On Thursdays for the rest of the semester we are going to explore the politics and public policy of biotechnology and biomedicine through research, individual reflection and group discussion.

- Because of the weekly assignments for the “Biotech Agenda”, you will not be required to submit discussion questions for Michael Crichton’s *Next*.

**March 20: Individual hopes for the future of biotech**

**DUE:** Write a short (250-500 word) reflection on the political future of biotechnology in the United States. Your essay should respond to the following questions:

1. What would you most like to see accomplished by the federal government relating to biotechnology during the next five to ten years?
2. What do you hope that the government does *not* do regarding biotechnology regulation or funding during the next five to ten years?
3. Who most cares about the issues you raise and why?
4. What does a citizen or a politician need to know to make an informed decision on the issues you raise?

**Discussion:** We will discuss your individual responses to the future of biotechnology.

**March 27: Interest groups and biotechnology**

**DUE:** On March 20th everyone will be assigned one of the following seven organizations and asked to research its biotechnology policy positions:

- The American Farm Bureau Federation
- The American Medical Association
- The American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
- The Biotechnology Industry Organization
- Greenpeace
- The National Right to Life Committee
- The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
You will write a short (250-500 word) report on the biotech issues your organization considers most important. See the course website for links to these organizations’ homepages.

**Discussion:** You will discuss your findings with the (approximately) three other students who also researched your organization. Together you will write a “consensus report” (under 750 words) on your organization’s positions and their rational.

You will also produce up to three “bullet-point” policy positions (e.g., “there should be a complete ban on federal funding of any research that requires the destruction of human embryos”). During the hour your group will try to convince as many other groups as possible to endorse your “bullet-points”. Feel free to horse trade and rewrite your “bullet points” to entice support (provided, of course, you remain true to the positions and philosophy of your organization).

**Due:** One member of the group will email me a copy of the “consensus report” and “bullet points” with endorsements no later than midnight on Friday, March 28th.

**April 3rd: The political parties and biotechnology**

**Due:** On March 20th everyone will be assigned to research the biotechnology policy positions held by either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. Drawing upon both course reading and original research, you will write a short (250-500 word) report on current biotech thinking within your assigned party. Make sure to acknowledge and explain intraparty disagreement, where it exists.

**Discussion:** You will be assigned to one of four groups, each devoted to one of the two major political parties. For the first twenty minutes, you will deliberate on a group report based upon today’s individual assignment. The groups will then mix, half Republican, half Democrat. These hybrid groups will discuss both points of agreement and disagreement between the parties (and, perhaps, factions within the parties) for fifteen minutes. The original groups will reconvene to work for the remainder of the class period on a report (under 750 words) explaining its party’s positions on biotech.

**Due:** One member of the group will email me a copy of its political party report no later than midnight on Friday, April 4th.

**April 10th: Interest groups, political parties and biotechnology**

**Due:** You will receive a copy of the seven reports on the interest groups and the four reports on the political parties by Saturday, April 5th. Write a short (250-500 word) reflection on the reports’ conclusions. Explain if there is anything you can do to narrow the gap between what you want to see and what you expect to happen in biotech.
**Discussion**: We will discuss the conclusions of the reports and your reflections on them as a class.

**April 17th: Biomedical funding**

**Due**: On the course webpage you will be given a fixed budget and asked to set funding levels for various diseases, conditions, and research areas. Submit your preferred budget with a short (250-500 word) justification.

**Discussion**: You will debate the budget until a majority votes for a final appropriation.

**April 22nd: Biotech Agenda Convention**

**Discussion**: We will deliberate on the scientific and political future of biotechnology in the United States and what we should do, individually and collectively, to guide its development.

**Grades**

Collectively the Biotech Agenda assignments count 11% of the final course grade, with individual assignments weighted as follows:

**Individual assignments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Reflection on the future of biotech</td>
<td>March 20th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Organization report</td>
<td>March 27th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Political party report</td>
<td>April 3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Reflections on organizations and parties</td>
<td>April 10th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Research budget justification</td>
<td>April 17th</td>
</tr>
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**Group assignments**

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<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7%</td>
<td>Organization report</td>
<td>March 28th (via email)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7%</td>
<td>Political party report</td>
<td>April 4th (via email)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11% Overall participation during Biotech Agenda class meetings