THE STUDENT ASSESSMENT OF INSTRUCTION SYSTEM
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Biology 250	Sec # ED9AA6(4)	Alison G. Boyer	
General Ecology (LEC)	Fall 2012	Form B	# of Students: 42

Questions	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	Item Mean
1. Course as a whole	6 (14%)	17 (40%)	10 (24%)	8 (19%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	3.43
2. Course content	8 (19%)	14 (33%)	12 (29%)	5 (12%)	3 (7%)	0 (0%)	3.45
3. Instructor's contribution to the course	9 (21%)	13 (31%)	11 (26%)	4 (10%)	3 (7%)	2 (5%)	3.36
4. Instructor's effectiveness in teaching material	9 (21%)	13 (31%)	11 (26%)	2 (5%)	3 (7%)	4 (10%)	3.26
5. Course organization	10 (24%)	16 (38%)	8 (19%)	5 (12%)	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	3.55
6. Sequential presentation of concepts	14 (33%)	14 (33%)	7 (17%)	6 (14%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	3.79
7. Explanations by instructor	11 (26%)	10 (24%)	11 (26%)	3 (7%)	4 (10%)	3 (7%)	3.29
8. Ability to present alternative explanations	9 (21%)	12 (29%)	10 (24%)	5 (12%)	3 (7%)	3 (7%)	3.24
9. Use of examples and illustrations	16 (38%)	16 (38%)	7 (17%)	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)	4.02
10. Enhancement of students' interest in the material	8 (19%)	13 (31%)	11 (26%)	5 (12%)	2 (5%)	3 (7%)	3.26
11. Students' confidence in instructor's knowledge	15 (36%)	12 (29%)	6 (14%)	5 (12%)	3 (7%)	1 (2%)	3.67
12. Instructor's enthusiasm	13 (31%)	17 (40%)	8 (19%)	3 (7%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	3.88
13. Clarity of course objectives	9 (21%)	17 (40%)	9 (21%)	5 (12%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	3.60
14. Interest level of class sessions	6 (14%)	11 (26%)	13 (31%)	6 (14%)	3 (7%)	3 (7%)	3.05
15. Availability of extra help when needed	7 (17%)	11 (26%)	19 (45%)	1 (2%)	3 (7%)	1 (2%)	3.36
16. Use of class time	12 (29%)	14 (33%)	7 (17%)	5 (12%)	3 (7%)	1 (2%)	3.57
17. Interest in whether students learned	11 (26%)	16 (38%)	7 (17%)	5 (12%)	2 (5%)	1 (2%)	3.62
18. Amount you learned in the course	9 (21%)	13 (31%)	10 (24%)	4 (10%)	4 (10%)	2 (5%)	3.31
19. Relevance and usefulness of course content	8 (19%)	18 (43%)	7 (17%)	6 (14%)	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	3.48
20. Evaluative and grading techniques	11 (26%)	11 (26%)	10 (24%)	4 (10%)	2 (5%)	4 (10%)	3.31
21. Reasonableness of assigned work	18 (44%)	9 (22%)	9 (22%)	4 (10%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	3.95
22. Clarity of students' responsibilities/requirements	13 (31%)	13 (31%)	9 (21%)	3 (7%)	2 (5%)	2 (5%)	3.62

Relative to other colleges courses you have taken	Much Higher		Average				Much Lower
23. Do you expect your grade in this course to be:	5 (10%)	13 (30%)	11 (30%)	11 (30%)	1 (0%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)
24. The intellectual challenge presented was:	1 (0%)	7 (20%)	15 (40%)	9 (20%)	7 (20%)	1 (0%)	1 (0%)
25. The amount of effort you put into this course was:	2 (0%)	16 (40%)	10 (20%)	11 (30%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
26. The amount of effort to succeed in the course was:	3 (10%)	13 (30%)	13 (30%)	10 (20%)	2 (0%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)
27. Your involvement in this course (asgn, atnd, etc) was:	12 (30%)	11 (30%)	8 (20%)	9 (20%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)

28. On average, how many hours per week have you spent on this course, including attending classes, readings, reviewing notes, writing papers, and any other course related work?

Under 2	1	(2%)
3-4	9	(21%)
5-6	11	(26%)
7-8	13	(31%)
9-10	2	(5%)
11-12	3	(7%)
13-14	0	(0%)
15-16	1	(2%)
17-18	1	(2%)
19-20	0	(0%)
21-22	0	(0%)
22 or >	1	(2%)

29. From the total average hours above, how many do you consider were valuable in advancing your education?

Under 2	5	(12%)
3-4	14	(33%)
5-6	8	(19%)
7-8	10	(24%)
9-10	1	(2%)
11-12	3	(7%)
13-14	0	(0%)
15-16	0	(0%)
17-18	1	(2%)
19-20	0	(0%)
21-22	0	(0%)
22 or >	0	(0%)

30. Expected Grade

A	16	(39%)
B+	13	(32%)
B	10	(24%)
C+	1	(2%)
C	1	(2%)
D	0	(0%)
F	0	(0%)
S	0	(0%)
NC	0	(0%)
Other	0	(0%)

31. Course Was

In major	30	(71%)
In minor	4	(10%)
Dist. Req.	6	(14%)
Elective	0	(0%)
Other	2	(5%)

32. Class Composition

Fresh	0	(0%)
Soph	3	(7%)
Junior	26	(62%)
Senior	12	(29%)
Grad	0	(0%)
Other	1	(2%)

33. Wanted to take course

Yes	27	(69%)
No	8	(21%)
Neutral	4	(10%)

Student Responses to Open Ended Questions
Question #1: Was this class intellectually stimulating? Did it stretch your thinking?
•   Yes-I learned some cool things about ecology that made me think about what we are doing to our plannet.
•   No-The material does not interest me in the slightest bit. It is all stuff that I have learned since 3rd grade.
•   Yes-It allowed me to see Ecology as something other than another class I had to take for my major. Dr. Boyer is an excellent professor and keeps lecture intellectually stimulating by constantly involving students in topics relevant to her lectures which are identical to her exams.
•   No-She only presented case studies and never explained what we were actually studying. I was confused in class because basic concepts were not explained. The concept might have been introduced, but it was not explained. Instead of taking the time to make sure that a clear definition of the concept was presented, she went straight into different experiments and studies that included multiple concepts and each concept was never clarified.
•   No-The material was mostly repeated from earlier courses, and the amount of new material was not enough to challenge me. The biggest challenge was guessing which of the possible correct answers to choose on tests.
•   Yes-Ecology is a unique and interesting science that requires you to think critically...memorization is only a very small part of the work.
•   Yes-The instructor effectively taught all of the course objectives and made the material engaging.
•   - I felt like the material was "dumbed down". Normally I feel challenged in my classes and so I study a lot to make sure I understand the material. In this class, the material was presented like anyone could understand it even with no scientific background. This is a problem because when students are not challenged they get lazy. Then the test comes and all of the material has been transformed by the instructor to sound "hard" but in reality it doesn't make sense. It is just aggravating for someone to talk to you in a baby voice and act like your too stupid to understand it makes me almost sick and not even want to go to the class.
•   Yes-i like see how different things in the environment effect one another and it was cool how we talked about case studies to see the things we learned played out
•   No-I do not feel like I was taught how to do any of the required research for this course. When we got into the lab, we were doing work that had nothing to do with the lecture, and we were expected to know how to use a computer program no one had any previous experience with. Also, when we went to the field to collect data, we were expected to know how to do all of this without any instruction. This is counter productive, because we spent more time trying to figure out what we were supposed to do, instead of collecting data and knowing what to do.
•   Yes-I loved the way Dr. Boyer spoke and made the material seem very interesting, because it is. And I could tell she really like what she taught.
•   Yes-This class allowed me to think on a more broad scale. Analyzing the cause and effect relationships was interesting in regards to the material presented.
•   No-Too many graphs!!!!
•   Yes-Tests were conceptual questions and not just straight definitions
•   Yes-Yes and no. It did stretch my thinking quite a bit but the material is fairly easy to understand.
•   Yes-Lots of valuable information
•   Yes-I liked the inclass exercises and how she taught, but maybe relate to book more.
•   No-I already knew a lot about ecology.
•   Yes-It was a very interesting class and helped present different aspects of biology.
•   Yes-Yes, it made me approach questions from entirely new angles that I had before not been accustomed to.
•   Yes-All classes do that. Reason to be in school.

Question #2: What aspects of this class contributed most to your learning?
• Group project
• The use of current or past research that evaluated each concept was an EXTREMELY valuable tool in teaching the material.
• None of it.
• Coming to class, asking questions, and the TA Jess!
• n/a
• The lab projects were the most valuable. Lectures were a waste of time.
• My interest in the subject and the professor's organization of material.
• Self study, lecture presentations, study guides.
• Pictures .... her power points are like 60 slides long .... and she just reads off them
• lab
• being in the field and hands on, learning about ecology first hand.
• The lab work, for sure. I get a lot from applying what we talk about in class to real-life experiments.
• Lecture, study guides, in class activities, and online quizzes all helped in my learning the material.
• Reviewing of questions the following labs
• The organization of the class definitely helped me. The fact that the syllabus told me what to expect every week was extremely helpful and refreshing. The powerpoints were also very detailed yet easy to follow. The Rapid Ecological Study and the final ecology project also helped me very much. They helped me more deeply understand the concepts we were learning in class by actually doing them out in the field.
• lecture
• actually, lab contributed most to my learning
• The study guides for the exams were the most help and Dr. Boyer's thoroughness of explaining the material in lecture. She was constantly asking us questions during lecture and getting us to think about the mechanisms associated with ecology.
• Figures and pictures
• Slides and her talking over slides.
• Lectures
• I really liked the examples that were used in class. Every topic we studied had a actual study that went along with it and that helped me see how this is applied.
• The labs where real situations met mechanics and equations.
• I had a group.

Question #3: What aspects of this class detracted from your learning?
• I can't think of anything
• The in-class activities that we did in class-they were a waste of time.
• Surfing the web during class... Sometimes.
• In lecture, she only went over experiments and studies, never what the book was teaching.
• The lectures were not as helpful as reading the book and outside readings.
• Some of the concepts were overlapping and therefore very confusing.
• None
• I was distracted by the lack of interest the teacher allowed me to have. I like to be challenged not spoken to like Im stupid. Also, there are stupid reasons for poor performance in this class. This woman allows her TA's to take off on an essay portion of a test for "writing too much" even though it was right. Im sorry that should be a warning not point deduction. Also, she spends too much time talking about case studies. There will be a concept for example that she uses 4 cases studies to explain. Wasting class time with pictures and "student input" takes away from the time she could be challenging us with concepts that will actually be on the test. You don't go to a bio-chem class and hear the teacher pause for 10 minutes listening to students ideas of what MAY have happened. Even if that were possible, it would confuse students because some of the comments aren't true. Its a nice idea but instead of talking about unrelated material that wont be on the test she should teach a
• kind of monotone lecture
• not knowing how to complete the assignments and receiving very little instruction about assignments.
• The size of the lecture. Sometimes it becomes hard to concentrate for me, but I thought Dr. Boyer did a good job of trying to engage students in the lecture.
• The technical papers were too technical and hard to read much less interpret the data.
• All of the case studies and only using pictures to teach
• The trickiness of the tests. Sometimes there was material on the test that we either talked about once or barely talked about at all that was worth a pretty large portion of the test.
• book
• Slower pace than most classes
• All of the examples.
• I didn't really like some of then in class assignment that we would do in a group. There weren't necessarily bad just they didn't really contribute to my learning.
• The power points were often difficult to navigate.
• It was early in the morning, of course.

Question #4: What suggestions do you have for improving the class?
• Maybe more grades?
• I do not think that the book quizzes were useful. The material that we were tested over was presented in lecture, and Dr. Boyer often times did a better job of presenting the material than did the book. Instead, quizzes over required scientific article readings might be a better option.
• Dr. Boyer treated us like elementary school children-I could have done without that. The test questions need to be more specific and not so vague. Especially since lots of the material comes from what they say in class (not specifically in the notes) and if you write it down wrong or can't write it all down as quick as they speak then you will miss the test question. We went through the notes too quick. Maybe a fill in the blank notes would be better or go slower so we can write the stuff down that we need to write down.
• Don't make those awful book quizzes weigh so much!
• Explain concepts better. Less experiments and studies in the powerpoints. Try and be a teacher, not an experimenter.
• The lectures were boring. More case studies and examples should be given, and the theory should not be repeated so many times due to its simplicity.
• The final lab project required too much time outside of class for the time given. There was a quality tradeoff for time.
• Overall this class was effective for learning the material. Nothing significant could be changed on the part of the professor or department to improve the class. Possibly more relevant quizzes to prepare for lectures.
• Make the material more clear, less dumbed down, and more interesting. Remove 60 slide power points and talk from the knowledge you know.... force students to have to take notes so they are actively learning. Dont just read from the slides and take really really slow so that class drags. Force your students to think.
• I would suggest that the class be evaluated and some of the less important content removed and make it so there is less material to cover and more time spent learning about ecology.
• Maybe more class participation. When Mariano did his guest lecture, he brought a girl up to do a demonstration, which I found to be a really helpful way to learn and entertaining as well. I know it's sometimes impossible in a huge lecture, but I thought Mariano did it well.
• I'm a senior and I spent twice as many hours doing assignments in this class than any of my other classes.
• Not as many case studies and don't have only slides with pictures have some explanations because its hard to get everything written in class then only have pictures to review from the slide.
• None really. It was a wonderful class overall.
• better tests, some Qs seemed subjectively graded or were worded confusingly
• It is very difficult to study for these tests. I am unsure of where to place the priorities when studying.
• None
• Keep same, but maybe put more writing on slides with pictures.
• While the idea of class participation is novel, the act of waiting for an extended amount of time for someone to answer a question or give input when it is painfully obvious that the class does not wish to participate is not a worthwhile venture. Honestly, it detracts from the experience of the class and lessens the interest of the class as a whole.
• Maybe use a few less in class assignments and a few more actual studies.
• Make the power points easier to understand
• Do more quizzes. The infrequency of the quizzes prevented me from ever remembering to do most of them, as they would mainifest semi-randomly through the semester.