Biology Paper and Presentation (6-8 pages, double-spaced 12 pt font)

This paper will be based on an article from a magazine, newspaper, or other popular press source that has something in it about biology. In your paper you should explain the science so that it is clear that you understand the biological principle(s) involved, and you should explain why you chose the article. Why is it interesting, and what does it have to do with your professional or personal interests?

Where To Find a Suitable Article To Write About

Just about anywhere. Part of the reason for the assignment is to help you to be aware of how many ways biology is involved in “everyday” things. Using an index or abstract is not the way to find an article; rather, just pick up a paper or magazine you would normally read and look in there. Newspaper articles, magazine articles, something you’ve read for another class, anything will be suitable as long as it includes something biological. Include a photocopy of the article with your paper as well as a citation for it in the bibliography. Good places could be the science section of the New York Times, Scientific American, The New Yorker, Time, BBC News, etc. Do not use primary literature journals such as Science or Nature. The article should have been published within the last six months.

Explaining the Science.

The goal here is to convince me, or anyone who reads the paper, that you have identified and understood the basic biological principles and problems dealt with in the article. You may use your textbook as well as other books or reference materials from the library, and primary literature as a resource to help you understand the science. For instance, if the article is about liver transplant surgery, you will want to know and explain something about why a liver is a necessary organ, why a liver might need replacing, what is transplant rejection, and how it can be prevented. List the reference materials you have consulted in a bibliography at the end of the paper and cite your sources in the text when you refer to them – do not use footnotes. I expect a minimum of five sources in addition to the original article itself. Generally, dictionaries and encyclopedias are not considered appropriate reference material for this purpose. Wikipedia is definitely not appropriate!!!

Start this section with a brief overview of the topic of the article. Then give background information on the science (ie., the function of the liver). This should be followed by a full description of the science involved. Next discuss the broader implications of the topic ideally from an evolutionary perspective but you can also include broader social and economic implications. You need to explain the science so that it is understandable, this helps to communicate the subject but also allows me to see that YOU understand the topic and are not just regurgitating information.
Any information that you obtain from other sources must be put into your own words and cited!!!! Do not quote sections of your sources.

An example of a citation in the text would be “Spotted hyena skulls continue to grow until 32.5 months of age (Tanner et al., 2010).” Then in your Literature Cited section at the end of the paper you would include the full citation.


Explaining Why You Chose This Article.

Your goal here is to connect this article and the scientific content to something else in your personal or professional life. Why did the article catch your attention? How does it relate to other things that are important to you? How will understanding the science improve your understanding of the larger issue or context?

Presentation.

In 10-12 minutes present the topics of your paper and explain the science so that your audience will understand it. Do not just read from your paper. Explaining a topic orally is a different beast from a paper so figure out the best way to communicate the subject and science.

Schedule of deadlines:

2/11 Topic Approval
2/16 List of references
2/27 First Draft
3/9 Final Paper due
4/6 Presentations
4/8 Presentations