

Ohio University
PBIO 418, Writing in the Life Sciences
Winter 2006

TTh 1:10 pm -3:00 pm, Porter Hall 417

Instructor: Dr. Sarah Wyatt
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Hours: by appointment

Office: 508 Porter
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Course Overview: Current research and public controversy dealing with topics in biology, with an emphasis on plant science, will provide students opportunities to practice and master skills needed for successful written communication in the those fields.

Course Objectives: At the completion of the course, the student should be able to

- 1) retrieve, critically evaluate and synthesize scientific information from a variety of sources including the primary literature
- 2) tailor writings for different audiences ranging from the scientific community to the general public
- 3) review and edit his/her own work and the work of others
- 4) use correct grammar, punctuation, transitions, and other mechanics
- 5) demonstrate the ability to produce scientific documents as below.

Required Texts:

Perelman, L.C., Paradis, J., Barrett, E. (1998) *The Mayfield Handbook of Technical & Scientific Writing*. Mayfield Publishing Co. Mountain View, CA

Assignments: There will be a variety of informal, in-class writing exercises based on articles from the primary literature and new media. In addition, several formal writing projects will be expected. These include a one page policy brief or a 1-2 page outreach/education/media brief, a group project to construct a scientific poster from a published paper, a short review in the format of *Trends in Plant Science* or a similar journal, and a CV or resume and cover letter. For both the poster and the review, time is allotted for submission, critique and revision of preliminary drafts. Other assignments may be revised and resubmitted (one time only) as desired.

Attendance and Course Expectations: Attendance of all class meetings is expected. Writing, in class, will be required each week and peer review and comment will be part of many of the writing exercises.

Grading: The final grade will be determined by adding points from weekly in-class writing assignments and the major writing projects and mid term exam as indicated below.

Assignments:

Portfolio	100 pts
Abstract	25 pts
Media or policy paper	25 pts
Literature review	125 pts
Poster	75 pts
Cover letter/ Resume or CV	50 pts

Grading:

A-, A	90-100%
B+, B, B-	80-89%
C+, C, C-	70-79%
D+, D, D-	60-69%
F	<60%

Notice: Students are expected to meet all deadlines for out-of-class writing assignments. Late submission will result in a 10% reduction (for each class period missed) in the final points awarded for the assignment. In-class review and critique will be part of the writing process.

Academic dishonesty: Plagiarism, in any form, will result in failure of the course.