

BIOLOGY 400 History of Biology

Spring 2022

Department of Biology, University of Victoria

Welcome back to the online world

As you know, UVic has moved most of its Spring 2022 courses online from January 10 to January 23, due to you-know-what. In Biology 400, we will observe this shift.

The current plan is to resume face-to-face instruction on Monday, January 24. If this virus has taught us one thing, however, is that it is full of malicious surprises, and we therefore cannot give you any assurance that we will be face-

Prerequisite

Third year standing.

Readings

I will post pdfs of selected readings on the Brightspace site when they become relevant as we progress through the course. There is no text or course pack to buy.

Course website

Biology 400 has a Brightspace website. As a registered student in this course, you will automatically be enrolled in this site.

On the site you will find course business notices, lecture PowerPoints and pdfs, test results and so on. Please check the site before each class.

Course Topics (tentative)

Introduction

The roots of biology

Biology in the ancient world

The Islamic world and medieval Europe

Hidden and mythical organisms

The human body: the Scientific Revolution and after

The early days of microscopy

Biology and the emerging physical sciences: chemistry

Describing and arranging organisms

Biology and the emerging physical sciences: geology

Evolution before Darwin

Darwin

Cells, the units of life

Heredity

Evolution and genetics come together

The hereditary material

TD Lysenko and Soviet biology

C. Packback

What is it?

Packback is an online platform for discussion among students. You will probably have been contacted already by the company about signing up.

Since Biology 400 has only third-year standing as a prereq, there are students from many different academic backgrounds registered here. That has always been one of the strengths of the course and one of its pleasures to me. I am hoping that Packback will be better able to bring together students with different knowledge, ideas and values than has previously been the case in Biology 400.

Cost

The cost is \$29; it is less if you have used the platform in previous courses at UVic. I thought long and hard about whether the cost was justified, and I concluded that it was worth a try. Some of my colleagues have used it in their courses and have had positive things to say about it.

The Bookstore used to sell a course pack for Biology 400 at a cost of \$29, but I have moved this material online for free, so you are not paying more than what students have traditionally paid in this course.

How it works, what you will do, and how you will be assessed

The idea behind the platform is that you will post one discussion question per week, related to the course material in some way, and reply to two questions from other students per week. Each question and response is worth 10 points, or 30 points per week total.

respond to earlier questions. Your response will be time-stamped, and will count toward your

The questions will be assessed for their quality by the platform. Questions that pertain to closed, easily-lookuppable issues (low marks; more open-ended questions score higher. The score a post gets is called its curiosity score. I have set the minimum curiosity score at 40, which is on the low side according to the company. I thought it advisable to try it this way initially, though, due to the wide disparity in the class population in terms of academic background. After the AI tells you what it thinks of your question or response, you may edit and improve it. It is only your edited post that will count, or your one post if you choose not to edit.

If the AI thinks your final post deserves a score of 40 or more, you get 10 points in the course grade book for the post. If your post and your edited post go below this minimum, you will get 5 points.

Your participation in Packback will be worth 25% of your course grade. The platform determines your grade, not me. So I will not mark you up or down depending on what I read.

When you log in to Packback, there to get you started.

Deadlines

The deadline for your posts each week is Saturday at 5:00 PM, PST. There will b week is Saturd

Sunday, February 13