
WILD 494 - 01 – Senior Wildlife Seminar
Fall 2023
Thursdays: 3:00 – 3:50-ish PM in Forestry 106

Dr. Victoria Dreitz

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Office Hours/Appointments: Tuesday 3:00 – 5:00 pm or by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Effective communication skills, both in writing and verbally, are critical for professionals in wildlife biology. Knowing your audience is key to effective written and verbal communication. The goal of this course is to enhance students' communication skills through instruction and practice.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Learn skills to communicate effectively and strategically in various professional settings
- Gain experience in developing written communication
- Gain experience giving professional-oriented oral presentations
- Practice self-critique and constructive critique of peers to improve communication skills
- Learn about wildlife biology and conservation topics

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Communicate effectively and strategically. Students should be able to:

- identify necessary steps in preparing professional written and verbal communication;
- identify techniques for engaging audiences and delivering key messages;
- tailor written and verbal communication to diverse audiences; and
- understand linkages between communication and leadership.

Gain experience with peers. Students should be able to:

- prepare and deliver professional communication in front of others;
- appreciate concepts of channeling inner purpose and nerves into positive energy when preparing and delivering professional communication; and
- overcome basic anxieties associated with self-developed professional communication.

Positive Critique. Students will practice critiquing other's work. It's a valuable skill that offers both personal and professional growth, enhances communication, and contributes to the overall improvement of one's creative and professional development.

- prepare and deliver constructive input to peers
- increase critical thinking and attention to detail, enabling you to produce higher-quality communication
- enhance your ability to understand diverse viewpoints and collaborator efforts

effectively, appreciation for diversity of creative expression
Expand knowledge of wildlife biology and conservation. Students should have a broader knowledge of current wildlife science and management issues.

OVERVIEW OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Each student is required to provide multiple written and verbal communication that will benefit soon-to-be graduates. Written communication is in the form of cover letters and curriculum vitae (CV). We will work on tips and tricks when applying for positions with differing wildlife organizations through peer-to-peer *constructive* critiques and class discussion. Verbal communication is in the form of 1) an elevator speech (60-90 sec), 2) a 3-minute professional/technical presentation (1 slide using PowerPoint or Google Slides), and 3) a non-technical/"layperson" presentation (no visual aids – e.g., slides) focused on a wildlife biology or conservation topics. Each student will also be required to submit a short (~1 page) *constructive* critique of a) fellow peer presentations and, 2) their OWN presentations viewed on video.

A separate, detailed assignment sheet will be provided that sets forth expectations and provides guidance. ***Your presentation TOPIC and preferred presentation dates (Oct 26th or Nov 2nd for 3-minute technical talk; Nov 9th, Nov 16th, Nov 30th or Dec 7th for non-technical presentation) must be submitted to the instructor by email no later than September 28th. See the detailed assignment sheet for guidance.***

Grading is CR/NCR (credit/noncredit). Attendance is mandatory unless there is an exceptional circumstance and the absence is approved in **ADVANCE** by the instructor. Two or more *unexcused* absences will automatically result in NCR grade.

TENTATIVE* SCHEDULE (Bold font represents due items)

August 31	Review syllabus and course requirements; Introduction to Effective Communication
September 7	Knowing your audience and knowing your purpose: communicating strategically and finding common ground. Materials on Moodle should be view prior to this class meeting.
September 14	Peer-to-peer critique of cover letters. Cover letters MUST BE submitted to the instructor prior to class, no later than 11 AM.
September 21	Discussion of effective communication strategies and techniques in context of wildlife conservation. Instruction for elevator speeches. The instructor provides models of elevator speeches.
September 28	<i>No in-person class – prepare and practice elevator speeches. 3-minute talk and non-technical presentation topics and preferred presentation dates due to Professor via Moodle by 5 PM today.</i>

- October 5th **Students Deliver Elevator Speeches – Employment** Students will pick one of the positions provided for the cover letter and provide a 60-90 sec elevator speech to ‘sell’ themselves.
- October 12th **Students Deliver Elevator Speeches – Technical** Students will provide 60-90 sec elevator speech on their technical topic. Instructor discusses the remaining two presentations – 3-minute talk, and non-technical (or “Lay”) presentations.
- October 19th *No in-person class – prepare and practice 3-minute talk and non-technical presentation*
- Oct 26th & Nov 2nd **Student 3-minute technical talk** (1 slide ONLY). Your audience is professional peers. Think of this talk being done at a professional conference (e.g., The Wildlife Society or American Fisheries Society Annual conference).
- Nov 9th – Dec 7th **Student non-technical presentation w/o visual aids. Dates of presentations are: Nov 9th, Nov 16th, Nov 30th or Dec 7th (NO class Nov 23rd (Thanksgiving)).**
- December 7th Conclude seminars, final lecture, and course evaluations.
***Schedule provided is tentative and may change. The instructor will provide ample notice to students of schedule changes.**

Course Website & Emailing ME!!

- MOODLE UOnline (<https://umonline.umt.edu/>).
- **PLEASE SEND EMAILS TO ME THROUGH MOODLE!!!** I have set up my inbox to ‘flag’ emails sent through Moodle, and I respond to these ‘flagged’ emails first. If you email me directly, it could take a few days, maybe up to a week, because I respond to emails in order as received (and I do restrict my time responding to emails!).

Office for Disability Equity (ODE):

- The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Office for Disability Equity (ODE); <https://www.umt.edu/disability/>. If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with ODE, please get in touch with ODE in Aber Hall (1st floor) or 406.243.2243. I will work with you and ODE to provide an appropriate modification.

Student Conduct Code

- All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <https://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/community-standards/default.php>

COVID-19/Illness Related Considerations:

- Masks are optional in the classroom.
- Attendance is mandatory. If you are sick and feel its best to be isolated, **you may reach out to me via email to request a Zoom link to attend class remotely. I will make accommodations for students who reach out to me, and I acknowledge I received the request, by 11 AM the day a class meets.**
- The course may be recorded via Zoom, in which case I will let you know in advance.

Dropping/Adding:

Drop/Add dates are posted at [Office of Registrar: Calendar](#).

Important Dates Regarding Opportunities to Drop a Course during Fall 2022 Semester:

Date	Description	Date Range
To 15 th instructional day	Students can drop classes on Cyberbear with refund	Aug 28 to Sept 18 (by 5 PM)
16 th to 45 th instructional day	Drop requires instructor and advisor approvals (via Cyberbear), and there is a \$10 fee; student will receive a 'W' on transcript and no refund.	Sept 19 (after 5 PM) to Oct 30 (by 5 PM)
46 th to last instructional day	Students are only allowed to drop a class under very limited and unusual circumstances. Concern over course grade is not an acceptable reason. Requests to drop must be approved by the instructor, advisor, and Dean and a \$10 fee applies. A WP or WF will appear on the student's transcript.	Oct 31 to December 8 (by 5 PM)