

Scientific Writing and Presentations

AGRI/NRM 790

Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources
University of Tennessee at Martin

Course Syllabus

Class Schedule: Online
Credit Hours: 3 semester hours

Instructors:	Dr. Barb Darroch	Dr. Craig Darroch
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Office Hours: Barb Darroch: When I am not teaching a lab, I am usually in my office (from 8 am to 12 noon and 1 pm to 5 pm). You can reach me by phone or email. I have labs all day Tuesday (though you may be able to catch me between labs occasionally) and on Wednesday afternoons from 2 to 5 pm. I also have a lab setup time on Mondays from 3 to 5 pm.

Craig Darroch: You can contact me by email. I am free on most Monday, Tuesday and Friday afternoons, and on Tuesday and Thursday mornings between 8 and 10 a.m.

Textbooks: Two books are required for this course:

1. How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper. 6th Edition. Authors: Robert A. Day and Barbara Gastel. ISBN: 0-313-33040-9
2. Alley, M. 2003. The Craft of Scientific Presentations: Critical steps to succeed and critical errors to avoid. Springer, NY. 241 pages. ISBN:0-387-95555-0.

Other required readings will be provided either via Blackboard or through links to pertinent websites.

Other Computer Requirements: You will need Microsoft Office (preferably 2003 or 2007), specifically Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and Excel. You will also need to have Macromedia Flash installed on your computer, and maintain the latest updates for JAVA and other plug-ins that you use with your web browser. You can download the Flash player from the Macromedia website. You will also need Adobe Acrobat reader to open pdf files. The reader can be downloaded for free from Adobe's website. See links in Blackboard.

Course Description

A course designed to give graduate students the skills necessary to write a thesis, and to prepare other professional materials for presentation or publication. Topics covered in this course include: searching the scientific literature; scientific writing style; writing graduate level papers, proposals, projects, and thesis components; preparing scientific presentations; presentation of data; using visual aids; and using word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation software.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Distinguish different types of research, their audiences and how research material might be effectively presented
2. Prepare scientific and technical papers, and presentations.
3. Format documents and presentations to optimize their visual appeal when viewed in-print, as a podcast or audio/video file format on the internet, or through personal presentations to an audience
4. Effectively use features of Microsoft Office to create eye-catching professional documents and presentations.
5. Effectively use features of Microsoft Word, Powerpoint, and Excel to create professional looking tables, graphs and figures.
6. Accept constructive criticism and use reviewers' comments to improve quality and clarity of written reports and presentations.

Grading Procedures

The final letter grade in this course will be based on the total points accumulated throughout the semester calculated as a percentage of total possible points. We will use Blackboard to keep track of your grades in this course so you will be able to access your current grade in the course at any time by logging into the course site in Blackboard. Points are accumulated as follows:

10 to 12 Assignments	400
8 to 10 Quizzes	100
Midterm test	100
Presentation	100
Final Exam	<u>100</u>
Total	800 points

Letter grades are assigned based on a percentage of the total points possible:

- A** = 90% or greater
- B** = 80% to 89.9%
- C** = 70% to 79.9%
- D** = 60% to 69.9%
- F** = Below 60 %

Note: Any student eligible for and requesting academic accommodations due to a disability is requested to provide a letter of accommodation from P.A.C.E. or Student Academic Support Center within the first two weeks of the semester.

Assignments will usually be due every week. Exact dates will be announced later. Small online quizzes will be posted periodically. The assignments will include a term paper which will consist of a literature review on a subject of interest to each student. The midterm test will probably be during the week of Oct. 6th or 13th and the final will be due during finals week.

Class Policies

Attendance: Class attendance will be determined through submission of your assignments, quizzes, and tests. If you cannot complete an assignment by the stated deadline, please contact us **before** that deadline to arrange an alternate time. We are willing to be a little flexible (within reason) but **only** for a good reason (such as illness, having to travel for work). Chronic lateness without prior approval will lead to reduction in your grades (10% per day late). It is important that you keep up with your weekly work! This is NOT a self-paced course.

Academic Honesty: Each student is expected to do all of his/her own work. We encourage you to use the discussion board to assist one another in completing your homework assignments; in fact, some assignments may require you to use the discussion board. However, we expect you to turn in your own work as the end product. For some assignments we will be using the Safe Assignment tool in Blackboard to check for plagiarism. For quizzes and midterm and final exams, we expect you to do all of your own work. Academic dishonesty, in any form, will result in an “F” in the course.

Tentative Course Outline

Here is the tentative list of topics that we plan to cover in this course. This list is subject to change based on class progress and the instructors’ discretion.

Module 1 Introduction

- Research – What is it?
- How do researchers communicate?
- Types of scientific communication
- Examining examples of different types of scientific communication

Module 2 Scientific Literature

- Searching the scientific literature
- Using the UTM library
- Using online search engines
- What is a refereed journal?
- Plagiarism and how to avoid it

Module 3 Beginning to Write

- Establishing your constraints
- Organizing your writing
- Preparing outlines
- Standard formats for scientific papers, research projects and theses
- Style guides

Module 4 Content

- Creating a literature review
- Preparing other sections of a research report (abstract, introduction, materials and methods, results and discussion, conclusions)
- Including and summarizing research data

Module 5 Style and grammar

Scientific writing style
First-person vs. Third-person; Passive vs. active voice
Avoiding excessive wording
Grammar
Avoiding misuse of words
When to use footnotes

Module 6 Reference citations

How to use references
- Within the text
- How to make lists of references

Module 7 Revising

Dealing with revisions
Accepting criticism
Making sense of reviewers' comments
Making the changes
What to do if you don't agree with reviewers' comments

Module 8 Other communication

Other types of scientific writing
- research proposals
- creating a fact sheet/bulletin
- articles for popular press
- memos, letters and emails

Module 9 Computer skills

Using Computer technology:
Microsoft Word
▪ Formatting (including margins, tabs, indents, justification, etc)
▪ Using the table feature
▪ Creating tables of content

Module 10 Computer skills

Microsoft Excel
▪ Creating tables, charts, graphs

Module 11 Poster Presentations

Organization and formats for posters
Using Microsoft powerpoint

Module 12 Oral Presentations

Designing and preparing slides for an oral presentation
Importing tables, charts and graphs from Excel
Optimizing pictures for use in presentations
Using visual aids without overdoing it
Using Microsoft Powerpoint