BIO 151 Written Assignment Grading Criteria/Instructions

A) Remember that in addition to the readings, lectures and quiz, you have written assignments due in the 3rd and 7th weeks. There isn’t a discussion board component for Weeks 3 and 7. The point value for the written assignment is 55 pts.

B) These assignments are meant to be at least moderately science-based position papers that explore a topic and defend/oppose a position. As with all "good" position papers, yours will begin with an introductory paragraph, outlining the topic, first from a broad perspective, then narrowing down to the specific topic(s) addressed in the essay and the thesis (standpoint) that you will defend. In the "middle" paragraphs (the main body of the essay) you will present and discuss the various lines of evidence for and against your thesis and in so doing answer the questions posed in the assignment. Obviously, you will cite each statement that is not considered common knowledge (if in doubt, cite). After detailing the pros and cons in support of/against your thesis, wrap up the essay with a final paragraph that begins with the initial point of the paper, summarizes the main points of the essay, and draws a final conclusion. Also, be concise: Don't ever waste words by saying, "According to author x...". Rather, just state the findings and parenthetically cite the author(s) at the end of the sentence*.

C) As at least moderately science-based position papers that explore a topic and defend/oppose a position, these assignments are to be written:

1) in an active voice

2) concisely, with clear flow and logical organization

3) in the 3rd person (this means no "I", "we", "you", "our", or other first or second person pronouns)

4) with cited support from scientific authorities*

5) with the answers/points outlined for each assignment deftly integrated into the essay rather than presented as a list of sentences/paragraphs each providing a discrete answer

6) using proper grammar, complete sentences, and paragraphs composed of complete sets of related thoughts

7) in science, direct quotations are frowned upon. Thus, don’t quote! Rather, paraphrase. Take what the author says, put it in your own words, cite at the end of the sentence. Note: This is a big one for me, and the way I grade reflects it.

D) I do not grade based on whether or not I agree with your opinion. Rather, I grade 50% on whether or not 1) you’ve interpreted and presented scientific information correctly, and 2) you have correctly answered the questions/addressed the points required for the assignment. The other 50% of the score regards quality, format, grammar, flow, etc., as outlined in “C”. In other words, follow the directions in "B" and "C", above to maximize your score.
Helpful hint in writing: Want to be more concise? Eliminate the verbs “to have” and “to do”.

For instance, rather than saying, “Researchers in Nevada have found that treating cows with BGH increases milk production (Diddums et al., 2011)”, say instead, “Cows treated with BGH produce more milk (Diddums et al., 2011)”. Wow! Look how much shorter that is!

*Required Citation & Bibliography format:

1. Inline citations: must be name and date formats:
   - For one author: (Jones, 1999);
   - For two authors: (Smith and Jones, 2001);
   - For any more than two authors (Smith et al., 2002).

For instance: In striking contrast to early folklore, the Malaysian three-spot leopard displays 27 spots on each flank, at least when hunting rascally rabbits in the wild (Jones et al., 2004).

2. Citations in the Bibliography must include every author (no et al., in the bib.)
   - Journals/magazines, as such:
     - Note the first author initials are after the surname, then the remaining authors are flipped.
     - Note the date comes after the authors
     - Note presentation of journal volume and pages after the journal title.
   - Chapters in books as such:
     - Note the need for publisher and their nearest location.
     - Note that book title as well as the title of the chapter are listed as are the book editors.
     - Note: journal and book titles, abbreviations such as et al. and scientific names must be italicized.
   - Web page citations must be complete, including the date accessed, if possible the specific author of the portion of the page reviewed, etc.

And, of course, if you have questions, please ask!