

GC 512: Written Communication and Presentation Skills

Fall 2017 CRN: 40402

Instructor: Dr. Vincent Adiutori

Time: TR 3:30-6:30 pm

Location: Stevenson Hall 100

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Office Hours: TR 12-2 or by appointment

Office Location: UH 626

Course Description and Goals: The course provides students with the process and skills to write according to the conventions of academic English and to communicate with specialist and non-specialist audiences. Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Write according to the conventions of academic English. At the sentence level this means having the ability to use various types of clauses, make appropriate verb choices, and avoid needless complexity and jargon. At the paragraph level this means having the ability to write clear topic sentences, employ smooth transitions within paragraphs, and create coherence across paragraphs. At the paper level this means establishing a firm understanding of generic conventions and practicing those conventions to communicate effectively and efficiently.
2. Use a writing process of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and submitting to complete academic writing assignments.
3. Identify strengths and weaknesses in one's own writing as well as in her/his peers' writing.
4. Communicate effectively with specialist and non-specialist audiences.
5. Present original research effectively to an audience and create appropriate and effective visual aids.

Class meetings will consist of lectures, small and large group activities and discussions, and writing workshops in which students will be asked to write or revise their own work as well as read and comment on other students' work. The course's success depends on our ability to establish and maintain a cooperative and collaborative writing environment in which all students come prepared to be active participants. As Peg Single puts it in her *Demystifying Dissertation Writing*, "although writing is a lone experience, writing does not have to be, nor should it be, a lonely experience" (5).

As the semester progresses, class meetings will primarily focus on workshopping ongoing writing projects. The success of these workshops depends on students being fully prepared. This means students are required both to be physically present and adequately prepared in order to achieve the week's goals. As you're all graduate students, I can assume a certain level of self-motivation and strong commitment to your studies and success as professionals and practitioners. And as a small community of graduate students who are connected to larger communities of scholars and other professionals, we must approach this course and each meeting with the understanding that while our professions may not wholly depend on our individual successes, our individual successes will depend on our collective ones as members of GC 512. I wish all the best to us all.

Course Policies: This course follows a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory assessment policy. Assessment is based on Attendance, Participation, and Individual Effort and Improvement throughout the

semester. To the **first** category: there are no excused absences, just absences. Too many absences will negatively affect your final assessment. To the **second** category: participation is not limited to how often you respond to questions in class (everyone is expected to respond, silence is the exception). Instead, participation includes attentively reading course materials, contributing to class discussions, having assignments completed on expected dates, being an active participant in writing workshops, and taking seriously your role as peer reviewer. If you begin having trouble meeting any of these criteria, please let me know immediately. To the **third** category: I will provide written and/or verbal feedback for every assignment and require a meeting with each individual student at least once during the semester. We will do our best to address topics of interest to all students as well as focus on specific areas of concern on an individual basis.

Course Texts:

To Purchase: Angelika Hofmann *Scientific Writing and Communication: Papers, Proposals, and Presentations*, 3rd edition.

To Access via Daley Library Website: Harmon and Gross *The Craft of Scientific Communication*

Gross, Harmon, Reidy *Communicating Science: The Scientific Article from the 17th Century to the Present*

Provided via BlackBoard:

Bazerman *Shaping Written Knowledge*

Booth *The Craft of Research*

Goldbort *Writing For Science*

Graff *They Say/I Say*

Zeiger *Essentials of Writing Biomedical Research Papers*

Available in my office:

Markel *Technical Communication*

Single *Demystifying Dissertation Writing*

Partial Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

Week 1 (8/31):

Lecture/Group Discussion: Syllabus review; Course expectations and objectives; Fields of study; Reading and writing expectations, goals, and strategies; Complete first week survey

Group Discussion: Interdisciplinarity, The Rhetoric of Science, Communication and Communities, Scientific vs. Science Writing

Read: *Demystifying* excerpt on “Interactive Reading.” **Read:** *TSIS* “The Art of Summary” and Chapters 4 and 5. **Read:** Selection of essays on BB covering the rhetoric of science **Write:** Compose

a commentary essay. The objective of the essay is to summarize, analyze, comment and establish a position on the selection of essays on the rhetoric of science. The position you establish should be in response to the readings and should, therefore, use those readings as the grounds on which to establish that position.

Week 2 (9/7):

Group Discussion: Reading Science, Reading Argument

Group Discussion: Joining the conversation: Is Science rhetoric “without remainder?”

Writing Workshop: Self-Assessment—style, presentation, argumentation

Read: Chapter 1 of *SC* (3-11) **Read:** Chapter 14 of *Craft* (187-197) **Read:** The Science of Scientific Writing (BB Link) **Email Instructor/Bring Printout to Class:** A recent writing sample. The sample can be of any length or genre, but it should be a substantial representation of the kind of writing expected in your field from a graduate student. While it does not have to be polished, the sample should be at a stage of completion that allows for comprehension and critique.

Week 3 (9/14):

Group Discussion: Conventions of Scientific Communication: The Good, Bad, and Ugly

Lecture: Verbs, Adverbs, and Adjectives; Character, Focus, Value

In-Class Exercise/Discussion: Using your individual writing samples, identify good and bad choices using the reading materials and lecture topics.

Locate, Print, and Read: At least three individual journal articles with topics related to your dissertation topics. **Write:** a 2-3 paragraph summary of and response to each article. Write your summaries for an academic audience. Use Chapter 2 from *TS/IS* (BB) for guidance. In a separate paragraph, describe and analyze the article in terms of its clarity and effectiveness of communication. How is comprehension enabled or hindered at sentence and paragraph levels of construction? What features can serve as models for your own writing and could be identified across various disciplines and fields of study?

Week 4: (9/21)

Lecture: The Reader’s Role: Generic Conventions and Reader Expectations

In-Class Exercise/Discussion: Analyze journal articles and student summaries following lecture topics.

Find, print, and read: series of related articles in your field from popular science sources. Identify a topic currently important to your field of study and in which you’re interested. **Locate** a number (3-5) of articles addressing the topic. **Read** the articles. **Prepare** notes. What difference is there in the demands of reading? How does the difference in writing objectives affect how you read? What do the articles tell you about how science and scientific writing go about informing audiences, constructing narratives, and formulating arguments differently?

Write: Summarize, analyze, and synthesize the articles from popular science sources in two different ways. One summary will be for a specific general audience (i.e. city mayors, uber drivers, leukemia patients and caregivers, investors, employers, etc.), while the other should be written for an academic audience (i.e. science vs. scientific writing). Produce two different readers’ analyses using the following guidelines: Imagine and Identify: 1. who the readers are; 2. what readers will already know; 3. what readers would find of interest in the article and how you addressed those interests, needs,

expectations, concerns, research, goals, etc. in your summary; 4. what readers should learn from the article; 5. where your summary guides or directs your reader's attention. Bring articles and written assignments to 9/28 meeting.

Read: *Craft* Chapter 11 (135-152) and Chapter 15 (198-211)

Week 5 (9/28):

In-Class Discussion: The challenges of writing for different audiences

Lecture: Core, Connectors, Orientors

In-Class Activity: Workshop student writing samples based on lecture topics

Find, Read, Write: A series of journal articles strongly connected with your research interests and/or dissertation topic. **Summarize** and **respond** to the articles using *TSIS* Chapters 4 & 5 (BB) and *Academic* Unit 6. Your goal is to provide your audience with a picture of where your research stands in relation to a current research topic important to your field of study. **Bring** printed copies of the articles and your summaries/critiques to class on 10/5. **Be prepared to present** your topics and **explain** how your research is situated within the field's concerns—both historically and presently.

Week 6 (10/5):

In-Class Presentation/Discussion: Individual students present topics and articulate and defend positions on where their research stands

Lecture: Information Flow

In-Class Activity: Reading and Writing for Information Flow

In-Class Discussion: What's a lightning talk? How do I prepare one?

Read: *Craft* Chapters 12 and 13 (152-183) **Read:** *SW* Chapter 9 (174-211) **Prepare and Practice:** Lightning Talk Presentation

Week 7 (10/12):

Individual Lightning Talk Presentations

Weeks 8-15 (10/19-12/7): Schedule TBD:

Genres to be discussed and practiced include: Research Statements, Annotated Bibliography, Literature Reviews, IMRD Scientific articles, Grant Proposals, and Cover Letters. Students will be expected to compose an individualized writing plan and contribute input and materials as necessary.