Student Guide

Useful Information For Students

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We Welcome You and Are Excited to Have You Join Us!

(1) Overview of Programs

Blue Marble University, and its autonomous graduate school, the **Panama College of Cell Science**, offer distance learning programs which can be completed entirely online. registered in the Commonwealth of Dominica for the purpose of offering educational instruction, programs, and degrees via the Internet. All degrees are issued upon the recommendation of its Faculty to designate completion and mastery of a particular program. Blue Marble University Ltd. engages in research into novel educational models, alternative education, and non-traditional education, and consequently every one of our programs is unique and innovative in some way. Administrative offices are in Thailand (where we started) and Dominica.

(2) Distance Learning vs E-Learning

All of our programs are "distance learning" programs. The principle difference between distance learning an e-learning is that in e-learning, all activities and learning occurs on the computer. For example, all learning materials are supplied to the student, all exams and tests are provided online. In many cases of e-learning, students are required to be online at the same time as their instructors. E-learning is best suited to high school (secondary) and undergraduate curricula which remain pretty much the same over time, and is less suited to graduate programs which require a more dynamic learning environment.

A distance learning program, such as those offered here, is delivered over the internet, but the student is required to search for and find sources of knowledge. A student may be directed to a video lecture on a different website, or be required to conduct literature research via the internet. Likewise, assignments will be completed offline, and then uploaded or forwarded to the instructor by email. A "distance learning" program is asynchronous, meaning that the student and the instructor are not online at the same time. This permits us to offer programs across many time zones and allows you to access your material 24/7.

(3) What Is Required of You

(A) Technical Computer Requirements

Because we are a virtual university, it is necessary for each student to have adequate hardware and software, either personally or via study at a local library or local university/ college library, or at an internet cafe. At a minimum, your equipment must be able to run one or more of the **latest web browsers** (Chrome, Firefox, or Safari). Because we make use of many online videos for lectures and demonstrations, the **ability to view videos that play smoothly** without jerking and "buffering" delays is a must. A student should get his/her equipment organized for **downloading of videos** from the internet. There are many free "video downloaders" available (such as ant.com, or realplayer downloader), and the web browsers sometimes provide video downloading as a free add-on extension. So, please check into this and be sure your set up is sufficient. The ability to move large files around (such as for downloading texts and materials) is also essential and requires a **fast internet connection**. A dial up connection will not be effective, and we do not believe that our program can be completed with only a dial-up connection. We recommend the fastest connection you have available, which should be at least DSL or ASDL. Lastly, your software must include the ability to convert all of your work, handwritten drawings, images and so forth into PDF format for submission. **Only PDF format, the international standard is permitted.** Doc files are not accepted.

(B) Effort Needed

We expect you to make an "honest effort" to complete the program. This may be new and difficult for you because you have to be organized and push yourself to work independently without the camaraderie of other students in a typical classroom.

DO NOT EXPECT TO BE "SPOON FED". You are expected to work independently and solve your own problems. You will of course be guided by your instructors, and our mission is to help you complete the program successfully.

Get organized. You know you will have assignments, work to be delivered, reading materials, correspondence and the like. Get your computer organized with appropriate folders for each course, so that you can find the material you need at any time.

(4) About Textbooks and Literature Searches...Some Tips

As new students may soon discover, we do not use a lot of hard cover texts in our course presentations. Our humanities programs are more text based, and we use some terrific sources. But for our other programs, there are several reasons for this, one of which is that primarily we try to save our students cost.

Of course, not having texts for many of the courses, makes it a lot harder on our faculty who have to guide you to other resources, and also makes it harder on you students who are required to actually do some digging to reach key knowledge for your chosen program.

During your course of study here, you must be able to master searches of the literature and reference works appropriate to your course of study. If you do not know how to conduct an internet search for scientific literature or humanities materials, please search "how to search humanities literature" or "how to search biomedical literature" and obtain some guidance on this. Your mastery of this is not only needed now, but will be required when you get started on your dissertations and/or Online Portfolios, as well as your future careers.

These suggestions are not meant to be comprehensive instructions to how to do scientific literature searches. We feel you should learn how to find things and where to find them. We always recommend visiting your local college or university library, possibly even your local public library if available, and find out how to do excellent literature searches.

Lastly, as we said, don't just expect us to give you a text that you can read and replay back to us. **You will have to search for and find your own answers. This is how to really acquire knowledge that lasts past an exam...**You are going to have to, with our guidance and encouragement, learn to master the techniques of literature searching...it is an art that will pay you dividends in your future careers.

(5) Referencing the Scientific Literature

For many of our programs, in your assignments and homework, it will be necessary for you to cite scientific literature in proper form, and also to add reference numbers in the body of your works. You can find various forms for citation of scientific papers by reviewing a few biomedical journals and studying how papers are referenced. You cannot go wrong with the following form, which we prefer:

Noggle, S. et al., Human oocytes reprogram somatic cells to a pluripotent state. **Nature: 478, 70-75 (2011)**

If a paper only contains two authors, both should be cited (and drop the et al.).

Now, as to noting a reference in your homework or other assignments, you can do this is several ways:

1. The most appropriate way is to use superscripts, such as:

In 2006, researchers made a breakthrough by identifying....stem cell like state[1]

2. Another way is to place the reference number in parentheses, like so:

In 2006, researchers made a breakthrough by identifying....stem cell like state (1)

This format has become quite popular with the newer online Journal publishers.

3. The third acceptable way is to cite the author and date in parentheses, like so:

(6) Grading and Grading Philosophy

The purpose of grading is to maintain a record of your achievement in completing the program, and for you to present for purpose of employment or otherwise.

A grade of "B" or better is required to pass every Graduate level course. This equates to a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, or 80 out of 100 points. When using Pass or Fail, a Passing grade (P) requires that the student attained at least a "B-" for the course. For "P", your transcript will reflect that this equates to a "B-" or better. This requirement is similar to many USA graduate schools. **Undergraduates** are held to a lower standard, but we like to see you maintain a "B" average if possible as this will lead to better acceptance of your academic record.

Letter Grades are awarded in each course to reflect the Student's performance. Letter Grades correspond to a Grade Point System as follows:

Letter Grade	GPA Scale	0-100 Scale
A+	Honors	100-97
A	4.00	96.9-93
A-	3.66	92.9-90
B+	3.33	89.9-87
B	3.00	86.9-83
B-	2.66	82.9-80
C+	2.33	79.9-77
C	2.00	76.9-73
C-	0	0
D and F	0	0

We do not grade on a bell shaped curve. Each person is graded on his/her merit. Everyone can do well. If you make an honest effort to study and learn the material, you will be successful.

Promptness in completing homework, exams, and research papers is required. The failure to promptly turn in homework assignments, research papers, answers to exams by the designated due dates **results in an "F" score for that item**. Professors do not have the time to chase after students pleading for them to turn in their work. An "F" on any one item, depending on the weight given, most probably would result in a failure for the entire course, and hence our program.

We have had situations in which a **Graduate student** has done well but fell down on one course. In such an event, the Faculty considers on a case by case basis, whether a "C" grade would be permissible, rather than to have to dismiss the student from the entire

program. Our current policy is to permit the presentation of extra-credit work to correct a "C" grade. However, this is reserved for special cases and is not routine. Permitting a student to correct every "C" grade is not favored. A grade of "D" or "F" will result in suspension or dismissal from a graduate program; but may be accepted on a case by case basis for **Undergraduates**. The fact that we are a virtual college does not also mean that sloppy, poor work indicative of a lack of study and effort will be acceptable.

As stated elsewhere, we want everyone to be successful and complete our program. If you make an honest effort to do so, you will graduate. An honest effort, of course, goes hand in hand with good results. We will meet you halfway, but you must also do the same.

Exams are handled by each instructor, and in most cases, may be in the format requiring the student to discuss important principles or to conduct literature searches relating to important principles.

(7) Tuition and Refund Policy

There are no refunds, **No exceptions**.   Our tuition costs are kept to an absolute minimum. We believe that our tuition is lower than any other undergraduate or graduate program, either based on an annual cost or by credit.

There is no Financial Aid. We made the decision to save costs and paperwork that is involved in having a higher tuition cost and then allowing financial aid. Rather, we offer a very low cost and an interest free time plan that everyone should be able to pay.

(8) File Types, Large Files, and Transmitting in Your Work

PDF Files: As has been stated many times in our materials, ONLY PDF files (.pdf portable document file) are acceptable for any material you transmit to the University. PDF files are the global standard for collaborating and for transmitting material over various computer platforms and browsers.

Any work not in PDF format Will Not Be Accepted. Our faculty to not have the time to convert various file types that students send. You are required to convert all of your work to the pdf form. In some cases, you may have to scan materials and then convert to pdf form for transmission.

An individual professor may be willing to accept material in text form (such as an essay) whereby your material in text form is included **in the body of an email,** and NOT as an attachment. However, it is the policy of the University to require all transmissions to be in pdf form, and so, it is best to bring yourself up to speed in this regard.

Images: When it is important to use an image, only JPEG image files (sometimes known as "jpg") should be used. A jpeg image can be inserted into a presentation, report, and the like, and then the entire report converted to PDF for transmission to the University. Be careful of **image quality**. Image files less than 300 KB rarely convert well for a report and usually end up blurry. Blurry images ruin a report or an exam resulting in mark-downs. Try to use **large file sizes** if possible, try to modify to **increase resolution,** if taking a picture of your image as a screen shot, don't forget to **increase the brightness** of your

monitor to maximum before taking the photo. Always try to enhance your images by increasing **sharpness.** Try to have software available that can get your images in great shape for presentation. You are learning how to present professional papers and reports!!

Large files: Over the course of the program, you will have occasion to send very large files. Large files can be a problem in that many email services limit file sizes to 10 MB, although the trend is toward larger 25 MB attachment sizes. Google Gmail permits up to 50MB. Your Instructor will guide you in this regard, but you as the student should understand the file size limitations of your email service, and think about how you would transmit large file sizes.

(9) Communicating With the University

Blue Marble University is registered in the Commonwealth of Dominica with Administrative Office in Thailand:

Administrative Office
International Mail Processing

Blue Marble University Ltd.
Box #182
No.8 Narathiwas Rajanagarindra Road
Bangkok 10120, Thailand
Thailand Voicemail: +66-2-105-6142

As an international virtual institution delivering educational courses over the internet, faculty and students are separated by different continents, different time zones, and different schedules. Collaboration occurs via the internet. It is not useful to conduct any business by phone, and consequently, all communications with the University are done by email and other messaging services.

In an effort to commence and operate as a paperless endeavor, and to increase the efficiency of response, hard copy mail is discouraged. All business and educational matters should be conducted via internet, by using one of the email addresses listed below.

Necessary Attachments and Documents must be converted to Portable Document Format (.pdf) before sending. Photos may be sent as jpeg. NO OTHER FILE TYPES ARE ACCEPTED. Documents in Text Form (.txt) may be incorporated in the body of an email.

Please use one of the following email addresses:

EMAIL ADDRESSES-CONTACT US HERE	
All General Business and Questions	**Mailbox@BlueMarbleUniversity.com**
Admissions and Enrollment	**Admissions@BlueMarbleUniversity.com**
Payments and Student Accounts	**Accounts@BlueMarbleUniversity.com**
Legal Matters and Contact Director	**WalterDrakeJD@BlueMarbleUniversity.com**

In addition to general communications with the University, each Professor/Instructor will tell you how to communicate regarding his/her specific course.

For additional Contact options, please visit the Contact information page for our parent corporation, Blue Marble University at: http://bluemarbleuniversity.wordpress.com/contact/

(10) Additional Administrative Fees

We try to keep your costs to a minimum. Our mission is to deliver a solid educational program at a reasonable cost. Additional fees, charged at $100 USD per unit, will be incurred by you if we are asked by you to search/deliver some document, correspondence, and the like, which was already forwarded to you. The University is not the repository of your work, your communications, your Professors' communications with you. It makes it tough for everyone when a student cannot find this or that and we have to search our records on your behalf. This costs us money and time and must be offset by your paying additional charges.

Of course, accidents happen, and maybe you erased/deleted something that you really need. If so, we are happy to help, but an additional charge will be incurred. Please try to carefully maintain your own files, folders, and materials.

Student Reinstatement Fee: If you are suspended for any reason, you will be charged a "reinstatement fee" of $500 USD to cover our costs in having to re-work your private student portal to update calendars and course work.

Books and Materials: Included in tuition.

Lab Fees: Nominal lab fees may be required for one or more "lab" type courses in some programs. Typically, these are about $150-$300.

Lab Supplies for Dissertation Students: Although not a requirement, some students in our science programs choose to conduct some simple experiments at home or in association with their employment labs. Any costs must be paid for by the student. Please note that the majority of dissertations are "review" type articles, books, videos, or otherwise that do not require any additional costs.

Recommendation Letter: $200 USD per letter, no hard copies issued, only digital delivery via email or via receiving institution link. The Registrar's Office will select who can issue a recommendation letter based on Faculty availability.

Change of Your Email Address: This is a major burden on our staff and various departments, for which we charge $300 USD.

Transcript Fee: $25 per time for Registrar to Transmit via email only, NO mailing.

(11) Transcripts and Form of Diploma

As to transcripts, we have developed a new system that will allow you (or anyone authorized by you) to access your transcript online directly at any time and at no charge. Student transcripts will be published privately to the Web. Further information on this is provided on our website, and will be described in greater detail with you in due course.

Form and Text and Issuance of Degree **(For Blue Marble University)**

Our degrees are issued by Blue Marble University, upon the recommendation of the Faculty, and are in the usual form, and signed by appropriate Officers as per the following example:

****

Blue Marble University Ltd.
Commonwealth of Dominica

Upon the Recommendation of the Faculty Has Conferred Upon

NAME OF STUDENT

the degree of

DOCTOR OF SCIENCE (D.Sc.)
In e.g. Applied Biology

With all Honors, Rights, and Privileges to that Degree Appertaining

In witness whereof the Seal of the University and the signature of its Officials hereunto affixed on this _____day of _____, in the year 202_

Signed: Walter P. Drake, JD, PhD, President of Blue Marble University Ltd

Signed : Acharaporn Udomsri, Registrar and Custodian of Records, Blue Marble University

Seal of Blue Marble University

****

The Degree certificate is beautifully created in color in the approximate size 8 x 10 inches, using various fancy font styles. It is converted to the digital formats PDF and JPEG, and posted on the permanent records page for the student along with the student transcript. The Degree (and transcript) is available for free at any time by accessing the permanent student record page with the appropriate password. In this way, an original of the Degree is always available for printing in color by the student using a laser/inkjet printer or via a photo shop. In addition, it may be viewed or downloaded independently by any employer or other interested person to whom the student has given the password. **Hard copy degrees are neither issued nor mailed, nor are available for mailing.**

(12) Academic Records Page

Blue Marble University has installed a new course content management system which is both revolutionary and elegant. Each student will have their own password-protected Academic Record Page. It will look something like this:
BlueMarbleUniversity.com/msl

This will be your Go-To page for all your learning activities. On this page you will find your Curriculum, your Academic Record showing your Grades, the courses you may be excused from due to prior education, as well as the Links to each course Syllabus in our Library.

Once you are enrolled, you will be given our **Operations Manual** which will provide further details about how to conduct your studies.

(13) Email Abuse and Other Improper Messaging

It is one of the great advantages of the online learning environment that students have convenient, unrestricted access to their Instructors. And likewise the Instructors benefit from the interaction as well. There is a far better opportunity for communications with Faculty in our online environment than can ever be achieved in a campus lecture hall with 300 or more students, taught by a professor who just wants to get out of there and get back to his/her research lab. So we cherish this opportunity that we have and that can be afforded to our students.

Having said that, however, there are two areas of activity that may constitute "abuse" of the communications privilege: Volume of emails, and rude or disparaging messages.

(A) Volume: Many Adjunct Professors complain about email volume and that it not only detracts from handling their course duties, but that overall, answering emails leads to

their spending significantly more time teaching an online course than for a campus-based course. On the other hand, students very much enjoy the instant access to their course instructors, and some like it so much, they email daily or even more than that with any and all ideas that pop into their heads! Sometimes is it hard to find a good balance.

As an online institution, we must strive for an excellent communication policy, particularly in practice. **We are all on the "honor system"** in that our Instructors must make themselves reasonably accessible, and our students must try to use email and other contact messages for important questions and interactions. We are not going to specify what volume of email constitutes "abuse", but for sure we can all probably agree that daily emails from students are not appropriate. If your email volume becomes too difficult to manage, your Instructor may notify you. Or you may find some of your messages unanswered.

(B) Rude or Disparaging Email and Messages: Rude or disparaging email and messages are not tolerated and will subject the student to immediate suspension or dismissal from our program with no refund of tuition being made. Feedback that may tend to make our program better, and legitimate constructive complaints are welcome, and can be addressed to either the Instructor for the course or to our central administrative staff. We will make every effort to answer such inputs. But name calling, lewd commentary, repeated complaining about our academic program, or any other inappropriate comments or messages are not welcome and will be dealt with by suspension and/or dismissal. As a university student, you are a scholar, and should therefore act as one.

(14) Suspension and Dismissal

We all have to recognize that sometimes "things" just don't work out. From our perspective, we want each and every student to complete our program, and go on to do great things in their careers. We will try our best to help you get through our programs, which are not geared toward the geniuses among us but rather toward that student, even an average student, willing to make an "honest effort" to complete our program.

But life has a way sometimes of interfering with our plans. Students may find that changing circumstances make it impossible to complete the program. This could be due to changed financial circumstances, family obligations, time constraints, wrongful estimation of interest in the program, medical issues, or other unexpected events. So, we recognize that not everyone will in fact complete our program successfully.

In addition to circumstances which arise not under the student's control, are those things related to performance and interaction with our program that may require suspension or dismissal. **Poor academic performance, failure to timely pay tuition or buy books, or rude and unpleasant emails, are the three main causes of Suspension and/or Dismissal.**

Respecting academic performance, a student must read and study the texts and other learning materials. You then have to demonstrate that have acquired an understanding of the material. And you have to do this in the context that this is a university, not a high school, not a degree mill. We do not grade on a bell shaped curve, but rather expect every student to achieve a "B-" in each course in order to receive a Passing grade. If you will work at it, this will be achieved. But on the other hand, sloppy

work, borderline effort, or worse, no effort at all, may, and most likely will, result in a Suspension or Dismissal from the University.

(15) Five Year Limit for Completion

Any student that has not completed a **3 year program** within 5 years will be considered to have abandoned the program. The student will be removed from the rolls of active students, and the Transcript will be finalized, recorded, and made available online. In some cases, in the absolute discretion of the faculty, a Master's Degree may be awarded to acknowledge those students that have satisfactorily completed ALL coursework for a doctoral degree but have not completed their dissertation or Online Portfolio, but this **is not favored**.

The Five Year time limitation may be waived in appropriate circumstances such as for medical treatment, or in those cases where independent dissertation work is not yet completed but where clear and definite progress is shown. The burden is on the Student to show appropriate circumstances for waiver of the 5 year completion requirement, and all decisions in this regard are solely within the discretion of the Faculty.

(16) Problems

It is believed that most problems including complaints can be resolved between you and your instructor. Don't hesitate to bring problems to his/her attention. Don't let problems or concerns fester and become bigger than they should be.

We are in this together. It is a joint adventure. We want you to succeed and bring favorable commentary to our program.

If you are having any kind of problem or concern or complaint relating to any matter, then please contact:

Walter P. Drake, JD, PhD, Director
Blue Marble University

WalterDrakeJD@BlueMarbleUniversity.com

P.S. Our main email address, Mailbox@BlueMarbleUniversity.com, is only accessible to our administrative staff and is not accessible by our faculty members. Although sometimes email directed to Mailbox@BlueMarbleUniversity.com is forwarded on to faculty for handling, comments concerning faculty, particularly negative teaching comments from Students concerning faculty, are not forwarded to any faculty members. Such student comments are kept confidential and are used for in-house faculty evaluation. We encourage our students assessment of their Instructors and the individual courses.

(17) The Google Trick for Obtaining Research Papers

Here are a few suggestions and a **very helpful trick**. This example is for the biomedical sciences, but, the "trick" we present using Google Scholar, should be useful for all of our programs.

When you need to do some research to find research papers on this or that topic, oyu will many times come across the obnoxious problem that a Journal wants you to PAY to view the article. We abhor this practice, and tend to find workarounds. Most new work leaks out in more than one Journal, and so most likely you can find it or similar results elsewhere. If not, ignore that journal and author altogether! We criticized this practice in an essay published on our sister school website: https://panamacollegeofcellscience.org/2015/11/22/boycott-pay-per-view-journal-publishers/

Anyway, you can obtain many journal articles at your local college or university library. Due to federal regulations in the US, nearly every college and university library is open to the public.

"Google Scholar" has the most research papers.

But here is the trick you need to know:

Many times, especially for recent articles, publishers do not release the full text article. You have to pay for it. You can find the abstract, but not the full text. And abstracts (i.e. Summaries) are not going to be of any use to you. If you run into this problem, here is what to do:

Let's say you are looking for this paper: Noggle et al. "Human Oocytes Reprogram Somatic Cells to a Pluripotent State", **Nature 478:70-75 (2011)**.

If you search for it on Google for example, or even go to the online site for **Nature** , you will find it very difficult to find any full text article. Try it.

But if you search for it on **Google Scholar,** you will be referred to other sources which many times provide the free pdf version for download. Here are some screen shots to help you locate and use **Goggle Scholar:**

First, you might try to locate your article with just Google. What comes up are only articles for which you can obtain the abstract only, not the full text. See screen shot below:
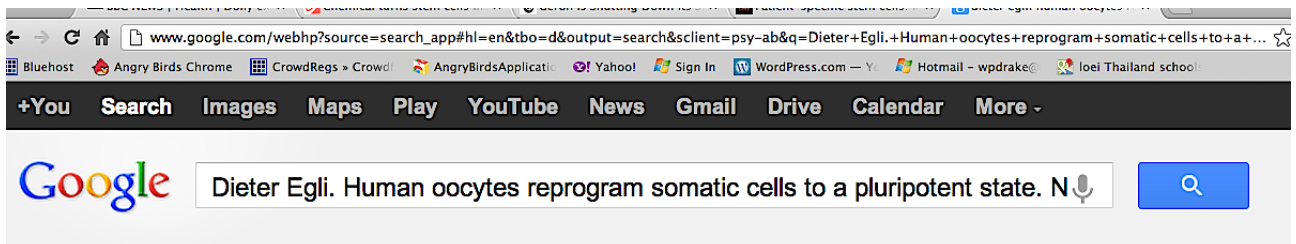
Do you see the "More" button on the upper right, click on that and here's what you see:
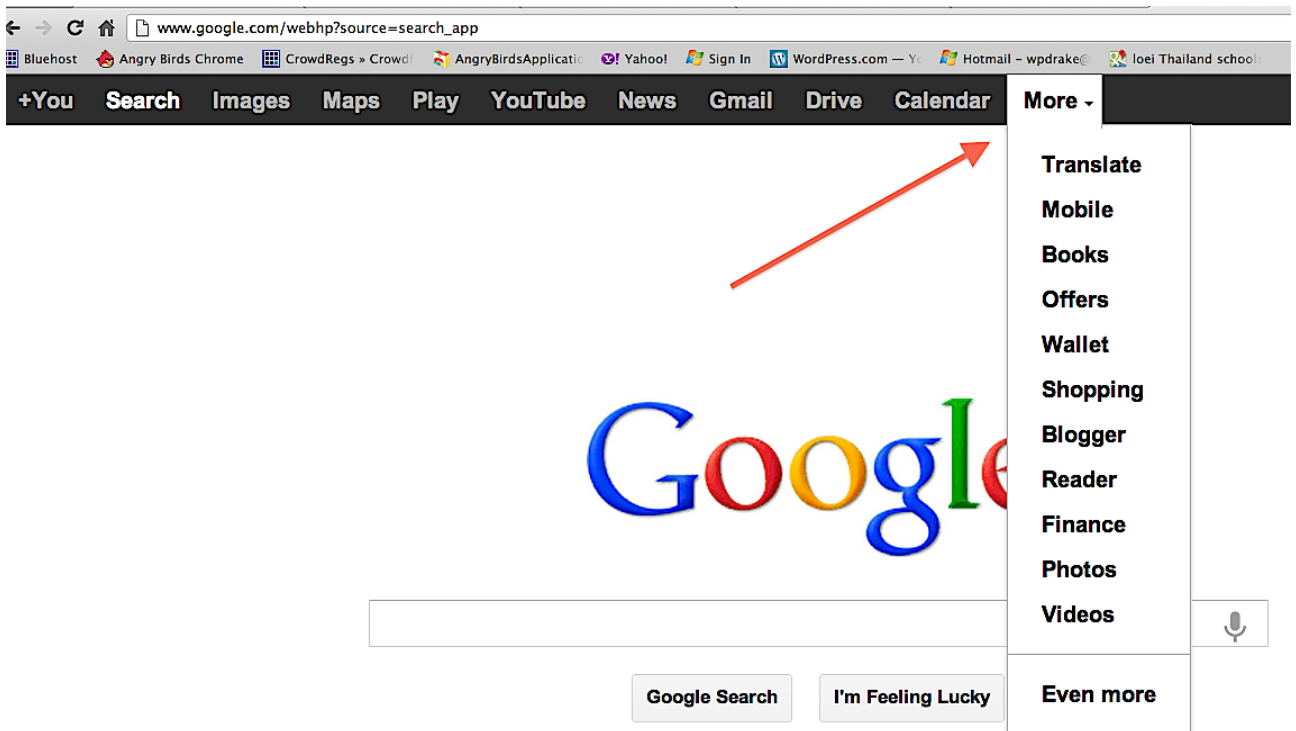
Then, click on "Even More" and you will come to this Screen, where you can select **Google Scholar:**
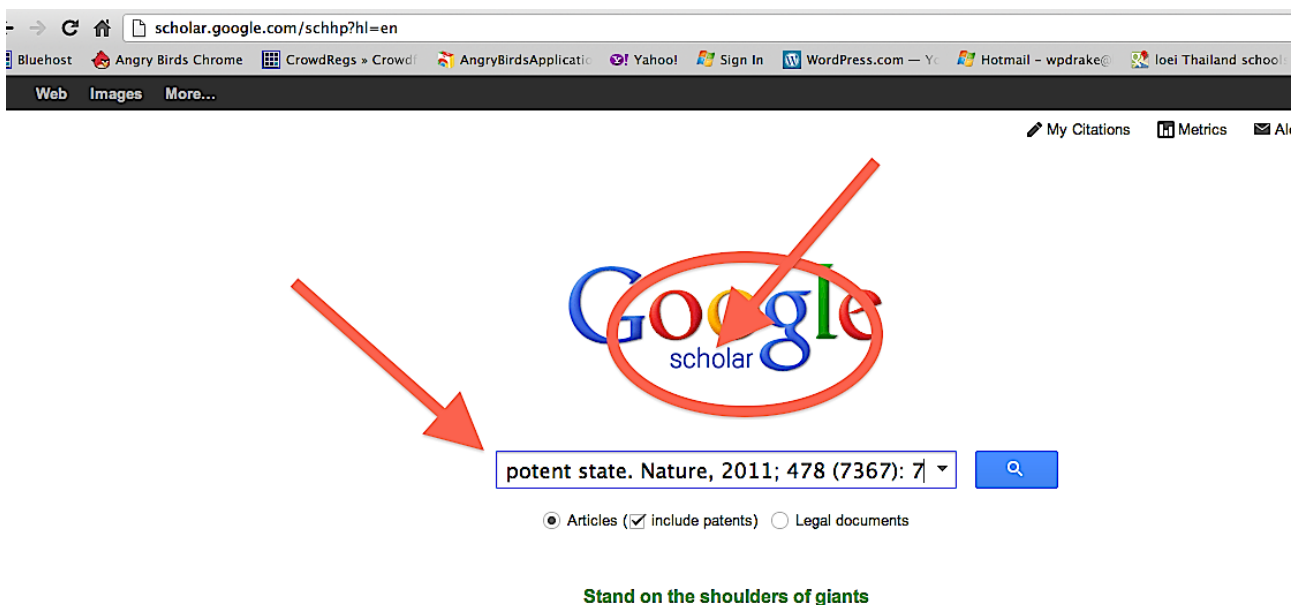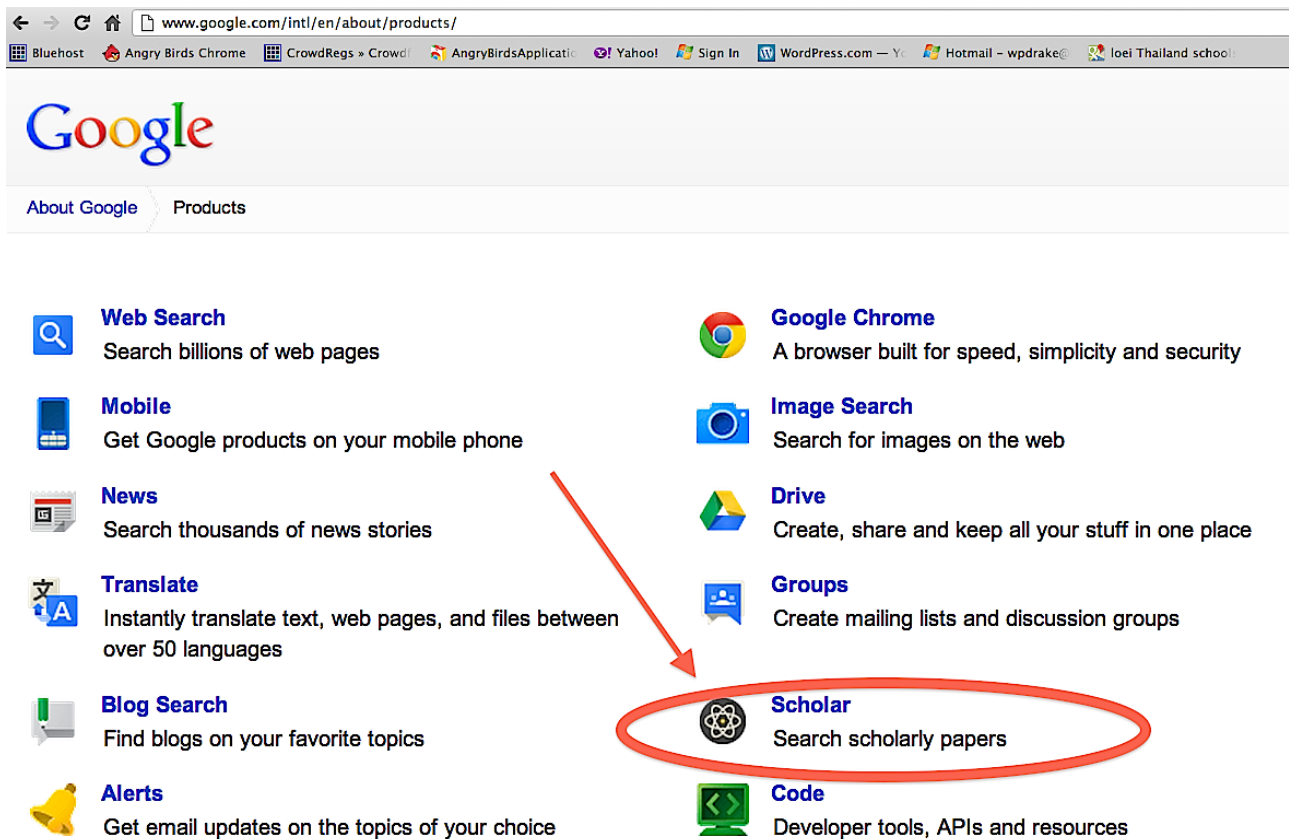
This is the key....Click on All Versions as shown here:

And then the other versions of the article are presented to you, from which many times, you can find a pdf version of the full article!!

End of Student Guide