ESM 437: Writing Skills for Environmental Professionals

FALL 2015, MONDAY 4:00-5:15 PM
BREN HALL 1510

INSTRUCTOR: Lisa Leombruni
Bren Hall 4520 | lisa@bren.ucsb.edu
Office Hours: Thurs 10am-12 pm and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will provide you the skills to write effectively across 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’ll likely encounter in your career, such as research and project proposals, evaluations and data summaries, policy analyses, 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 write effectively in a variety of professional writing styles and formats.
2. To understand and apply good writing mechanics.
3. To develop “research translation” 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.

CLASSROOM CULTURE

Peer review is integral to this class; you’ll read and respond to the work of many others. Come to class attentive and ready to engage to foster an open, collaborative, and supportive environment.

REQUIREMENTS

• TEXTBOOK. Two books are required: 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.

• 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.

• PARTICIPATION. Writing well demands practice, so this course requires active participation—at home and in the classroom. Be ready to write and think creatively and critically, and be committed to writing at home each week. Please bring a pen and paper to each class, along with any required print-outs.
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. Late assignments will be marked down. There is no final paper for this 2-unit course, though you will need to generate ideas for several of your assigned writing projects.

Assignments. You will read and write every week, and a 1) Writing Project, 2) Builder assignment, or 3) Homework will be due on the Sunday before each class. I will post all assignment instructions on GauchoSpace.

1) There are three Writing Projects, each worth 25 points:
   1. Project Proposal (PP) Oct 25
   2. Client Report (CR) Nov 15
   3. Pop Science Blog Post (Blog) Dec 6

2) You will also complete five “Builder” assignments to prepare you for the Writing Projects, each worth 5 points:
   1. PP Builder 1 Oct 11
   2. PP Builder 2 Oct 18
   3. CR Builder 1 Nov 1
   4. CR Builder 2 Nov 8
   5. Blog Builder Nov 29

3) There will also be a few ungraded homework assignments, though you must complete them and bring them to class for credit. Homework will be minimal most weeks, as the focus will be on other writing assignments. Only two homeworks require more writing, and they are assigned on weeks when no Writing Project or Builder assignment is due:
   1. Writing Analysis Oct 4
   2. Science Translation Nov 22

IMPORTANT NOTE: Attempting all writing assignments is a course requirement. A missed assignment (including a missed homework) will result in -25 points at the end of the quarter.

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”.

Assignment Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DUE</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Oct 4</td>
<td>Homework: Writing Analysis + Writing Sample</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Oct 11</td>
<td>PP Builder 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Oct 18</td>
<td>PP Builder 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Oct 25</td>
<td>Final Project Proposal</td>
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Readings will be assigned on a weekly basis to help you complete each writing assignment. Please check GauchoSpace for readings each week.

The Bren Communication Center

The Bren 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; you can set up an appointment with the writing tutors by emailing writing@bren.ucsb.edu, or stopping by BH 3310. 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.