

# Communicating Science

## WILD 595, 3 credits

### Spring 2015, Syllabus

#### Instructor Details

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**Office Hours:** By appointment

#### Course Time and Location

Wednesdays and Fridays 3:40-5pm in FOR 305

#### Course Description

In this course, students will get hands-on practice communicating their science in various ways, including elevator pitches, talking to the media, oral and poster presentations. We will practice communicating to diverse audiences including scientists in your field, various stakeholders, the media, and the lay public. We will not work on scientific manuscripts per se, however, many of the skills learned in the course should be beneficial for writing manuscripts, including figure design and clear, concise language use.

#### Course Objectives

The objectives of this course are to familiarize students with some of the nuances of communicating with scientists and nonscientists and provide a supportive environment where students can practice communicating in various ways.

#### Course Format

Each class will include a combination of lecture, discussion, and interactive activities. Many of the activities will require some preparation before class, and you will be given specific instructions/assignments one week in advance. These assignments can be completed in 5 minutes or you might spend hours—it is really up to you. Like most graduate courses, you will get out what you put in. Example activities: Students in this course will interact with students in JRNL 575 to create press articles, audio and/or video pieces about themselves and their work that have the potential to be disseminated widely.

## **Useful Books**

- Baron, N. 2010. *Escape from the Ivory Tower*. Island Press, Washington, USA.
- Greene, A.E. 2013. *Writing Science in Plain English*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Hayes, R. & D. Grossman. 2006. *A scientist's guide to talking with the media: practical advise from the Union of Concerned Scientists*. Rutgers University Press.
- Olson, R. 2009. *Don't be such a scientist: Talking substance in an age of style*. Island Press.
- Tufte, E.R. 2011. *The visual display of quantitative information*. Graphics Press LLC, Cheshire, USA.
- Ware, C. 2012. *Information visualization*. Morgan Kaufmann, Waltham, Massachusetts, USA.
- Wong, D.M. 2010. *The Wall Street Journal: guide to information graphics*. Norton, New York, USA.

\*Dr. Luis has a copy of each of these books in her office. You are welcome to stop by and borrow one during your lunch break, but not for extended periods since there is only 1 copy of each.

## **Grading**

You will receive a letter grade in this class. Course grade is based on attendance, participation, and homework. Each homework assignment will be designed to prepare you for the following class and the assignments will be graded as complete or incomplete.

## **Topics to be covered**

1. Communication today compared to Darwin's day
2. Science communication in plain English/ Sentence structure & Jargon
3. Distilling your Message
4. Narrative
5. Analogies
6. Elevator pitches
7. Message boxes (from Baron 2010)
8. Considering your audience
9. Two-way communication
10. Body language
11. Communicating to the media
12. Science journalism
13. New media tools
14. Strong figures for the expert & non-expert
15. Scientific PowerPoint presentations
16. Scientific posters