

NRSM 200-03 Natural Resources Professional Writing

Tuesday, Thursday 12:30-1:50 Schreiber Gym Rm 303

Instructor: Peter Kolb, Associate Professor Forest Ecology & Management
MSU Extension Forestry Specialist

209 Forestry (243-4705) Peter.kolb@umontana.edu

Course expectations:

The study of the natural resources encompasses science, art, philosophy, psychology and controversy and is one of a few disciplines that crosses such wide boundaries. Ultimately the future of these resources rests in the hands of its dominant residents, that today is mainly comprised of humans. Since almost everyone has some experience and/or paradigms associated with various aspects of nature, writing and speaking about this topic as a professional requires exceptional clarity of thought and expression. This course is designed to improve your skills at formulating and expressing written works about natural resources topics. Your audiences include the general public, natural resources stake holders such as landowners and municipalities, professionals including loggers, foresters, mill owners and NGO's, and scientists. In this course you will gain experience writing informational articles for each of these audiences, and critiquing the work of others within this subject arena.

Grading:

Grading will be based upon the cumulative score you gain from 4 written works, each worth 25 points. A score of 90% or greater will be an A, 80-89% = B, 70-79% = C, 60-69% = D and < 60% = F. There will be no (-) (+) grades. Each assignment will have a 3 week period in which it will be written, and revised for a final grade. Thus you will have opportunities to revise and improve each work. A 600 word minimum and 800 word maximum will be required for each writing assignment. You will find it is much more difficult to write succinct brief articles, than long rambling ones. All writing assignments are due on the following schedule: 1st draft at class begin Tuesday one week after it is assigned, final draft on Tuesday class at the end of each 3-week section (2 weeks later).

Assignments will be turned in on white paper and double spaced in the Calibri font and 11-12 pitch. Papers may be turned into my office (209 Forestry) to my admin assistant Christina. Each spelling mistake will be a 1 point deduction (that means 25 mistakes, you get a score of 0). Spell checker is easy to use and there is no excuse for spelling errors. The final score will be only for the final version, though, failure to turn in a previous version will result in an automatic 5 point deduction for each paper. You only learn to write by writing and thus repetition and review is one of the main teaching methods of this class. Thus for each 3 week section, I expect to see and read 2 versions of the same article from each of you, each one hopefully getting better.

Notes:

Any questions should be asked or e-mailed to the instructor at any time. Due to my crazy schedule I will be out of town some weeks and we will make alternative arrangements for those weeks. All students will be offered the opportunity to gain 5 additional points extra credit if they choose by write a 1-minute radio broadcast based on instructor's specifications.

Schedule:

Weeks 1-4 (September 8-September 29)

Reading: Greene, Chapters 1-4; Aaron, Part 4, Sentence parts and patterns.

Assignment: Informative article on a topic of your choosing. (examples, how to plant a tree, how to hunt an elk, how read currents in a river, how to pack a backpack for a 1 week trip, etc.)

Weeks 5-8 (October 4-Oct. 20)

Reading: Greene, Chapters 5-6; Aaron, Part 1 The writing process.

Assignment: Persuasive article on a topic of your choosing. (examples, why hunting is important, why conservation is important, why preservation is important, why thinning trees is important, etc.)

Weeks 9-11 (October 25 – November 10)

Reading: Greene, Chapters 7-9; Aaron, Part 3 Clarity and style.

Assignment: Objective article on a controversial topic. (examples, hunting versus balancing predators and prey, forest harvesting versus wildfires, recreation areas with limited users, etc.)

Weeks 12-13 (Nov. 15- Dec. 1)

Reading: Greene, 10-11; Aaron, Part 7 Research writing.

Assignment: Combine persuasive article (weeks 5-8) with Objective article (weeks 9-11) to write a literature cited article about a discovery topic of your choosing. This may be a rewrite of a previous assignments but must include a review of previous peer reviewed research on the topic.

Weeks 14-15 (December 6-15)

Reading: Aaron, Part 8 Writing in the Disciplines.

Assignment: Write a news release (Opt-ed) about a natural resources topic that describes an issue, explains the positions and offers a solution. The topic of the Opt-ed must be approved by the instructor first. Again, a previous article may be used for this assignment. **This will be your final grade and conducted in lieu of a final exam. Your total semester grade will be determined by the cumulative scores you have received from your written works.**