course.** Here are some options:
 - a. The OFFICIAL required textbook is Concepts of Biology, from OpenStax College. This book is available FREE online at: <http://cnx.org/contents/b3c1e1d2-839c-42b0-a314-e119a8aafbdd:2/Introduction>. You can purchase a color version of this text from Amazon for about \$30. http://www.amazon.com/Concepts-Biology-OpenStaxCollege/dp/1938168119/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1452293407&sr=1-4.
 - b. ANY non-majors general biology text will do! Shoot me an email if you have any concerns :)
2. **Three ring binder or spiral notebook** for your notes.
3. **Reliable and updated computer**
 - a. Most computers and internet providers are adequate for course success. Speedy internet access (cable, DSL, or satellite) recommended because video lectures are a required multimedia component of the course.

- b. You need to have reliable access to the internet at least four times a week for 16 weeks. Anticipate problems with your computer and internet access (including power outages) by not waiting until the last minute to submit assignments. It is your responsibility to meet the course deadlines....

4. Webcam!

Each week you will upload a very brief video of yourself answering a reflective question about your learning during the week. You must have a working Webcam (and supportive software) to do this. OR you can just upload a video from your phone.

5. Cell phone or digital camera

You will need to document your lab work with digital images, then upload these images into your lab notebook. This is a course requirement. Cell phone camera would work perfectly.

Online Course Expectations

This online course will require at least as much time as you would dedicate to a traditional class (probably MORE). This four credit hour class will require at least 20 hours per week (for 8 weeks) if you want to succeed. You will need to watch video lectures and take good notes; record brief videos in Canvas; carefully read textbook chapters when something is unclear; complete labs at home using kitchen supplies; participate in online discussions about lecture and lab content; complete weekly quizzes; and take FOUR exams. Conscientiousness, attention to details, and skills in reading and writing are critical for success. **You can do it!**

Student readiness

Are you ready for online classes? The first module in this course will help you make this assessment of your skills and preparation. If you are concerned, here are some modules about online learning that might be helpful: <https://apps.3cm mediasolutions.org/oei/students.html>

Portable Devices vs. Computers

Although you can use late-model portable devices (such as Android or iOS phones & tablets) for SOME parts of this class, you should plan on doing the majority of your work (especially exams and assignments) from a reasonably late- model notebook or desktop computer (Mac or PC). Do NOT plan to participate in this class solely from a portable device, because some aspects of the class are clunky, awkward, and/or inefficient when viewed on portable devices! Clunk≠Cool. If you do decide to use your portable device for some of your class work, use the free Canvas app (called “Canvas by Instructure”) available in iTunes (for iOS) and the Google Play Store (for Android). Do not try to connect to Canvas using a web browser on a portable device- this multiplies the clunk-factor. Your experience with Canvas will be a lot happier if you use the app.

CANVAS

All content is available in Canvas, the official Learning Management System (LMS) of CR

1. Because this is an online class, you should plan on logging into Canvas ALMOST EVERY DAY. You can access an incredible number of resources through Canvas...get used to it
2. All content is organized in weekly Modules. Each module has the same structure & set up by DUE DATE.
3. If there is content you are looking for but can't find, PLEASE email me ASAP. There are probably other folks looking for the same thing, I'm not perfect (YET) and I may forget to publish things).
4. New modules will show up at the BOTTOM of your module list. All old modules will remain available.

Video Lectures

You MUST watch the video lectures each week, unless you choose to READ (and understand) the TEXTBOOK instead. If you don't watch the videos or read the textbook, you are basically CHOOSING to skip class. Now...if you feel you can pass the class while skipping class every day, more power to you. But please make an informed decision about this, as it is always highly inadvisable to skip lectures for the courses you take.

All video lectures are published in YouTube. However, they are also posted in the weekly MODULES in Canvas. I recommend accessing the lectures in Canvas, just to be sure you're watching the most up-to-date video. I also organize the lectures on my YouTube channel, so you are welcome to watch them there if it is easier.

Riggs' YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-yQpFb89u7qb-duWMZvoog>

Please let me know if you are having ANY kind of technical difficulties with these videos.

Drop policy

You are expected to complete ALL activities in the first week of class to make sure you aren't dropped from the course! This is a HIGHLY COVETED class. You need to participate if you want to keep your spot! I understand that sometimes you'll miss a deadline. I'm happy to chalk this up to "doo doo happens." However, if you miss five graded assignments in a row, I will drop you from the course. There is a LOT going on in this class- it is really important for your success in this class that you keep up with the fun!

Confirm your presence in the online classroom

Log in to the course in Canvas and begin completing the tasks in “Module 0: Let’s Roll” no later than 11:59pm on Tuesday August 26th to ensure you keep your spot in the online classroom. Doing so will confirm your enrollment in the course and prevent you from being dropped as a “no show.” You can and will be dropped from the class if you do not log in and begin participating in course activities. A student from the wait list will take your place.

Course Philosophy: Active Learning

Learning happens when your brain changes. If your brain does not actually change the way neurons communicate with each other, then you are not learning anything. And the best way to **change your brain** is to **DO SOMETHING**. This is the fundamental assumption that informs the methods I use in my classes.

Research about how people learn (or how they change their brains!) overwhelmingly indicates that the most successful teaching methods get students to be **active participants** in the learning process. Collaboration and problem solving are just a few ways to engage in your own learning.

You might imagine that collaboration and ACTIVE LEARNING can’t happen in an online class. This is not true! However, just like in a face to face class, YOU are responsible for how ACTIVE you choose to be. In this course, you will work in lab groups to facilitate collaboration, you will participate in weekly “Muddy-Fun” discussions, and you will take quizzes to make sure you’re keeping up with the content.

One of the best ways to become an active learner is to TALK about what you are learning because the fact is, learning is social. In my face to face classes, you TALK to your classmates, because engaging with each other IS engaging with the content. In this online course, you WRITE to your classmates. Do not be shy when participating in the weekly discussion boards- they represent an important part of the process.

Learning is a PROCESS

Every single class I teach is HARD. There is a TON of new content and this includes not only new vocabulary, but also new CONCEPTS. My goal is that you TRULY LEARN the material, and this requires you to not only memorize new terms, but also THINK about what those terms MEAN. And here is the awesome part. LEARNING IS A PROCESS. My courses are set up to offer plenty of opportunities to capitalize on learning opportunities and IMPROVE YOUR UNDERSTANDING OVER TIME (and consequently, your grade). Please embrace a GROWTH MINDSET in this class. Take feedback and grades as opportunities to improve yourself. Set out to truly UNDERSTAND the material, and your grade will reflect that understanding.

Everything in this syllabus is subject to change...but I'll let you know if it does

AI Use Class Policy

Recent advancements in generative artificial intelligence (AI) have made large language models such as ChatGPT and Google's Bard widely available. However, overuse of these tools in this class can undermine your learning and curtail the development of your critical and creative thinking skills. In addition, AI outputs are often unreliable and frequently subject to bias. For these reasons, the policy of this class is that AI cannot be used at any point in the completion of class assignments, including discussion posts. Any or all of your assignment submissions and discussion posts may be screened by AI detection software, but the real penalty for AI misuse is that you will miss out on an opportunity to learn.

Disruptive Behavior

Student behavior or speech that disrupts the instructional setting will not be tolerated. Disruptive conduct may include, but is not limited to: unwarranted interruptions; failure to adhere to instructor's directions; vulgar or obscene language; slurs or other forms of intimidation; and physically or verbally abusive behavior. In such cases where the instructor determines that a student has disrupted the educational process, a disruptive student may be temporarily removed from class. In addition, the student may be reported to the Chief Student Services Officer or designee. Additional information about the rights and responsibilities of students, Board policies, and administrative procedures is located in the [2024-2025 College Catalog](#) and [CR Board and Administrative Policies](#).

Inclusive Language in the Classroom

College of the Redwoods aspires to create a learning environment in which all people feel comfortable in contributing their perspectives to classroom discussions. It therefore encourages instructors and students to use language that is inclusive and respectful.

Canvas Information

Log into Canvas at [My CR Portal](#)

For help logging in to Canvas and general tech help, visit [Canvas Support Home](#)

Once you're logged in to Canvas, you click on the Help icon on the left menu

Canvas online orientation workshop: [Canvas Student Orientation Course](#)

Setting Your Preferred Name and Pronouns in Canvas

Students have the ability to display personal pronouns and an alternate first name in Canvas. Students may change their pronouns on their own in Canvas (Account :: Settings :: Edit Settings). To request a change to your preferred list name, contact [Admissions and Records](#). Your Preferred Name will only be listed in Canvas; this does not change your legal name in our records. See the [Student Information Update form-2022.pdf](#).

Important Dates

Date	To Remember
August 22	Last day to register for classes (day before the first class meeting)
August 23	Classes begin
August 29 th	Last Day to add a class
September 1 st	Labor Day (All Campuses Closed)
September 5 th	Last Day to Drop & Receive a Refund
September 7 th	Last Day to Drop w/out a "W"
September 8 th	Census Date (20% of class)
October 31 st	Last Day for Student/Faculty Withdrawal
November 11 th	Veterans Day (All Campuses Closed)
Nov 24 th – 28 th	Fall Break (All Campuses Closed)
December 13 th -19 th	Final Examinations
December 19 th	Last Day to File P/NP Option
December 19 th	Semester Ends
December 26 th	Grades Due