

The complete syllabus for Biology 280 is available at

<http://www.hope.edu/academic/biology/classdata/bio280/280home.htm>

## Dr. Murray's Patented Advice on Preparation for Exams

Here's a bit of general advice on preparation for exams from someone who has been there: your performance on exams (as well as anything else) will be highly correlated with how much effort you put into the course, from going to lecture every day to studying hard prior to every quiz and exam. By the time you've been in college for four years you'll be much better at it than you are now, because you'll develop your own style of preparation.

What works is different for each of us, but I can tell you what worked for me when I was an undergraduate. **I would usually start studying for a midterm exam in a challenging class about a week before the exam date.** No, I'm NOT kidding. Here's a little outline based on what I used to do:

### Lecture notes

- At least review your lecture notes a few times, but better yet, **REWRITE** your lecture notes so that you have a neatly-written, logical set from which to study. This will take some time - perhaps over several days - but while you're doing so you'll identify those things that you're not sure of, and you can fill in the details by referring to your textbook or asking me.
- After you have the set of rewritten notes you can study from it, rather than from the original. Completely review these notes at least once per day until the exam.

### Textbook

- **R**e-read the parts of the assigned readings that you underlined or highlighted - at least once per day while you're preparing.
- **B**e able to define (briefly) all of the boldfaced words in the assigned readings.
- **U**SE the end-of-chapter reviews of key concepts, self-quizzes, challenge questions, etc. Although I may not use questions directly from those resources, they **DO** focus on the most important concepts presented in each of the chapters, and if you understand them, you'll probably do well on the exam.

You're probably thinking that this constitutes an inordinately large amount of time spent on one course. It is, and I would often fall a bit behind on the readings for my other courses until after the exam. In fact, after the first group of midterm exams I would usually be playing "catch-up" for the rest of the semester. Frustrating, but I just learned to live with it, because overall it worked for me.

A final piece of advice that comes from something I only figured out during my last finals week as an undergraduate: stop cramming for the exam at least an hour before exam time. Instead, study hard in the days before, but on exam day remain calm. Don't be frantically flipping through your notes right up until the instructor is standing over you

with the exam. Your notes are probably looking more and more like stuff you've never even seen before. And while you might keep some obscure term in short-term memory just long enough to get it right on the exam, freaking out like this will probably prevent you from thinking clearly, so that you'll do more poorly on parts of the exam that depend on thinking conceptually rather than on rote memorization. So go into the exam with a smile on your face, confident that you've prepared as well as you were able, and that whatever is going to happen is going to happen whether you freak at the last moment or not. Your smile will also make the other students nervous - well, you get the picture.