



**BISC 120Lg: General Biology:  
Organismal Biology and Evolution**  
4 units  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30–4:50 PM

**Instructor: Oliver Rizk, Ph.D.**  
**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 10 AM–12 PM (via Zoom)  
**Contact Info:** orizk@usc.edu

**Lab Manager: Brett Spatola, Ph.D.**  
**Office:** ZHS 362  
**Office Hours:** TBD  
**Contact Info:** spatola@usc.edu

**Required Texts:**

Lecture

[Campbell Biology 12<sup>th</sup> ed., 2020.](#)  
(10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> editions are also acceptable)

Laboratory

Fall 2021 BISC 120 Laboratory Manual.  
(Chapters posted as PDF files on Blackboard)

**Website:** <https://blackboard.usc.edu>  
(site for course materials, lecture notes, quizzes, additional readings, grades, etc.)

**Course Description**

This 4-unit biology course will present several key topics in evolution, ecology, environment, and the diversity of life. These topics will be covered in weekly lectures (schedule below) and a weekly laboratory session. Besides registering for one lecture section and one lab section, you also need to register for the quiz section.

**Learning Objectives:**

At the end of the course, students will:

- know key concepts of the scientific method
- understand how the scientific method is applied to questions regarding the nature of life on Earth
- know the mechanisms of heredity
- know the theory of evolution
- understand how evolution explains the diversity of life on Earth
- know the defining characteristics of the domains Archaea, Bacteria, and Eukarya, with special attention to plants, fungi, and animals
- understand how the environment and organisms contribute to the evolution of ecological relationships
- understand how the environment has changed and continues to change and how this affects the evolution of life on Earth

**Learning Objectives (continued):**

- be able to design and conduct scientific investigations
- be able to think critically about how experimental evidence answers a scientific question
- be able to perform biological laboratory techniques

**Lecture Quizzes:** There will be 12 multiple choice quizzes to be completed on Blackboard during the semester. The quizzes will be posted at 11:00 A.M. on Fridays and will remain available until 9:00 A.M. the following Monday. First Bb quiz will be posted on Sep 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Exams:** The lecture portion of this course will include three midterm examinations and a final examination. Examinations (midterms and final) may include a variety of questions such as multiple choice questions and short answers. The final examination will not be cumulative, effectively serving as a fourth midterm. Three midterms will be given during the Friday 2:00 P.M. quiz section, and the final will be given on Wednesday, Dec 15<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM. To be assigned a final letter grade at the end of the course, a student must take at least two midterm lecture exams and the final exam and have completed at least 75% of the assigned weekly laboratory activities.

**Grading:** After each examination, grade point cut-offs will be released. There is not an absolute number of points that predetermines a letter grade of A, A-, B+, B, B-, etc. The final letter grade for the course will be assigned on a curve, determined by the total number of points as given below. While there are multiple sections and days offered for BISC 120 this year, your grade will only be based on your performance within this group of students (i.e., T/TH grades will not be pooled with grades from the M/W/F class to calculate final grades).

The point system will total **1000 points**, as follows:

Midterm Exam 1	150
Midterm Exam 2	150
Midterm Exam 3	150
Final Exam (not cumulative)	150
Lecture Quizzes	72
Laboratory Assignments	328

Laboratory scores will be normalized as explained in the laboratory syllabus in order to correct for possible differences in grading between laboratory instructors. Any document associated with grading may be photocopied by the instructional staff.

## Schedule of lecture topics (subject to modification of specific topics and reading assignments\*)

Day	Quiz	Lecture	Readings
T Aug 24		<b>1</b> Active Learning	Course Syllabus
TH Aug 26		<b>2</b> Mendel & The Scientific Method	1.3, 14.1–2
T Aug 31		<b>3</b> Mendelian Inheritance	14.3–4, 13.1–2, <i>fig. 13.7</i>
TH Sep 02	Quiz 1	<b>4</b> Chromosomal Inheritance	15.1–3, 15.5, 13.4
T Sep 07		<b>5</b> Gene Expression	17.1
TH Sep 09	Quiz 2	<b>6</b> Natural Selection	22.1–2
T Sep 14		<b>7</b> Evolution of Populations	23.1–2, 17.5, 15.4
TH Sep 16	Quiz 3	<b>8</b> Speciation: Micro- to Macroevolution	23.3–4, 24.1–2, 24.4, 25.6
<b>FRI Sep 17</b>		<b>MIDTERM 1</b> (lectures 2-7); 2:00-3:00 pm	
T Sep 21		<b>9</b> Phylogenetics	26.1-5
TH Sep 23	Quiz 4	<b>10</b> The Origin of Life I	25.1–3
T Sep 28		<b>11</b> The Origin of Life II	25.1–3
TH Sep 30	Quiz 5	<b>12</b> Bacteria and Archaea I	27.1, 27.3, 27.5–6, 54.1
T Oct 05		<b>13</b> Bacteria and Archaea II	27.2
TH Oct 07	Quiz 6	<b>14</b> Viruses	19.1–2
<b>FRI Oct 08</b>		<b>MIDTERM 2</b> (lectures 8-13); 2:00-3:00 pm	
T Oct 12		<b>15</b> Endosymbiosis	28.1, 26.6
TH Oct 14		FALL RECESS – NO CLASS	
T Oct 19		<b>16</b> Protist Diversity	28.2–3, 28.6
TH Oct 21	Quiz 7	<b>17</b> Slime Molds and Fungi	28.5, 31.1–2, 31.5
T Oct 26		<b>18</b> How Plants Colonized Land	28.4, 29
TH Oct 28	Quiz 8	<b>19</b> Seed Plants	30.1–30.3, 38.1
T Nov 02		<b>20</b> Animal Diversity	32
Th Nov 04	Quiz 9	<b>21</b> Invertebrates I	33.1–3
<b>FRI Nov 05</b>		<b>MIDTERM 3</b> (lectures 14-20); 2:00-3:00 pm	
T Nov 09		<b>22</b> Invertebrates II, Chordates	33.4–5, 34.1, 25.5
TH Nov 11	Quiz 10	<b>23</b> Vertebrates, Human Evolution	34.2–34.7
T Nov 16		<b>24</b> Animal Behavior	51.1-4
TH Nov 18	Quiz 11	<b>25</b> Introduction to Ecology	52
T Nov 23		<b>26</b> Population Ecology	53.1, 53.4-5
TH Nov 25		THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY – NO CLASS	
T Nov 30		<b>27</b> Community Ecology	54.1–2, 55.1–3
TH Dec 02	Quiz 12	<b>28</b> Conservation Biology	25.4, 55.4–5, 56.1–4
<b>W Dec 15</b>		<b>FINAL EXAM</b> (lectures 21-28) 9:00 – 10:00 am	

\*Additional readings for specific lectures may be posted on Blackboard during the semester.

## Course Policies

### COVID-19 Protocol

Students are expected to comply with any and all aspects of COVID-19 safety protocols outlined by federal, state, local, and university policies. Keep in mind that these policies will evolve with the changing conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic and may include social distancing, the use of appropriate masks which cover your nose and mouth at all times (regardless of vaccination status), and regular Trojan Check and/or COVID testing, among others. Failure to comply may result in removal from the class and referral to Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards (SJACS).

### Policy on Re-grading Exams

If you feel that an error was made in the grading of an exam, you need to do the following: 1) Check the answer key with your TA, 2) Prepare a **printed statement** explaining why you feel your grade was incorrect, and 3) Submit your printed statement, Re-grade Request Form (downloaded from Blackboard) and your original exam to your TA **within one week** of the time the exam was returned to you. The TA will either handle the re-grade or consult with the professors. The entire exam will be re-graded and, as a result, your grade may increase or decrease from a requested re-grade. No frivolous reasons will be accepted for requesting grade changes; stated reasons for a grade change must be legitimate (e.g., error in totaling the score).

### Policy on Missed Lecture Exams

No make-up lecture exams will be given in this course. You may be excused from an exam in the event of a documented illness, emergency, or other serious problem beyond your control. *No other excuses for missing exams will be accepted.* If you miss an exam for a legitimate reason, and wish to ask for an accommodation, you should proceed as follows. Within 24 hours of the missed exam, send an email to the Lab Manager to request to be excused. In the case of illness, this request must include either an official letter from your doctor stating that you were too sick to take the exam, or your doctor's name and contact information with permission for us to contact the doctor for a limited discussion of your condition. Note that neither you, nor the doctor, need to tell us the nature of your illness. If you were seen at the USC Health Center, a summary of your visit can replace a doctor's note. If you miss an exam for non-illness related reasons, you must provide similarly convincing documentation of the emergency to the Lab Manager within 24 hours. If we judge your excuse to be valid, we will give you a grade for the missed exam equal to the average of your grades for the equivalent exams that you did take. Except in extraordinary circumstances, we will make accommodations for only one missed lecture exam. If your excuse is judged not to be valid, or you do not provide it within the allotted time, you will receive a score of zero for the missed exam.

If you miss the final exam and have provided a valid medical excuse to the Lab Manager within 24 hours of the exam time, a final course grade of **Incomplete (IN)** will be recorded and you will be permitted to take a make-up final exam during the following semester.

### Policy on Missed Lecture Quizzes

**No make-up lecture quizzes will be given in this course.** You may be excused from a lecture quiz only in the event of a documented illness.

**Extra Credit:** No extra credit will be given for special projects, etc.

## Impairments Affecting Your Performance

Students occasionally encounter difficulties that affect their academic performance, such as illness, accidents, bereavement, depression, anxiety, learning disabilities, and other problems. If you encounter such difficulties, please bring them to the attention of one of the instructors. We can refer you to sources of help and may be able to offer accommodations. All such discussions will be confidential. Please seek help as soon as you feel your performance is being affected.

## Students with Disabilities

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with the Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Be sure that the letter is delivered to the Laboratory Manager as early in the semester as possible, preferably by September 7. OSAS is located in GFS 120 and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Their telephone number is 213-740-0776. If a student's approved accommodation is limited to extra time on examinations, the teaching staff of BISC 120 will provide the accommodation. For any other accommodation, such as a private room, reader or a scribe, students must make prior arrangements with the OSAS office 2 weeks before the exam date. For more information please visit the following website: <https://osas.usc.edu/current-students/accommodation-information/>.

## Statement on Academic Integrity

The instructors in this course strongly support the ethics of academic integrity. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00: <http://web-app.usc.edu/scampus/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

## Course Website

Students are responsible for logging onto Blackboard (<https://blackboard.usc.edu>) and checking the course website on a regular basis. Postings on Blackboard will be an official source for announcements, course materials, lecture notes, score postings and general discussions. Lecture quizzes will also be completed on Blackboard. Lecture exam scores and lecture quiz scores will be posted under your **LECTURE SECTION**. It is the student's responsibility to immediately notify the Lab Manager in the event of any mistakes, so please check your scores on Blackboard weekly.

## Gift Policy

No gifts or presents of any kind are permissible to give to any of the instructional staff.

**Changing a Lab or a Lecture Section**

During the first three weeks of classes you are responsible for changing your lecture or lab section by dropping your current section and adding your new choice through *USC Web registration System*. You can switch into a new lab section only if it is open (if it has less than 20 students). If a lab section is currently closed you must wait until other students drop before you can switch into that section. No changes are allowed after the third week of classes. You are responsible for taking a screenshot of your scores from Blackboard **before** changing sections and emailing it to your lab manager so your scores can be transferred to the new section. The same applies if changing lecture or lab sections.

**Final Comments**

No exceptions will be made to these policies under most circumstances. If you think that the instructor or TA has granted you **any deviation** from the policies in this document, you must obtain their **written agreement** to support that claim.

**FALL 2021 BISC 120Lg INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM**

For ANY administrative questions about ANY aspects of the lecture and laboratory portions of this course, please FIRST CONTACT the Lab Manager, Brett Spatola (E-mail: [spatola@usc.edu](mailto:spatola@usc.edu))

MWF instructors:      Dr. Trond Sigurdson  
                                 Dr. Andrew Gracey

TH instructor:      Dr. Oliver Rizk

Lab Manager: Brett Spatola

Lab Instructors: TBA during the first week of classes

Supplemental instruction (SI) leader: TBA

SI study session times can be found at <http://dornsife.usc.edu/supplemental-instruction> once the semester starts.

**BISC 120 LABORATORY SYLLABUS**Lab Manager: Brett Spatola

ZHS 362

E-mail: [spatola@usc.edu](mailto:spatola@usc.edu)

Office hours: TBD

Laboratory Schedule:

<b><u>Lab #</u></b>	<b><u>The week of</u></b>	<b><u>Laboratory</u></b>
	Aug 23 <sup>rd</sup>	NO LAB THIS WEEK
1	Aug 30 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction to BISC 120 Labs & Assignments/ Laboratory Safety
2	Sep 6 <sup>th</sup>	The Microscope
3	Sep 13 <sup>th</sup>	Scientific Investigation I (Beans & Beetles)
4	Sep 20 <sup>th</sup>	Scientific Investigation II* / Scientific Writing*
5	Sep 27 <sup>th</sup>	Evolution* (Peer Review due)
6	Oct 4 <sup>th</sup>	Animal Behavior
	Oct 11 <sup>th</sup>	NO LAB THIS WEEK – FALL RECESS on the 14 <sup>th</sup> & 15 <sup>th</sup>
7	Oct 18 <sup>th</sup>	Bacteria I*
8	Oct 25 <sup>th</sup>	Bacteria II*
9	Nov 1 <sup>st</sup>	Plants
10	Nov 8 <sup>th</sup>	Ecology (Lab Report due)
	Nov 15 <sup>th</sup>	<b>LAB EXAM</b>
	Nov 22 <sup>nd</sup>	NO LAB THIS WEEK – THANKSGIVING
	Nov 29 <sup>th</sup>	Biodiversity Conservation Presentations

\* Exercise for which 5-7 pages, type-written lab report is required.

\* Exercise for which there is a homework, pre-lab or a post-lab assignment.

The Lab Manager reserves the right to make some changes to the lab syllabus during the semester. Some adjustments might be necessary due to everchanging COVID-19 conditions.

**IMPORTANT: COVID-19 PROTOCOLS**

Students must remain compliant with any and all COVID-19 safety protocols outlined by federal, state, local, and university policies. Keep in mind that these policies will evolve with the changing conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic and may include social distancing, the use of face coverings at all times, and regular COVID testing, among others.

Required Textbook:

A PDF of the **Fall 2021 BISC 120 Laboratory Manual** will be [posted on Blackboard](#). Chapter printouts must be brought to lab each week.

## LABORATORY POINT DISTRIBUTION

The laboratory portion (**328 points**) will count for **~33%** of your final course grade, distributed as follows:

Lab Quizzes (10 – 4 points each)	40 pts
Homework (2 – 10 points each)	20 pts
Scientific Reading	12 pts
Lab Report	40 pts
Lab Report Peer Review	20 pts
Lab Exam	146 pts
Biodiversity Conservation Presentation	30 pts
Lab Participation (2 points per lab)	20 pts

## LABORATORY PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

You are required to attend all lab sessions. Any unexcused absences will seriously affect your evaluation and lab participation points. Come to lab on time. You are also to remain for the entire lab session or until excused by your instructor. **DO NOT** make any other appointments for the time you are scheduled to be in lab.

You are required to wear closed toe shoes, long pants and a knee-length lab coat. Goggles will be provided in lab.

Before you begin the lab exercise, make sure that you remove all unnecessary materials from your work area. At the end of the lab session, clean and return all supplies to their proper place, clean your work area, and slide your chair under the table. Check with your instructor before leaving.

**NO EATING OR DRINKING IS ALLOWED IN THE LABORATORY UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.**

## PRE-LAB QUIZZES

Each student will take a Blackboard pre-lab quiz prior to coming to lab each week. Quizzes will consist of multiple choice questions. Questions will test your knowledge of the material you will be covering that week in lab.

## LAB MANUAL

During each lab students need to record their results (drawings, observations, calculations) in their lab manual. Tables need to be filled and all post-lab questions answered. Each student is required to show their TA the lab manual and obtain their signature before leaving the lab.

## HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

During the semester you will have two homework assignments, based on your lab experiments. Assignments are explained in the lab manual and more information can be found on Bb.



## PRE-LAB ASSIGNMENT – SCIENTIFIC READING

You will have to read a peer-reviewed scientific paper and answer questions on Bb before you come to lab. You are expected to participate in a lab discussion of the paper with your lab instructor and your labmates.

## SAMPLE LAB REPORT PEER REVIEW

Each student will review one of the sample lab reports. Instructions will be posted on Blackboard once the semester starts.

## LAB REPORT

One lab report will be written during the semester. Lab report must be posted on Blackboard (*Lab Reports* [turnitin](#) link) and a hard copy turned in at the beginning of the lab session. Lab report guidelines will be posted on Bb (<https://blackboard.usc.edu/>) in the beginning of the semester.

## LAB EXAM

The cumulative lab exam will test your understanding of the topics, concepts and exercises covered during the semester.

Missed Lab Exam: *It is your responsibility to be present on the day of the lab exam.*

If you miss a lab exam due to a serious illness, you must present a valid excuse to the Lab Manager **within 24 hours** of the missed exam. A valid excuse is considered to be an official note from your doctor, or the summary of your visit. Note that neither you, nor your doctor, need to tell us the nature of your illness – we just want to verify whether you were too ill to take the exam. If you miss an exam for non-illness related reasons, you must provide similarly convincing documentation of the emergency to the Lab Manager. If we judge your excuse to be valid, you will be allowed to take lab exam in another lab section. If you do not have a valid excuse or fail to provide it within the allotted time, you will receive zero points for the missed lab exam.

## MISSED LABS

If you miss a scheduled lab exercise **due to illness or emergency**, please contact the Lab Manager to see whether it will be possible to make up the exercise by attending an alternative lab section. For logistical reasons, it will not be possible to make up a missed lab exercise after Friday afternoon of the week in question. Therefore, students with labs scheduled on Fridays will have little or no alternative should they miss lab unexpectedly. Only a few requests for alternative labs can be accommodated, because few sections have available space. Therefore, it is very important for you to attend your scheduled lab section.

Students who wish to miss a lab for observance of a religious holy day should be aware of the University's policy on such absences, published at: <http://orl.usc.edu/life/calendar/absences/>. Requests for such absences should be made by email addressed to the Lab Manager ([bezmalin@usc.edu](mailto:bezmalin@usc.edu)) at least 2 weeks in advance of the absence. If the absence is approved, the instructors will determine a reasonable accommodation for the student.

Student-athletes who must miss occasional labs for legitimate reasons should bring the SAAS excuse letter to the Lab Manager at least 2 weeks in advance so alternatives can be arranged.

Please note that **no lab make-ups will be allowed** during the week prior to a holiday, and for school-unrelated activities.

## BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION PRESENTATION

Detailed instructions for preparing your presentation, including how points will be assigned, will be provided on Blackboard (<https://blackboard.usc.edu/>).

#### LAB SCORES

You can find scores for all of your lab assignments on Blackboard: <https://blackboard.usc.edu>. Your lab scores will be posted under your LAB SECTION. Be sure to check for additional postings on a regular basis. It is the student's responsibility to immediately notify his/her Lab Instructor or Lab Manager in the event of any mistakes, so please check your Blackboard scores weekly.

#### LAB SCORE NORMALIZATION

The lab scores will be normalized at the end of the semester by the Lab Manager to correct for differences in grading between Lab Instructors/TAs.

#### STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with the Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Be sure that the letter is delivered to the Laboratory Manager as early in the semester as possible, preferably by September 7. OSAS is located in GFS 120 and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Their telephone number is 213-740-0776. If a student's approved accommodation is limited to extra time on examinations, the teaching staff of BISC 120 will provide the accommodation. For any other accommodation, such as a private room, reader or a scribe, students must make prior arrangements with the OSAS office 2 weeks before the exam date. For more information please visit the following website: <https://osas.usc.edu/current-students/accommodation-information/>.