

# Welcome to the First Exam!

## BNFO 301: Introduction to Bioinformatics

*The primary purpose of this exam is to serve as an educational tool.* With this in mind, you should not be surprised if some of the problems go beyond your present abilities and try to connect things that may not yet have been connected. Nonetheless, most of the elements have been drawn from the problem sets and study questions. If you ask yourself, “*Have I seen something like this before?*” the answer is almost always yes. Answer what you can and go as far as you can (and a bit further) with the rest.

***Don't allow yourself to get stuck!*** There are always ways of getting through or around a problem.

### RULES OF THE GAME

- **Available resources:** This is an open book exam. It is an open notes exam. It is an open web exam. Most important, it is an open brain exam.
- **Unavailable resources:** Needless to say, it is not an open people exam.
- **Major exception:** Sterling and I *are* open resources for this exam and would be delighted to meet with you. You may consult with me any time you feel the need. In fact, I'd be surprised if you can get through this exam *without* a consultation.
- **Consultations may not be totally free:** You may be charged some fraction of the points allotted to a question for any advice related to that question (but **you'll be advised before any charge is levied**). Charges are highest for general questions (like “*I don't know what to do with this question*”) and lowest (and usually nonexistent) for specific questions (like “*I don't know how BioBIKE asks for input from the user*”). Before asking for a consultation, get clear in your mind what is the form of the minimal hint you need.
- **How to consult:** E-mail, telephone, walk-in... all work. To the contact information on the web (click on *Who we are*), add the home phone 285-2447, open for business until 10:30 PM, every day including weekends. I'm usually at VCU on weekends during the day.
- **Where to find the exam and related files referred to in the exam:**  
*(a web site will be e-mailed to you when the time is ripe)*
- **What to submit:**
  - In general, electronic submission is preferred. Hard copy is a distinct second choice, but if for some reason you find it necessary, paper submission will not be refused.
  - If you send one or more attached files, **be sure that the filename begins with your name** (so I don't get a mailbox full of files named “Exam.doc”). **Any file submitted whose file name does not contain the name of the submitter will have its spirit extracted and placed inside a doll, which I will then stick pins in.**
  - It's generally a good idea to submit material that shows your **thought processes**.
- **When to submit:** Everything must be submitted by **8:30 AM, Monday, February 16**, not later. There are at least two reasons for this policy:
  - A new unit will begin that Monday in class. A soft deadline might be a temptation to some to trash the class and focus on the exam. We need to move on.
  - It is a kindness to have closure to projects that could otherwise go on forever.