

AP Biology @ Wellesley High School
Course Overview and Expectations
Ms. Spangler

September 2, 2026

Dear Students, Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to AP Biology! I am looking forward to a year that will be fun & exciting! This is a college level course and it is expected that students sit for the AP exam on **Monday, May 3, 2026** at 12pm. The cost of the test is \$99 and payment and sign up is on RecTrc (please reach out to school counseling for financial support if needed).

Students must develop a sense of agency in order to be successful in AP Biology. The course covers a lot of biology topics but its main goal is to develop student scientists. The volume of explored content is utilized to encourage and support the development of student's academic skills including: critical thinking, problem-solving, data collection and analysis, argumentation, modeling, communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and collaboration. The course is fast-paced as we have a large volume of information to review and skills to develop before the AP test. It is *critical* that students take personal responsibility and **involve themselves** in all aspects of this course!

Our work together is a **partnership**. I work as a guide to facilitate each student's academic progress but the primary responsibility for the material and skill building lies with the individual. **We generally use a 'flipped model'** where students watch content videos and complete reading and preparation at home and then spend much of class time applying course material during lab experiences, case studies and activities that build scientific skills. Students are encouraged to ask questions about content at the time the material is being discussed and well before an exam or quiz. I encourage students to take advantage of my office hours which are held on **Mondays from 2:30-3:15** in room 341, or by appointment. My schedule will be posted and I encourage drop-ins! **My office is in room 358 and I also teach in 339.**

Overall, a student's course and AP test grades will be a direct reflection of the honest effort they have put into the course. Please make sure that you are completing assignments per guidelines provided, using the utmost academic integrity, and applying your best effort at all times. Specific details for success in this class are outlined below:

Policies and Procedures: (Remember that the policies and rules outlined in the WHS Student Handbook apply at all times!)

I. General Classroom Culture

The core values of Wellesley High School (Academic Excellence, Respect for Human Differences, Cooperative and Caring Relationships and Commitment to Community) live and breathe in our classroom. A culture of care, kindness and respect for our community is at the core of my daily practice and I expect the same from my students. Maintaining a constructive academic space requires an adherence to academic integrity, daily participation and active inclusion and compassion for everyone.

II. Materials

- A. Your **Computer!** With headphones and charger!! ('Do Not Disturb' mode ON!)
- B. Folder/Three Ring Binder (some way to organize paper handouts/assignments)
- C. Spiral or Composition-style **Graph** Notebook (background info for labs/data collection/graphing/notes)
- D. Pens/Pencils (often many colors are useful)

- E. CALCULATOR (bring to class **every** day!). The College Board does **NOT** allow graphing calculators on the AP exam but we can use them for class work. During assessments, A scientific calculator will be provided if necessary as you will not be able to use a calculator with storage capabilities.

III. Course Evaluation

Term grades are determined by averaging all work assigned during the term. The categories, and their weightings, are:

- ❖ Assessments (Tests and Quizzes): 70%
- ❖ Assignments (Labs/Activities/Classwork): 20%
- ❖ Reading and Preparation: 10%

Year Grades are weighted by term as indicated below:

Q1: 25%

Q2: 25%

Q3: 25%

Q4: 25%

Please see [AP Biology: Term and Year Evaluation, Due Dates & Test Policy 2026-2027](#) for further information regarding due dates, late work and test policies. Please discuss all accommodations with me in advance.

Please note:

*District accommodations ([DCAP](#)) are available to all students, and in the 26-27 school year, WHS is committed to moving this forward with fidelity. While some accommodations can be offered at the moment, others require advanced notice. For example: Extended time on an in-class assessment is a collaborative decision made by the teacher, student, and family to meet individual student needs. The WHS guideline is up to 25% extra time. This accommodation relies on proactive student communication **prior to the date of the assessment**. The student and teacher must establish how the accommodation will be provided.*

IV. Academic Honesty/Integrity/AI use

Please understand that cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty is unfair both to your learning and to your friends and classmates. **Cheating includes the sharing/copying of completed assignments and using internet sources/AI tools without permission and/or citation.** Dishonesty such as these examples “undercuts efforts to become a person of principle” writes Dr. Adam Grant, a NYT columnist and organizational psychologist at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Grant continues “The heart of integrity is recognizing that the ends don’t justify the means. What we achieve may define our successes. How we achieve it determines our character.”¹

If a violation should occur, guidelines outlined in the student handbook will be followed (parents and the appropriate assistant principals will be contacted, notation will be made in the student file, and appropriate consequences will be assessed) **ASSUME** that ALL work is ORIGINAL and INDIVIDUAL and is NOT to be shared unless indicated. **REMEMBER: Your score on the AP test will be a direct reflection of your honest input.**

The use of generative **AI tools** for coursework is prohibited unless explicitly authorized by your teacher. When use is permitted, all AI-generated content must be properly cited and used to support, not replace, your own critical thinking and analysis.

¹ Grant, Adam. “Opinion | There’s Really Only One Way to Stop Students From Cheating.” *Nytimes*, The New York Times, 26 Aug. 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/08/26/opinion/students-cheating-ai.html>. Accessed 28 Aug. 2026.

V. **Tardiness/Absences**

Our time in class is always in short supply. The labs (**7:30 am start time**) are very involved and often will not be able to be completed appropriately if you are late. If you know you will be absent or tardy from class, please let me know in person whenever possible. It is important for you to contact me about missed work ASAP or you will fall behind. **Communication will be key!!** Canvas is updated daily with class agendas and assignment schedules.

If I ever need to be absent, I will make every effort to let you know beforehand via a Canvas Announcement.

VI. **Canvas & AP Classroom**

All course materials will be on **Canvas**. Units will be outlined in module format and links to all documents, assignments, powerpoints, labs, etc. will be found within these modules. The Canvas Calendar will be updated regularly with due dates, assessment dates, etc. There is a 'Daily Running Agenda' for each unit located in the first Module on the Home page of Canvas. Here you can find the lesson plan for the day, announcements, and homework assignments. **If you are ever absent, this is a good place to check!!**

Most assignments will be turned in directly to Canvas as Google links, JPEGs or PDFs. When submitting a google doc link, please share with editing privileges. *Please note that the HEIC photo format, common with most iPhones, is not currently supported in Canvas.* Please convert photos to JPEG, PDF, or PNG from HEIC when including photos of work.

The announcement feature will be used for any updates, especially if there is a last minute change (like a canceled class- this is rare, but it happens occasionally). ***I strongly encourage you to download the canvas app to your cell phones and allow push notifications so you have the most up to date information possible.***

We will also be using **AP Classroom** which is maintained by the College Board. This resource provides helpful content videos and allows you to practice with AP style questions. These essential assignments are required and will count toward a completion grade.

VII. **Textbook**

The textbook used for this class is *Campbell Biology: AP Edition, 12thth edition*. This book has a cost of \$180 and the expectation is that you will keep it in very good shape and return it at the end of the year. This is a college level textbook common among many collegiate introductory Biology classes. The book, at times, goes beyond the curriculum established by the college board, yet reading it helps to develop scientific fluency, broaden scientific vocabulary and provides important illustrative examples that are often found on the AP exam. The purpose of using this robust text is twofold: 1) to help you learn and review essential content and 2) to practice reading complex and involved scientific texts for your next steps in college. There is no need to bring the book to school each day, as we have extra copies in the classroom and you will have an electronic copy available. *It is expected that you return the textbook at the end of the year in the same condition it was received.*

VIII. **Technology Use (Phones & Laptops)**

As per the school-wide policy, **cell phones** will remain off and at the front of the classroom in the cubbies provided. *Occasionally*, phones will be used as tools (for instance the camera is valuable for data collection) but usually they are off and in the cubbies (phones remain in the cubbies for any bathroom/drink/movement break as well). The use of **laptops** will be frequent. The appropriate use of technology is expected and the district [acceptable use policy for technology](#) will be adhered to at all times (frequent infractions include prohibited behaviors such as texting, playing games, or watching non-school related videos during class time - please refrain from engaging in these distracting activities). Please utilize *the do not disturb* feature on your laptops so your time in class is not interrupted by texts, alerts and other non-academic activities.

To ensure there is ample opportunity for collaboration, using headphones for personal use (*i.e.* listening to music during class) is prohibited in our classroom.

Thank you for your careful attention to these classroom expectations. I look forward to working with you this year.

Parents/Guardians: please feel free to contact me via email (spanglerc@wellesleysps.org). Email is the best way to get in touch with me and I will reply as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Carolyn "Beanie" Spangler (spanglerc@wellesleysps.org and @msspangler337)

Parent/Guardian- please Sign here: _____

Students Name: (Print) _____

Student Signature: _____

☐ Students - Check HERE once you've taken the **QUIZ** on CANVAS!