

University of California, Davis  
Dept. of Microbiology

BIS1A: Introductory Biology – Microbiology Discussion  
Enrollment: 76 (course total 400)

### **Course Description:**

This course introduced biological molecules, bioenergy, cell structure and function, and the elements of molecular biology and genetics, and viruses. Dr. Karen Gerhart lectured, and the TAs led discussions that re-visited specific topics using study and discussion questions. I added an assignment of presenting a current event in Microbiology to be presented during our discussion section meetings.

*Students:* This was an interdisciplinary course for majors in the biological sciences making up five quarter units: 4 lecture hours and 1 discussion hour. Most students were freshmen and sophomores (70%), but there were some juniors and seniors (30%).

### **Student Ratings:**

**Winter 2000:** Overall performance rating of  $4.0 \pm 0.7$  by 76 respondents (100%); 5 = Excellent. Students liked my enthusiasm, and that I portray my love of teaching. Support for this included comments like: “Inclusive of students....If I can, I would love to have her as a TA again! “; “I found this to be the most interesting and attentive class discussions I’ve ever had out of my whole 4 years here at Davis”. Students liked that I was prepared for discussion, and that I knew and explained material well (clearly), and was able to stimulate student discussion, answered student questions, helped clarify lecture material, and that I was encouraging. “Denise’s attitude about biology kept the discussion sections interesting. Her comments after each presentation brought biology closer to my mind and each question she posed provoked me to think. She does a very good job explaining and tries to accommodate to us a lot.” Others felt I was responsive to students by meeting their learning needs, used discussion time wisely, that I was good at question follow-up. “I like how she went over things that we had questions on. She was able to explain things well. I felt that if I had any questions or concerns. She wouldn’t have trouble helping me figure them out.”

Many students felt like they needed more time for discussion.

### **Changes:**

One improvement would be to make better use of time when adding on additional class activities and assignments. The current events exercise left some students feeling as if they didn’t have enough time to complete or fully understand the discussion questions. Perhaps reducing the time taken for current event presentations and discussions would be a way to improve my time management in this setting. Alternatively, making this a short writing assignment would be another way to interact with students to improve their writing and analytical skills.