

## **Tips on surviving biology multiple choice exams...**

### **Step One: Preparation in advance...**

Put in the day-to-day work of taking this class: keep up with reading that relates to the lecture/that will be tested (ideally before the professor lectures on the topic), take notes in class (even if the professor provides you with notes—it's good for cross reference, it helps you focus on the main ideas in order to write them down, and often the professor will say, "I left this off the notes, but you need to know it"), review all of your notes before each class, and make sure you understand everything (if you don't, find out—talk to a friend, go to SI, meet with the professor, take the initiative!). Attending class is key—reading the text, getting the notes you missed and even attending SI are not the same as being there. The lecture is set up to help you understand the material—miss it, and you won't understand as well. If you skip any of these steps, it will affect how well you do on the exam.

**A note on vocabulary**—it is important that you really understand the key terms from the lecture. Be able to put them in your own words—don't just memorize the standard definition, especially if that definition doesn't make sense to you. Try to visualize it. Think of ways to remember this word, and be aware of how it is similar and different to other words. \*\*On the test, more often than not, you won't be asked simply to define the word, but to apply the knowledge in an example or to distinguish the term from something similar. Rote, meaningless memorization won't cut it. Know these terms inside and out—know examples of them and think of situations in which they might be used.

### **Step Two: Studying right before the test**

If you've done the above work, studying for the test won't be too daunting. You can review the material again, and pick out the terms that give you trouble. Create your own test in your mind—cover up the definitions and guess the word, the examples, etc. Draw some pictures and diagrams to help you remember. Make sure you know what lectures and readings are being tested.

### **Step Three: Test-taking tips**

1. Read the directions for the exam before you begin!! Attempt to answer the question without looking at the options. If necessary, cover the answers with your hand.
2. Read all of the answers before you choose one. Cross out the ones you know are wrong so you can spend time thinking over the ones that are 'close'. Remember you must give the best answer; more than one could be partly right, or sometimes it's all of the above or a combination.
3. In a negatively worded question (as in "which of the following are NOT..."), put a T or F beside each option, then simply select the false statement.
4. Make sure your answer makes sense. Common sense can help!
5. Answer the questions you know first. Often answers to questions you don't know are supplied in other questions. Go back to answer the difficult questions later.
6. When you have to guess, research indicates your first answer is usually best. However, don't be afraid to change answers when you have good reason for doing so.
7. Answer all questions. Even educated guesses are better than no response at all.
8. Allow time at the end to check for carelessness. **READ CLOSELY!** A small word like "not" can make a huge difference in meaning!