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The Physics of Life: A Biophysics Course for Non-science Major Undergraduates[1] RAGHUVEER PARTHASARATHY, University of Oregon — Enhancing the scientific literacy of non-scientists is an important goal, both because of the ever-increasing impact of science and technology on people's lives, and because understanding contemporary science enables enriching insights into the workings of nature. One route to improving scientific literacy is via general education undergraduate courses - i.e. courses intended for students not majoring in the sciences or engineering - which in many cases provide these students' last formal exposure to science. I describe here a course on biophysics for non-science-major undergraduates recently developed at the University of Oregon. Biophysics, I claim, is a particularly useful vehicle for addressing scientific literacy. It involves important and general scientific concepts, demonstrates connections between basic science and tangible, familiar phenomena related to health and disease, and illustrates how scientific insights proceed not in predictable paths, but rather by applying tools and perspectives from disparate fields in creative ways. In addition, it highlights the far-reaching impact of physics research. I describe the general design of this course and the specific content of a few of its modules, as well as noting aspects of enrollment and evaluation.

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