

## Additional Comments for Jeffrey Elhai

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This class is very stressful, difficult, and at times very confusing, but I have also grown and learned more in this class than every other class I have taken. This class pushed me further than others but in a great way. The method for teaching molecular biology concepts through understanding the original papers and experiments is amazing, though much more difficult than reading a textbook. The proposal portion of this class is very difficult and confusing but also amazing to dive into a topic and get lost and eventually find your way out (I am still working on this part).

I have mixed emotions about this course as well as Professor Elhai. While I do not feel as if I learned a lot about molecular biology I do feel as if I learned a lot about thinking critically and working through problems. This course is a lot of work, though to be fair, we were warned it would be rigorous ahead of time. However, my major issue with this course is that it isn't measurable and doesn't demonstrate the rigor of this course to other universities/programs. For example, this class is a rigorous course but it will simply go down as a P or F on the transcript. This is a little frustrating because 1. It will be mostly disregarded by grad/professional schools 2. It doesn't demonstrate what the student learned by simply getting a P or F or the amount of effort that was put into this course. I also dislike that for most of the course you have no idea if you are going to pass or fail. You do get feedback on your (optional) assignments but still that doesn't really tell you how you're doing in the course because it isn't heavily taken into consideration for whether you pass or fail. I also think that Professor Elhai can be a bit rude when it comes to interacting with the students. He doesn't fully listen to what students are asking him or telling him before interrupting them and answering a question that wasn't even asked in the first place. A lot of the students have expressed that they felt uncomfortable talking to him as he can be very condescending. However, I realize in all honesty Professor Elhai really just wants to push you to be the best critical thinker that you can be. His methods may not make complete sense but I can tell he is passionate about what he does and its admirable how much work he puts into teaching the class and helping the students. Overall, as I stated earlier I have mixed feelings about this course.

I hate this class more than any other class I have taken at this university. If this class was broken down into two different courses: one that was focused on the course material and examinations and one that was focused on the research proposal, it would have been leagues better than it is now. The course expects way too much from its students, and then states that because it is pass/fail, none of the assignments are required, and the only required items are the exams and the proposal.

I think it is important for the student to be able to put 100% effort into one thing in order to master it: that was one of the first things this class taught us. However, it is very difficult for students to be putting in 100% effort into this class when it is separated into two portions: the exams and the proposal. Students, in the end, are only able to give 50% effort into either of the portions because they are focused on completing both portions by the end of the semester. One semester is not enough time to be completing both portions. It is already difficult enough to complete one portion properly.

This course was one of the hardest courses I have taken here at VCU, and I have taken both organic chemistry courses, biochem, animal physiology, and physics 207 and 208. I feel misled that this course was only 3 credits and graded as Pass/Fail, because it should honestly be at least 5 credits and graded with ACTUAL grades. I also feel like the amount of time I spent on this course was unnecessary, and took away time from REAL courses that actually have an impact on my future. If there is one thing I could offer as a way to improve this course, it would be to split it up into two courses: one with all the exams/molecular biology material, and one with all of the research proposal nonsense. If this was the case, I am sure multiple people would feel a lot better, and the success rate in both of these classes would be significantly higher. Doing both the molecular biology part of this course and the research proposal part at the same time was too difficult, and I felt like I was unable to give my full effort. I'd rather take two classes and put in full effort, then stuff all of this information and assignments into one THREE CREDIT class, for god's sake, and fail it. I don't understand how this class is still mandatory and has not changed a bit despite years and years of people complaining about the class itself, as well as the instructor. I can guarantee that every single person in my class was unhappy with the protocols and Jeff as well. It is difficult to ask him questions. He makes you feel stupid and gives you a philosophical analogy instead of answering your simple yes or no question. He doesn't ever provide good feedback, only bad, and seems to dispute everything you ever say to him. I think his expectations are way too high and simply unachievable. I do not appreciate how he thinks that his ideals and methods of doing things are correct. I hate this class, it was the worst class I've ever taken, and I have, on many occasions, considered dropping my major because of this course. If anyone were to ask me about choosing bioinformatics as a major, I would advise them against it simply because of this horrendous class. It's not worth it. Go for a biology major or biochem. This class is not worth the major at all. I'm extremely unsatisfied and hope that this class is removed from the "required" bioinformatics curriculum.