Texas A&M University
Departmental Request for a New Course
Undergraduate • Graduate • Professional
Submit original form and attach a course syllabus.

1. This request is submitted by the Department of

   Professional Program in Biotechnology

2. Course prefix, number and complete title of course:

   BIOT 645 Biotechnology Writing

3. Catalog Course description (not to exceed 50 words):

   Development of biotechnology writing and editorial skills; communication of specialized information to the public and peers.

4. Prerequisite(s):

5. Is this a variable credit course? □ Yes ✓ No

   If yes, from ________ to ________

6. Is this a repeatable course? □ Yes ✓ No

   If yes, this course may be taken ________ times.

   Will this course be repeated within the same semester? □ Yes ✓ No

7. Has this course been taught as a 489/689? ✓ Yes □ No

   If yes, how many times? 2

   Indicate the number of students enrolled for each academic period it was taught: 18 (07C), 29 (08C)

8. This course will be:

   a. required for students enrolled in the following degree program(s) (e.g., B.A. in history)

      Master of Biotechnology (MBIOT)

   b. an elective for students enrolled in the following degree program(s) (e.g., M.S., Ph.D. in geography)

9. If other departments are teaching or are responsible for related subject matter, the course must be coordinated with these departments.
   Attach approval letters.

10. Prefix | Course # | Title (excluding punctuation)

    BIOT 645 | BIOTECHNOLOGY WRITING

    Lect. | Lab | SCH | CIP and Fund Code | Admin. Unit | Acad. Year | EICE Code

    0 3 0 0 0 3 2 6 1 2 0 1 0 0 0 2 2 3 5 0 1 0 - 1 1 0 0 3 6 3 2

   Approval recommended by:

   [Signature] 1-28-09

   Department Head - Type Name & Sign Date

   Department Head - Type Name & Sign
   (if cross-listed course) Date

   Submitted to Coordinating Board by:

   [Signature] Date

   Associate Director, Curricular Services

   Effective Date

Questions regarding this form should be directed to Sandra Williams at 845-8201 or sandra-williams@tamu.edu
Curricular Services - 12/08
BIOT 645
BIOTECHNOLOGY WRITING
Fall 2009
Wednesday - 12:30-3:00 PM

Course description: Development of biotechnology writing and editorial skills; communication of specialized information to the public and peers.

Prerequisites: Graduate classification and approval of instructor

Course objectives:
This course is designed mainly for Biotechnology majors to write more effectively about biotechnology and biotechnology related topics. The specific goals of the course are
- To strengthen basic writing skills.
- To help students learn to present information effectively to the public, peers, and industry.
- To increase student skill in presenting biotechnology information via reports, summaries and abstracts.
- To enhance students’ abilities to evaluate scientific and technical writing. These goals will be pursued through classroom activities, readings, conferences with the instructor, and (of course) writing assignments.

Classroom activities will include writing assignments, reading and discussions of written examples. Additionally, the students will meet with the instructor one on one to discuss their writing skills. Writing assignments are a central part of the course. You will be required to complete seven brief writing assignments and two longer pieces of writing (one for the public, one for peers). The writing assignments are listed and explained on the schedule below; all writing should be double-spaced. One assignment may be submitted up to one week late without penalty.

Instructor information:
Name: Dr. Colin R. Young
Telephone #: 862-4975
E-mail: cyoung@cvm.tamu.edu
Office Hours: Thursdays 10:00-12:00pm
Office Location: Room 234, Veterinary Medical Research Bldg.


Grading policies:
Grading of assignments will be as follows: A+: 98, A: 95, A-: 92, B+: 88, B: 85, B-: 82, etc. Rewrites will be permitted of the writing assignments due in September and October. If you submit an acceptable rewrite two weeks or less after the assignment is returned to the class, your grade for the assignment will be increased by two points. Please be sure to submit the graded original with the rewrite. Each brief writing assignment will count for 5% of your final grade.
(total 35%); the first major writing assignment will count for 25%, the second major writing assignment will count for 30%, and class participation will count for 10%. A final grade of 90 or above will result in an A for the course; 80-89, B; 70-79, C; 60-69, D; 59 or less, F.

Grading rubric:
Written exercises are graded as follows: grammar-10%, spelling-10%, conciseness-10%, strength of analysis 15%, originality 10%, clarity of presentation-15%, absence of repetition or deviation-10%, structure of presentation-10%, engagement of reader 10%.

Late work: I allow late work to be turned in by the next class meeting without penalty. After that, one letter grade will be deducted for each day a paper is late.

Make-up guidelines: There are no exams to make up; class participation cannot be made up.

Attendance: I expect students to attend all classes. Any student having more than two weeks of unexcused absences will receive a zero for class participation. Students will be allowed to make up work missed as per University Student Rules - http://student-rules.tamu.edu.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Unit I: Writing Readably

Week 1

Introduction: The Course and the Participants
Presentation/Discussion: Approaching a Writing Project
Discussion: Some Elements of Editing
Exercises: Editing for Readability

Week 2
Discussion: Basics of Readable Writing
Workshop: Some Examples of Instructions and Tips; Some Descriptions of How Things Work
Exercise: Preparing Instructions

Core Reading Due:
(1) Thompson, Edward T. How to write clearly. (Advertisement-International Paper Company.)
(3) Chapter 3, Chapter 30-33, and Appendix 2 in the textbook. If you are non-native speaker of English, it is recommended that you also read Chapter 34.

Writing Due: A brief analysis of why two pieces of writing in your field differ in readability. Instructions: Identify two pieces of writing in your field: one that you found easy to read, and one that you found hard to read. Submit (1) a discussion of features contributing to the difference in readability and (2) at least a one-page excerpt from each of the two readings. Your discussion need not exceed about 400 to 600 words. It should include examples to support points made.
Unit II: Communicating Specialized Information to the Public

Week 3
Discussion: Presenting Specialized Information to the Public-Some Basics
Discussion: Newspaper Coverage of Specialized Fields: Structuring a News Story
Workshop: Writing Assignment from last week
Core Reading Due:
(1) Chapter 26 in textbook.
(3) Chapter 40 in textbook.
Writing Due: EITHER (1) a description of how something in your field works OR (2) a set of instructions

Instructions:
Option (1): Describe how an item in your field works. The item may be either an object or a process. The description should be about one to two double-spaced pages long; its Fog Index should not exceed about 12. Diagrams or other illustrations may be included. Please indicate the audience for which your description is intended.
Option (2): Prepare a set of instructions for performing a process in your field. The instructions should be about one to two double-spaced pages long; the Fog Index should not exceed about 12. Diagrams or other illustrations may be included. Please indicate the readership for which your instructions are intended.
Other: When you read newspapers this week, notice articles containing information from your field. Note how the articles are structured. Also note how the material from your field is presented.

Week 4
Discussion: Presenting Specialized Information via Consumer and Trade Magazines and Newsletters
Discussion: Writing a Feature Story; Some Feature Stories on Specialized Topics
Exercise: Analyzing a Magazine
Core Reading Due:
• How Magazines Work and Where Writers Fit In.
• Selling What You Write.
• Writing Queries That Work.
• The Secrets of Winning Leads.
(2) Some feature stories on specialized topics.
Writing Due: EITHER (1) a news article on a development in your field OR (2) an analysis of a published such article
**Instructions:**

**Option (1):** Write a newspaper story about a newsworthy development in your field. The news peg for the story may be, for example, the publication of a journal article or the presentation of a paper at a conference. Your story should be about 250 to 500 words long and should be in approximately inverted-pyramid format. Please specify the newspaper for which your story is intended.

**Option (2):** Find a newspaper article about a development in your field. Prepare an analysis including discussion of (a) the newsworthiness of the topic, (b) the organization and writing style of the article, (c) the gearing of the material for the readership, and (d) the quality of the technical content. Your analysis should be about 250 to 500 words long. Please attach a copy of the story you are analyzing.

**Other:** If you read magazines this week, look for stories about your field. Consider how these stories resemble and differ from news stories in newspapers.

---

**Week 5**

**Presentation/Discussion:** Working with a Public Information Office (may include guest presentation)

**Workshop:** Plans for/Progress on major assignment #1

**Workshop:** Current and recent writing assignments

**Core Reading Due:** Some examples of news releases and related items.

**Writing Due:** an analysis of a consumer magazine or trade magazine in your field

**Instructions:** Identify a magazine in your field. The magazine may be either for interested members of the public or for scholars/professionals in the field. (However, it should not be a scholarly journal.) Characterize the magazine, especially with regard to aspects a potential author should keep in mind (e.g., subject matter, audience, slant, types of articles, style). Also present, in one paragraph, an idea for a story in the magazine. The entire assignment should run about 400 to 600 words. If feasible, hand in an issue of the magazine with your assignment.

---

**Week 6**

**Discussion:** Presenting Specialized Information- Electronically (may include a guest presentation)

**Pointers:** Being Interviewed by Reporters

**Wrap-Up Exercise:** Viewing and Analysis of a Science/ Technology Documentary

**Core Reading Due:**

1. Chapter 39 in textbook.

**Other:** If you watch television, listen to the radio, or look at the World Wide Web this week, be alert for material in your field. Notice how the material is presented. (Note: To avoid a time crunch, you should also be working on items due next week.)
UNIT III: COMMUNICATING SPECIALIZED INFORMATION TO PEERS

Week 7
Discussion: Scientific Presentations and Posters
Discussion: Some Norms of Scholarly and Professional Communication
Discussion: How Scholarly/Professional Journals Function

Core Reading Due:
(1) Chapters 27 & 28 in textbook
(3) Chapters 1, 2, 4-6, and 19-22 in textbook.

Writing Due: Majors Assignment #1- a feature article on a topic in your field
Instructions: Prepare a feature article on a topic in your field. The article should be designed for a specific magazine or newspaper and should be about 1000 to 1500 words long. If appropriate, include ideas for illustrations. Please specify the magazine or newspaper for which the article is intended.
NOTE: Please bring two copies of your article to class-one to hand in and one to give a classmate, who will prepare constructive critique of it as the next week’s assignment.

Week 8
Brief Discussion: Exercise-Scientific Posters
Discussion: Writing Papers for Journals

Core Reading Due:
(1) Chapters 7-18 in textbook.
(2) Examples of papers published in journals.

Exercise Due: Evaluating Some Scientific Posters
Writing Due: Constructive critique of feature article by classmate
Instructions: Prepare a constructive critique of the feature article by a classmate. You should submit
- a copy of the manuscript with editorial markings on it
- a separate list of comments and suggestions

Please provide both parts of this material in duplicate, so that the author and the instructor each can get copies.
Other: If you read journal articles this week or in the coming weeks, consider how they are structured.

Week 9
Workshop: Major Assignment #1
Discussion: Selected Other Topic in Scientific Communication

Core Reading Due:
(1) Articles by classmates.
(2) Chapters 36 & 38 in textbook
Week 10
Discussions: Journal Submissions Other Than Scientific
Discussions: Plans for major assignment #2
Workshop: Plans for major assignment #1 (continued)
Core Reading:
(1) Chapters 23 & 24 in textbook.
Workshop: Plans for major assignment #2
Writing Due: Interview report on writing done by a scholar or professional in your field
Instructions: Identify someone who has a job you might like to have eventually. Ask that person:
1) what kind of writing he or she does in his or her work
2) what advice he or she has about writing effectively
Summarize what the person says, and comment on it if you wish; about 500 words should suffice. If possible, attach at least one example of writing the person does in his or her work.

Week 11
Discussion: Writing Grant Proposals and Progress Reports
Progress Reports: Major assignment #2
Workshop: Recent and Current writing assignments
Core Reading Due:
(1) Chapter 37 in textbook.
Writing Due: book review
Instructions: Write a review of a textbook or other book of professional interest to you. Indicate the publication for which the review is intended. The review need not exceed about 500 words.

Week 12
Progress: Major Assignment #2
Lecture/Discussion: Writing Books and Book Chapters
Presentation/Discussion: Writing in a Professional Context (may include guest presentation)
Core Reading Due:
(1) Chapter 25 in textbook.
Week 13
Discussion: Writing Assignment Due Today
Wrap-Up Exercise
Special Segment: Writing and Publishing-The Lighter Side
Student Presentations (optional)
Writing Due: Major Assignment #2-EITHER a journal article, grant proposal, book chapter, or other appropriate piece of scholarly/professional writing OR an analysis of such a piece
Instructions:
Option (1): Prepare a piece of specialized writing suitable for submission to a journal, granting agency, book publisher, corporate or government entity, or other scholarly or professional outlet. The piece of writing should be about 8 to 12 double-spaced pages long; on it, be sure to specify the site for which it is intended. Before preparing your piece of writing, please check with the instructor to make sure that it would fulfill the assignment.
Option (2): Drawing on guidelines presented in this course, analyze and evaluate a journal article, grant proposal, or other piece of scholarly or professional writing. As well as assessing the piece as a whole, your analysis/evaluation should identify strengths (and weaknesses, if any) of each part of the piece of writing it should run about 8 to 12 double-spaced pages. Please ask the instructor in advance whether the item you choose would be suitable to analyze.
Note: If you wish, you may give a brief presentation based on your second major assignment. If your presentation is satisfactory, 2 points will be added to your grade on the written version. Instructions and a sign-up sheet will be available in class.

Week 14
Supper Seminar at Instructor’s Home

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Services, in Cain Hall, Room B 118, or call 845-1637. For additional information, visit http://disability.tamu.edu.

Academic Integrity
As the Aggie Honor Code states, “An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.” It is expected that you will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid on work in this course. All writing for this course must be your original work. For Texas A&M Honor Council Rules and Procedures, please see www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor.