

Special Topics in Biological Sciences: Genetically Modified Organisms

Guidelines for Discussions of Proposed Readings and Guidelines for Class Participation in Discussions

In the last half of the course, each of you will have an opportunity to lead the discussion of your proposed reading. Both you and the class have responsibilities on the day your reading is discussed.

Guidelines for Discussion Leader (50 points)

1. Two Weeks Before Class:

- Distribute your reading *at least two weeks* in advance, and according to instructions below. You can either:

Bring 16 neatly copied and neatly stapled photocopies to class, at your own expense.

OR

Use e-mail, and distribute the reading as an e-mail attachment. Send the file to both the instructor (obrien@rowan.edu) and the whole class (section-biol-01445-2@lists.rowan.edu). Be careful to type the addresses correctly. Generally, the file should be in a .pdf format. A web address is not acceptable: the reading must be provided as an attachment that is formatted for printing. (The point here is that you are not burdening the rest of the class with printing issues, which is often a problem when printing directly from web pages.)

Note to everyone: files distributed electronically will be sent to your Rowan e-mail account, unless you have arranged to have your e-mail forwarded to another e-mail address. See the Syllabus.

However you choose to distribute your reading, it should be neatly copied or electronically saved. It should also include all figures and tables in full size and all of the text, as they appear in the original publication.

2. During Class:

The guidelines for leading a discussion are described below. Your success in accomplishing these will be the basis for your points for leading the discussion.

- Lead a 30-40 minute discussion of your approved reading
- Focus on *facilitating* discussion of three aspects of the paper:
 1. Objectives: What did the author(s) do? Why was it done?
 2. Methods: How were the objectives evaluated? Are the methods sufficient?
 3. Ethical Issues: What are the issues?
Are there benefits? What are they?
Is there harm? Who is harmed?

- Assume that the class has carefully read the paper. (It's not your task to review the paper for an audience that has not read it.)
- As a leader of the discussion, think of yourself as a peer of your classmates. Do not put yourself in the role of an instructor. As such, your primary goal is to *facilitate* discussion, not teach the class what's important about the reading. (Inevitably you will do some teaching, but remember that this should not be your focus.)
- Speak clearly, not too quickly and with limited your use of jargon. Establish eye contact to help engage the class in discussion.

Guidelines for Class Participation

The primary goal of discussing the readings is to learn more about genetically modified organisms and their place in society. You will learn by both carefully reading each paper, and participating in class discussions.

As a participant in a discussion of the readings, you play an important role in what is learned during the class meeting. In short, it is not just up to the discussion leader to create the discussion. Therefore, your attendance alone is not a contribution to the discussion. The instructor will maintain a record of participation in reading discussions, which will be used as one factor in determining final grades for the course.

1. Before Class:

- Read each paper carefully before class. Come to class prepared to discuss each reading, especially in regards to the four general aspects of the paper that the discussion leader has been assigned to discuss (see above: 1-3).

2. During Class:

- Support your positions with reasoning or evidence (having an opinion is one thing; being able to say why you have an opinion is another).
- Respond to the discussion leader's questions or comments, or comments from other students.
- Raise your own questions, especially if the discussion leader or other class participants have not raised them.
- Participate in the discussion of *all* readings *each* class meeting (there will be two or three readings each day of discussion). Nonparticipants will be informed after the discussion of each reading. Note that for this portion of the course, participation is the largest component of your performance.
- Your mere presence (attendance) is not considered a contribution to discussion.