

Denise A. Piechnik, PhD

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Dept. of Biology

BIOL150: World of Plants
Enrollment: 20

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the world of plants, their role in nature and their relationships with humans. The labs focus on students-interactions with plants by growing, observing in the field, and studying their various uses to humans.

Students: A non-majors elective that fulfilled the requirement of a science class with a lab. Typically this course makeup is 80% freshman/sophomore and 20% junior/senior.

Student Ratings:

Fall 1997 - Overall performance rating of 4.6 ± 0.6 by 11 respondents (73%); 5 = Excellent.

The students appreciated the effort I put into explaining and ensuring their understanding of the material. The students said they felt like I cared about their learning experience. Student comments supported my overall performance as a TA with comments such as: “Denise Piechnik was a good instructor, overall. She was interested in helping us learn”. In the middle of the semester, I changed the format of the quizzes to include a variety of question types. Polling the students as to the kind of quizzes wanted have seemed to make a positive impression. A few students responded with supportive comments like this: “I appreciated that she was willing to listen to our problems and opinions of the class and lecture, and was willing to even change the structure of the quizzes for our sake.”

Changes:

I needed to prepare solid explanations and a backup examples that are well thought-out to increase accessibility and to create a “placeholder” to build on to for a better overall understanding.

Student Ratings:

Spring 1997: Overall performance rating of 4.6 ± 0.5 by 12 respondents (60%); 5 = Excellent.

Students appreciated my organized presentation of the material, and my availability to help them. Student comments supporting this summary include: “She did a good job in explaining her material well”, and “I think Denise’s labs are very thorough, organized and completely informative,” and finally, “ a very stimulating course provided by a very thorough lab instructor.” Students did not give suggestions for improvement.

Changes:

One change I would make would be to shorten lectures and provide an opportunity to discuss questions about lab material at the end. Few students read the lab exercise before attending lab, so this meant they did not have time to adequately process the more difficult concepts. More

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discussion at the end of class to clarify points and misconceptions would have helped all of the students.