



ESM 437-2: Writing Skills for Environmental Professionals

FALL 2016, WEDNESDAY 2:30-3:45 PM
BREN HALL 1510

INSTRUCTOR: Lisa Leombruni
Bren Hall 4520 | lisa@bren.ucsb.edu
Office Hours: Tues 3-4pm & by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to provide you the skills to write effectively across various academic and applied genres in the environmental sciences. A focus on writing mechanics and the principles of good scientific and analytical writing will help you de-clutter and streamline your work. The course covers writing styles and formats you will likely encounter in your career: research and project proposals, policy analyses, evaluations and data summaries, writing for the public, and professional correspondence. You will also practice “two kinds of thinking” essential to effective writing: free-form and creative brainstorming, followed by critical assessment and revision of your work. Classes will include lectures, discussions, in-class activities, and peer review workshops.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To recognize and write effectively in various professional writing styles and formats.
2. To understand and apply the mechanics of good writing and the principles of effective scientific and technical writing.
3. To develop “research translation” writing skills essential to science-based professions.
4. To write well-argued, supported, concise, cohesive, and clearly organized analyses.
5. To strengthen critical thinking abilities, analytical reading and writing skills, and develop good collaborative work habits.

REQUIREMENTS

- **TEXTBOOK:** Two books are required for this course: *The Elements of Style, 4th Ed.* by William Strunk & E.B. White, ISBN 978-0205309023 (~\$6), and *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser, ISBN 978-0060891541 (~\$10). I will provide all other readings as PDFs on GauchoSpace.
- **PARTICIPATION:** Writing well demands practice, so this course requires active participation—at home and in the classroom. You must come to class willing to write and think creatively and critically, and must be committed to writing at home each week to improve your craft. **Please bring a pen and paper to class each week, along with any required print-outs.**
- **ATTENDANCE:** You are expected to attend every lecture; I will circulate a sign-in sheet at the beginning of class. If you cannot make it to class due to an emergency or illness, **please notify me in advance.** Absences may also be excused for academic or professional activities, such as conferences or interviews, though all absences require make-up work. **If you miss three lectures or more, you will not pass the course.**

GRADING & ASSIGNMENTS

GRADING: Even though this course is set up as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U), your final grade will depend upon the accumulation of points. You will receive an “S” if you accumulate 80 points or more, and a “U” if you accrue less than 80 points. There is no final paper for this 2-unit course, though you will need to generate a “proposal idea” based upon your interests. Late assignments will be marked down.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS. There are **10 short weekly assignments**, which add up to 10 points:

1. Genre Analysis	10 pt.	Oct 4 @ 12 pm	GS + bring hardcopy
2. Science Summaries	10 pt.	Oct 11 @ 12pm	GS + bring hardcopy
3. Draft Science Story	10 pt.	Oct 19 @ 2:30pm	GS + bring hardcopy
4. Narrative Structures	5 pt.	Oct 25 @ 5pm	GS + bring hardcopy
5. Mechanics Exercise	5 pt.	Nov 1 @ 9am	Submit on GS
6. Final Science Story	15 pt.	Nov 9 @ 2:30pm	Submit on GS
7. Proposal Topic + Sources	5 pt.	Nov 16 @ 2:30pm	Submit on GS
8. Proposal Outline	10 pt.	Nov 23 @ 2:30pm	GS + bring hardcopy
9. Draft Proposal	10 pt.	Nov 30 @ 2:30pm	GS + bring hardcopy
10. Final Proposal	20 pt.	Dec 9 @ midnight	Submit on GS

Please use double spacing for your assignments, as it will be easier to provide comments.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Attempting all writing assignments is a course requirement. **A missed assignment will result in -25 points at the end of the quarter** to dissuade anyone who may have accrued enough points from skipping an assignment.

ASSIGNMENT FORMAT. Upload your assignments to GauchoSpace as a **Word document** so I can comment using “track changes.” **Include a header** with your name, the assignment name, and date. **Save your assignments as “Lastname_Firstname_AssignmentName_MMDDYY.docx”.** You will lose an automatic 5 points if your assignment is not in this format.

TOPIC OUTLINE

Lecture	Topic	
1	Sept 28	Intro to Writing for Environmental Professionals
2	Oct 5	Genres of Environmental Writing
3	Oct 12	Science Translation I
4	Oct 19	Science Translation II
5	Oct 26	Narrative Structures
6	Nov 2	Writing Mechanics, Tone, & Style
7	Nov 9	Argumentation
8	Nov 16	Academic & Proposal Writing I
9	Nov 23	Academic & Proposal Writing II
10	Nov 30	Peer Review & Evaluation

LECTURES & READINGS*

1. Intro to Writing for Environmental Professionals

SEPTEMBER 28

During this introductory session we will review the basic elements of good writing, begin a conversation about writing conventions across genres, and discuss idea generation.

- Readings due: None
- Assignments due: Please submit a writing sample to GS by Fri Sept 30 @ midnight (please do not submit your Bren application essay)

2. Genres of Environmental Writing

OCTOBER 5

Writing well means understanding your audience and the conventions of your genre. We will continue our discussion of genre and consider audience, purpose, strategy, and tone. Be prepared to share what you learned from your Genre Analysis with the class.

- Assignments due: Genre Analysis (Tues Oct 4 @ 12pm on GS)
- Bring to class: Hardcopy of your Genre Analysis + be prepared to discuss in class
- Readings due:
 - Bunn, M. (2011) "How to Read Like a Writer" in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 2*, <http://writingspaces.org/> 10 p.
 - Francis (2009) *Six Logical Writing Structures*, *Writer's Digest*. 2 p.

3. Science Translation I

OCTOBER 12

"Science translation" is the ability to understand and extract the most essential findings from a scientific study and present them in the most compelling way. Scientists and academics have the tendency to use complex language and phrasing, so we'll discuss how to distill dense scientific writing into succinct, jargon-free narratives. We will practice de-cluttering our writing, consider audience, and review basic approaches for writing to a lay audience.

- Assignments due: Science Summaries (Tues Oct 11 @ 12pm on GS)
- Bring to class: Hardcopy of your Science Summary + be prepared to discuss in class
- Readings due:
 - Zinsser, W. (2006) Science and Technology. In *On Writing Well, 7th Ed.* (pp. 147-164). New York, NY: HarperCollins.
 - Blake, G. & Bly, R.W. (1993). Principles of Technical Communication and Words and Phrases Commonly Misused in Technical Writing. In *The Elements of Technical Writing*, (pp. 63-96). New York, NY: Longman.

* Readings and lecture content subject to revision as the quarter progresses. Keep checking GauchoSpace for the most up-to-date readings and assignment prompts.

4. Science Translation II

OCTOBER 19

We'll continue to practice "science translation skills" and engage in peer review.

- Assignments due: Draft Science Story (Web Oct 19 @ 2:30pm on GS)
- Bring to class: Hardcopy of your Draft Science Story
- Readings due:
 - Zinsser, W. (2006) "Simplicity" and "Clutter." In *On Writing Well, 7th Ed.* (pp. 7-17). New York, NY: HarperCollins.
 - Lamott, A. (1995) "Short Assignments," "Shitty First Drafts," and "Someone to Read Your Assignments." In *Bird by Bird*, (pp. 16-27, 162-171). New York, NY: Anchor Books.

5. Narrative Structures

OCTOBER 26

Understanding common narrative structures in environmental storytelling will help you organize and frame your own work. We will review narrative structures and consider their effectiveness.

- Assignments due: Narrative Structures (Wed Oct 25 @ 5pm on GS)
- Bring to class: Hardcopy of your Narrative Structures assignment
- Readings due:
 - Rosen, J. (2015) Narrative X-Rays: Looking at stories' structural skeletons. *The Open Notebook*.
 - Kintisch, E. (2015) Into the maelstrom. *Science*, 344, pp. 250-253.
 - Jabr, F. (2014) A new generation of American chestnut trees may redefine America's forests. *Scientific American*, 310 (3).
 - One additional reading, TBD.

6. Mechanics, Tone, & Style

NOVEMBER 2

Poor grammar and sentence structure impede clarity and readability—and diminish the power and effectiveness of your message. We will review common writing errors, practice good writing mechanics, and consider key principles to help you tighten-up your work.

Developing your voice as a writer also takes time, but there are simple ways to adjust your tone for different audiences. We will review punctuation, emphasis, word choice, and sentence structure as a means to adjust tone and style.

- Assignments due: Mechanics Exercise (Tues Nov 1 @ 9am on GS)
- Bring to class: Be prepared to share and discuss your edits in the Mechanics Exercise
- Readings due:
 - Strunk, W., & White, E.B. (1979) "Elementary Rules of Usage." In *The Elements of Style* (pp. 1-14). New York, NY: Pearson.
 - Strunk, W., & White, E.B. (1979) "Elementary Rules of Composition." In *The Elements of Style* (pp. 15-33). New York, NY: Pearson.
 - Clark, R.P. (2006). Cut Big, Then Small. In *Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer*, (pp. 50-56). New York, NY: Little Brown & Company.
 - Zinsser, W. (2006) Business Writing: Writing in Your Job. In *On Writing Well, 7th Ed.* (pp. 165-177). New York, NY: HarperCollins.

7. Argumentation

NOVEMBER 9

Academic and professional writing requires you to make a strong argument for your idea. We will review three important “moves” in crafting a strong argument, discuss how to organize and structure academic documents and proposals—including how to logically present evidence or support. We’ll also consider the importance of a thesis and introduction, and review research tips.

- Assignments due: Final Science Story (Wed Nov 9 @ 2:30 pm on GS)
- Bring to class: Nothing! Just bring yourself.
- Readings due:
 - Creswell, J. W. (2003) Writing Strategies & Ethical Considerations. In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 2nd Ed.* (pp. 49-62). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
 - Creswell, J. W. (2003) The Introduction. In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 2nd Ed.* (pp. 73-85). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

8. Academic & Proposal Writing I

NOVEMBER 16

As an environmental professional, you’ll need to translate data into a digestible narrative—whether in a research report or NGO white paper. We’ll discuss how to select evidence to build a case and how to present data to support findings. We’ll cover literature reviews, citations, and methods.

- Assignments due: Proposal Topic + Sources (Wed Nov 16 @ 2:30 pm on GS)
- Bring to class: Hardcopy of your Proposal Outline + be prepared to pitch your project idea!
- Readings due:
 - Creswell, J. W. (2003) The Purpose Statement. In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 2nd Ed.* (pp. 87-103). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
 - Przeworski, A. & Salomon, F. (1995) The Art of Writing Proposals, *Social Science Research Council*, 8 pp.

9. Academic & Proposal Writing II

NOVEMBER 23

We will continue our discussion of academic and proposal writing, and hear your proposal ideas in a class pitch session. Be prepared to present and give feedback!

- Assignments due: Proposal Outline + Pitch (Wed Nov 23 @ 2:30pm on GS; pitch in-class only)
- Bring to class: Hardcopy of your Proposal Outline
- Readings due:
 - Creswell, J. W. (2003) Review of the Literature. In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, & Mixed Methods Approaches, 2nd Ed.* (pp. 27-47). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

10. Peer Review & Wrap-Up

NOVEMBER 30

In our last session we’ll re-cap major concepts, revisit and reflect on the writing process and personal writing strategies, and do a final activity; you’ll also complete the course evaluation.

- Assignments due: Draft Proposal (Wed Nov 30 @ 2:30pm on GS)
- Bring to class: Hardcopy of your Draft Proposal

- Readings due: None! Happy last day of class.

FINAL PROPOSAL DUE FRI DEC 9 @ midnight on GS

THE BREN COMMUNICATION CENTER

The Bren School Communication Center is a supportive environment dedicated to helping you improve your writing and presentation skills. Bren student writing tutors can work with you one-on-one to help you brainstorm, structure documents, and revise. Please feel free to use this great resource; for more information visit: http://www.bren.ucsb.edu/academics/comm_center.htm

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

To avoid issues of academic integrity, always give proper credit to your sources. Here is the University's stance on Academic Integrity:

All members of the academic community share responsibility for the academic integrity of students at UCSB. Academic dishonesty is an assault upon the basic integrity and meaning of a University. Cheating, plagiarism, and collusion in dishonest activities are serious acts which erode the University's educational and research roles and cheapen the learning experience as well as the value of one's degree. This is true for offenders as well as the entire community. It is expected that all UCSB students will support the ideal of academic integrity and that they will be responsible for the integrity of their work. Materials (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill academic requirements must represent a student's own efforts unless otherwise permitted by an instructor. It is also the responsibility of each student to know the campus rules regarding academic misconduct—ignorance is not an excuse.

- University of California, Santa Barbara, Office of Judicial Affairs (2015). Academic Integrity. Retrieved from: <https://judicialaffairs.sa.ucsb.edu/AcademicIntegrity.aspx>