Bio 139: Required extracurricular reading assignment  
Dr. Amy Rogers’ section

You are to choose ONE of the following books to read during the semester. Textbooks can be so information-dense that the subject matter loses its magic. By reading one of these less technical books, you will find the subject more relevant. This assignment is worth 20 points (see back side of this page).

Books should be available at the Hornet Bookstore; you can also get used copies cheaply online (amazon, half.com, ebay) or borrow from the Sacramento Public Library.

**************************************** CHOOSE ONE ****************************************

   About 300 pages; part 4 “Kitum Cave” is optional.

   A sensationalized NONFICTION story that reads like a Michael Crichton novel. It relates the story of an outbreak of an extremely dangerous tropical virus never before seen in the U.S. at a facility just outside Washington, D.C. in 1989. A fast, easy read that will get you thinking (or having nightmares) about emerging viruses in a world where they can be spread globally within 24 hours. A bit gory in parts, but hey, it ain’t pretty when you’re bleeding out of your eyeballs… Published in 1994, author shows impressive prescience regarding the “slow burn” of AIDS/HIV through the human population, and the likely emergence and rapid global spread of new infectious diseases (such as SARS, which came upon the scene years after publication of this book).

   About 300 pages but last two chapters, 9 (“From Alaska to Norway”) and 10 (“Mysteries and hypotheses”) are optional and cover about 50 pages.

   Highly readable work that introduces the enormity of the influenza plague of 1918 (more than 20 million deaths) and the modern quest to understand the virus. Author introduces you to real scientists at work. If the words “swine flu vaccine” don’t mean anything to you, you must read the chapters on that inglorious episode from 1976. Book also addresses the outbreak of avian influenza in Hong Kong, an issue which frighteningly smolders along to this day.

   Read Introduction, Chapter 1 (Man the Hunter), Chapter 2 (Breakthrough to History) and Chapter 6 (The Ecological Impact of Medical Science since 1700); this is a total of about 120 pages.

   A serious work of history with a groundbreaking thesis; remains a classic in the field even today. If you are interested in the history of civilization, and the rise and fall of empires, this book is for you. McNeill posits a central, unrecognized role for microorganisms in the major events of human history. Fascinating food for thought.


   So The Hot Zone isn’t scary enough for you? Here is Mr. Preston’s dramatic take on another virus: smallpox. The Demon in the Freezer deals with the history of smallpox, its eradication from the natural world, the two acknowledged remaining stocks of virus in freezers in the U.S. and Russia, and the specter of smallpox being released as a weapon of bioterrorism. Preston uses the anthrax attacks of 2001 as a prototype to terrify you about what could happen.
Getting your 20 points:

You will write a ~2 page (typed) “report” on the book you read, worth **15 points**. Also, on the **final exam** (lecture Exam #4), you will have **5 points** worth of simple questions to answer about your book. *These questions will be intended to assess whether or not you actually read the book*, nothing more.

I expect everyone to read a book and easily get full credit. **WARNING:** *Do not cheat*. READ the book yourself and write your own report. If I catch you plagiarizing another student’s work or an online source, you will get a zero score and be referred to the department chair for academic dishonesty.

**Guidelines for “Book Report”**

Your goal is to convince me you read the book. While any formal written assignment should demonstrate good grammar and logical sentence structure, I am not expecting literary analysis. The content of your report should include:

1. A summary, discussion, or outline of the book’s content (plot, storyline, main points, etc.)
   Be sure to include elements from throughout the book, not just the beginning or ending, so I believe you read the whole thing.

2. Your opinion, comments, reaction to the reading. What did you like or dislike? Did you learn anything of particular interest to you? Did the book change the way you think, or see the world? Do you wish you had chosen a different book from the list because you really didn’t enjoy this one?

3. Suggest one simple question you think would be fair for me to ask on the final exam to test people’s knowledge of the book, even if they read it several weeks or months ago.

The book report can be turned in anytime during the semester, but no later than the last week of lecture.

**Length:** ~2 pages, typed