This course is an overview and analysis of
Life on Earth.

We will examine the nature of life,
looking at diverse organisms,
how they develop, function,
interact and evolve.

We will use the text as a backbone,
but we will also examine
recent, relevant research papers
so that you can see what questions
biologists are wrestling with,
learn about some current techniques
and develop a critical approach to
new developments in biology.

We will survey the basic facts,
but we will focus our efforts
on understanding concepts
& the connections between
patterns & processes.

Critical analysis is essential to our success.

You should read the assigned material before the corresponding lecture,
then review the concepts and work through the self test at the end of each chapter.
Check the lecture schedule regularly for changes in the topics and assigned readings.

Lectures will be presented as PowerPoint slides,
and posted as web pages, linked to the lecture schedule.
The posted lectures will be incomplete.
You will need to attend the lectures to get the whole story, to participate in discussion
and to be present for quizzes (which cannot be taken late without a valid excuse).

Grades: The plan is: 40% - an unpredictable number of simple pop quizzes
30% - a 3-5 page 'News & Views' paper
(here is an excellent example paper; here is the grading rubric)
30% - a short essay final exam (from a list of study questions)

Grades will be curved, with a class average somewhere around 3-3.5,
depending on average student performance (here are last year’s grades).
My goal is to run the class so effectively that we will all perform
above our expectations and we can justify lots of good grades.
You'll have to do your part to allow me to achieve this goal!

If you have any difficulty with any aspect of the class,
please talk to me so I can help you.