

**Special Topic: Writing Science**  
**EES 6096**

**Instructor:** Dr. Robert Mahon, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences

Meeting times: Tuesday, Thursday, 14:00-15:15 GP1022

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Office Location: GP1062

Office Hours:

**Learning Objectives:**

Students will learn to prepare carefully crafted paragraphs and weave them into a compelling scientific narrative. We will critically evaluate the components of papers and proposals through examples, discussion, and peer evaluation. We will discuss preparing clear, concise, and relevant figures and conceptual diagrams. Students will work over the course of the semester toward a completed manuscript which we will peer-review and revise.

**Course Evaluation:**

**Grading:** Total class grade: over 90% = A, 80-89.9% = B, 70-79.9% = C, and 60-69.9% = D.

Readings and discussions – 35%

Assignments – 40%

Final Paper – 25%

**Extra Credit:** No extra credit will be offered under any circumstances.

**Readings and Discussions (35%):** We will have weekly readings, discussions, and activities. Participation therein will make up a significant portion of your course grade.

**Assignments (40%):** The principle objective of this course will be to prepare a compelling scientific manuscript or proposal. Through the course of the semester we will prepare individual components of these manuscripts, subject them to review and evaluation by our peers, and revise them incorporating this feedback. The assignments over the course of the semester will include these individual components and peer-reviews of each other's work.

**Final Paper (25%):** The final outcome of the course will be a completed manuscript. Each component will have individually gone through peer evaluation at least once, and discussion in pods throughout the semester. The complete manuscripts will be peer evaluated in their entirety and revised to create this final submission. The final paper should be submitted in the appropriate length and formatting for the target journal or proposal request.

**Course Structure:** Lecture and group discussion will primarily occur on Thursday. Tuesdays will typically be reserved for meeting in writing pods of 2-3 peers, where we will more closely evaluate each other's work and discuss findings from peer exchanges. In these pods, we will also discuss problem sentences and work through troublesome figure issues.

**Late Assignment Policy:** Any assignment turned in after the specified due date (at the beginning of class) will be considered late, an assignment not handed in by the end of the day it is due will not be accepted without a valid University excuse. Make-ups will only be given for verifiable written excuses specifically recognized by the University (illness of the student, or of an immediate family

member, death of an immediate family member, participation on trips related to certain University functions, major religious holidays). If you miss any classes, you must promptly notify me to make up the material. Make-ups after one week has passed will be permitted only under extenuating circumstances.

**Class Attendance:** Much of the course will emphasize seminar-type discussions which cannot be made up in the event of an absence. Class attendance is therefore considered mandatory, except in the case of University approved absence.

**Required Text:**

J. Schimel, *Writing Science: How to Write Papers That Get Cited and Proposals That Get Funded*, ISBN-13: 978-0199760244 (often findable online).

**Additional Resources:**

<https://www.craftofscientificwriting.com/>

**Academic Honesty:** Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the Academic Dishonesty Policy (<http://www.uno.edu/student-affairs/documents/academic-dishonesty-policy-rev2014.pdf>) for further information. The University policies and procedures regarding academic dishonesty are clearly defined in the University Code of Conduct: <http://www.uno.edu/student-affairs/documents/Student-Code-of-Conduct-rev-7-16.pdf>

**Students with disability:** It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individual basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirement. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services (LIB 120) as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. See the UNO Policy for Students with Disabilities at <http://www.ods.uno.edu/>

**Topics and Tentative Schedule:**

Week of	Topic	Assignment	Pod Discussion	Assigned Reading
8/19	Introduction	Ten hundred most common words assignment <a href="http://splasho.com/upgoer5/">http://splasho.com/upgoer5/</a>	Ten hundred words sharing	Schimel Chapter 1-3
8/26	Writing to your audience		Where do I start?	Schimel Chapter 4
9/2	Outlining a scientific paper	Set up writing pods draft an outline	Discuss outlines	Schimel Chapter 5
9/9	Introductions	Exchange outline draft an intro	Transitions: cut and paste	Schimel Chapter 6-7
9/16	Passive and active voice	Exchange introductions	Seek & destroy mission 1	

9/23	Prepositional phrases	Intro revisions	Seek & destroy mission 2	
9/30	Reviewing peers' work		Good and bad reviews	
10/7	Methods and Results	Draft a methods section	Chasm of despair	Schimmel Chapter 8
10/14	Separating results from interpretations	Draft a results section exchange methods	Discuss methods	
10/21	Figures and figure captions	Exchange results and begin discussion drafts	Discuss results	
10/28	Discussion	Draft a discussion		
11/4	Conceptual diagrams	exchange discussions	Discuss discussions	
11/11	Conclusions and the abstract	Draft a conclusion and abstract	Discuss problem paragraphs	Schimmel Chapter 9
11/18	Choosing a strong title	Exchange full drafts	Cut and paste exercise	Schimmel Chapter 11-13
11/25	Writing proposals that get funded	Revise full drafts	Full draft discussion	
12/2		<b>full drafts due</b>		