
USE OF DEMOCRATIC METHODS IN THE ORGANIZATION OF A ZOOLOGY COURSE

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The organizational plan of our introductory course is based upon the assumption that instructors and assistants will work more enthusiastically and conscientiously if each participates in the planning, as well as the execution of the course program. Each should feel individual responsibility for and interest in the course, since it is, at least in part, *his* course.

We utilize the Ohio State system of combination lecture-labs, with relatively small class sections of 24-28 students each.

The instructional staff and assistants meet together once per week.

All members of the staff teach advanced courses, as well as Zool. 1.

The coordinator or director is simply one of the group.

Graduate assistants prepare materials and assist with quizzes and class-work of a laboratory nature.

The general outline of the course is arranged by a committee, subject to the approval of the staff.

Individual topics, e. g., skeleton and muscle, are planned in reasonable detail by committees of "specialists"—usually consisting of two instructors who are presumably well-qualified in the specific fields concerned. Comparable committees of assistants are responsible for preparation and disposal of materials (demonstrations, etc.) for each topic. Staff and assistant committees work cooperatively, the function of the two being mutually complementary.

At the staff meeting preceding any given topic, proposed demonstrations, etc., may be previewed and discussed. At the meeting following completion of a topic, details of the outline and demonstrations are critically discussed for suggested improvements, and the committee concerned may revise the topic outline accordingly.

Each instructor is given copies of the various textbooks under serious consideration for adoption. He weighs their relative merits, particularly in respect to his own topics or fields. The combined opinions are incorporated in recommendations prepared by the textbook selection committee. These recommendations are submitted to the staff for discussion and approval.

The grading system is based upon the distribution curve of point totals accumulated by students of all sections. The points are derived from four one-hour exams, the final exam, and classwork scores—the latter being based largely upon daily quizzes. The exams are completely objective in form, and include many "thought questions." They are prepared by committees of three, each staff member being on at least one exam committee. The number and nature of daily quizzes is completely dependent upon the individual instructors, and varies from section to section.

A set of approximately 1300 study questions is available to the students. These questions are taken, for the most part, from previous exams. The list is revised and kept in topical sequence by the staff committees on the various topics. Possession and use of such a set of questions by each student not only provides a helpful study outline, but also eliminates a potential advantage which fraternity men might otherwise have over non-fraternity students who have no access to exam files, etc.

Assistants and students are encouraged to offer criticisms and suggestions.

Assistants work on individual projects for the preparation or improvement of such things as demonstration models and charts.

Every phase of the course is subject to continuous critical evaluation, and potential modification. Obviously, directed evolution follows. Our course, presumably, is evolving toward perfection—an elusive, but admirable, goal. At this point, we could well digress to discuss the effectiveness of adaptability (our major asset) in revolutionary survival. However, we shall restrain ourselves, and conclude with the modest confession that, somehow, we have not *quite* achieved perfection as yet. Give us time!
