This assignment is from a sophomore-junior level majors course. I give this assignment twice during the semester (with a different primary literature article). The second assignment is worth ~3X what the first assignment is worth to give students a chance to practice and improve their scientific writing.

Cell Biology (BIOL 266)  
Spring 2012

Guidelines for News & Views

The goals for primary literature reading and “News & Views” writing this semester are for students to learn how to:

• read the scientific literature, to understand “how we know what we know”  
• distinguish between results (data) and discussion (interpretation of data)  
• distill complex sets of information and identify the most important points  
• think, write, and speak clearly about cell biology

Your News & Views should provide an overview of the paper in a precise and concise way. Your summary should address:

1. Why is the paper important? 
2. What question were the authors trying to answer, and how did they do it? 
3. What was already known about the field that relates directly to the paper? 
4. What were the key results? What methods were used to obtain the results? What do the results suggest or indicate? 
5. What are the authors’ conclusions or inferences? What are the implications, and where should the field go next? If you disagree with the authors’ conclusions, why?

The summary can be up to two pages (double-spaced, 12-point font), including up to two figures. These figures should help the reader understand the result—for example, a model of the background information or the authors’ conclusions, or a flow chart or diagram of how the experiment was done. This will not usually be the data from the paper. It will be difficult to distill a 5- or 10- or 15-page journal article into two pages! However, this is exactly the type of work scientists must do: decide what is most important, and relay that information clearly for themselves and for other readers.

In the second round, the guidelines for the scientific summary are the same as in the first round. In addition, you will write a one-page “press release” suitable for a non-science audience, which must include one figure, picture, or image. How would you summarize the paper for a science feature in The Boston Globe?
Students use this response sheet to comment on drafts of each other’s work (without the point values) and I use the same response sheet in the grading of the assignment.

**News & Views #2: Hetz et al.**

Your Name:____________________                   Author’s Name:____________________

*Provide feedback for the author on how well he or she has addressed each of the following questions in the News & Views.*

1. Why is the paper important? (10 pts)

2. What question were the authors trying to answer, and how did they do it? (10 pts)

3. What was already known about the field that relates directly to the paper? (10 pts)

4. What were the key results? What methods were used to obtain the results? What do the results suggest or indicate? (25 pts)

5. What are the authors’ conclusions or inferences? Do you agree with the conclusions? If not, why not? What are the larger implications for the field? (5 pts)