

## Study Tips for Principles of Zoology and Animal Behavior

While Principles of Zoology and Animal Behavior are different courses with different goals (learning the defining characteristics of most animal taxa for the former; and learning the fundamental concepts of animal behavior and how to conduct animal behavior research for the later), my teaching style is similar for both.

Here are a few tips to help students understand my lecture format and test-making process, with the hope that these will not only help students study for my courses, but may also help students with other courses as well.

**1.** I use what I call **sign posting** in my lectures. This means that I start almost every lecture with an outline of the main topics we are going to cover, and give summaries of what I consider to be the most important points of each topic at the end of our discussion of each topic. I then give a summary of the main points at the end of each lecture. The topics then end up on these summary slides are the topics and subtopics I think are most important of the material we covered in class that day. These are the topics that are most likely to end up on exams, and are most important to know.

Other topics will be covered on exams as well, but rarely in as much detail. There will also be some emphasized topics that may not make it on to the exam...but that is because I do not want to make the exam too long, so I usually have to choose one, or sometimes two, important topics to leave off the exam. That being said, if a topic is on a summary slide, it is highly likely to be on an exam.

**2.** The text book is **supplemental/complementary** to my lectures. Material that is covered in detail in lecture and in the book is highly likely to be on an exam. However, there is material that I cover that is not in the book that is also highly likely to be on the exam. I put a couple of questions on each exam that are based on material in the book that we do not also cover in class....but this is generally going to be 10% or less of exam material. If a student is crunched for time and choosing between spending three hours studying lecture slides and their lecture notes or studying the book, lecture slides and lecture notes are always the better bet.

Along similar lines, if a student misses a class, I strongly advise obtaining lecture notes or coming to office hours to go over the missed material- there is material covered in class that is not in the book. (for both Principles of Zoology and Animal Behavior)

**3. I give test-like questions in class.** My tests are mostly short answer/label diagrams/draw figures. I rarely use multiple choice. However, I do start almost every lecture with a test-like question on the previous lecture's material, to help students become familiar with the types of questions that are going to be on exams. I also incorporate test-like questions in my lectures, and discuss the answers with the class. Students can use these questions to gauge their

comprehension of the material and to gain familiarity with the style of questions that are likely to be on exams.

### **Specific to Principles of Zoology**

This course is all about learning taxon-specific characters. That translates to **a lot** of memorization and comparative anatomy. Focus on terms, names of structures, and comparisons when studying.

### **Specific to Animal Behavior**

This course is about concepts and understanding how we conduct animal behavior research. This translates to understanding graphs, techniques, and building a conceptual framework. Focus more on concepts and being able to interpret figures than on terms, though there will probably be a few questions on terms for each exam.