

The Art of Writing in the Sciences

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Section 4565

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Office Hours
T-Th 3rdPeriod,
W 6th/7th Periods
(or by appointment)

Meetings: T-Th -- 4thPeriod (10:40 – 11:30 am)
104 Leigh Hall

Texts: The Craft of Scientific Writing The Elements of Style
3rd Edition -- Michael Alley 4th Edition – Strunk and White
Springer-Verlag 1996 Allyn and Bacon 2000

Course: There is a general recognition that the science curricula, while excellent in technical content, are inadequate in helping students develop effective communication skills. This course is an attempt to address the writing needs of students in the sciences. It is not a remedial course; students should have some general grasp of the language. It is also not a grammar course, although basic language elements will be reviewed and emphasized. Writing well in any area requires an appropriate appreciation of mechanics and style.

This course will be driven more by application than theory, aiming for immediate practical value to students. We will write early and often, but in manageable proportions (thinking both of the students and the instructor). Examples of good writing and not-so-good writing will be presented and analyzed. Skills will be crafted by addressing specific types of writing that scientists are called upon to do (e.g., abstracts, memos, letters, papers, dissertations). Even e-mail communication, which increasingly consumes us all, can benefit from attention to specific improvement skills. This is a course intended to improve current writing levels and to encourage continued attention to this important craft. No matter how good the science may be, if it cannot be communicated to others, careers can languish. Writing is not easy, but it should not be a source of dread. A goal of this course is to improve your skills to the point that you might even enjoy writing.

- Grading:** Evaluation of your performance in this class will be based on a series of writing assignments (85%) and a mid-term exam (15%).
- Exams:** The exam will be given at the time indicated on the class schedule. In general, no makeup exams will be given. If some emergency causes you to miss an exam, see me as soon as possible. Inconvenience does not constitute an emergency
- Honesty:** All the writing you submit in this class must be your work alone. No assistance permitted from fellow students, mentors, professors, etc. Such help is considered an Honor Violation.
- Attendance:** You are expected to attend all classes. If you to miss a class, you are still responsible for material covered that day, and note that not all class material will be posted on WebCT.
- Disability:** Please see me if you have a problem in this regard. The university wants us to include the following statement: *“Students requesting classroom accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students Office, which will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.”* Just see me if you have a problem.
- Other:** I begin the class on time (10:40 sharp) and also end on time, so please don't be late to class. And turn off any cell phones.