Professional Skills

BIOL/BIMS 2200.003
Center for Science 108 (CS 108)
W 7:00 – 8:40 PM

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Office hours: TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Presentation and discussion of selected topics related to the professional skills of practicing scientists will be developed. Topics will include scientific writing, literature searches, literature reviews, paper presentation, professional practices and job requirements. The course also covers types and anatomy of scientific literature, and unique aspects of scientific communications. Students will also make scientific presentations among their peers and critically evaluate each other.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


Additional Resources: The Instructor may make additional learning resources (links to website, books, reserve articles, software) available at the library and/or on Blackboard.

REQUIRED E-MAIL: All students must have a Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi e-mail account. Make sure that you can access and use it because, for students in my classes, it is the only e-mail address to which I will reply. Please go to http://www.tamucc.edu/ise.html to obtain a new islander account.

Assignments

Except for the oral presentation and the final exam, all the assignments will be in the written form and may be conducted outside the class (see tentative class schedule). Detailed instructions for each assignment will be provided during the semester. Written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date announced (see tentative class schedule). Late assignment penalty for tardy work = 10% assignment grade deduction per class day late. However, after the 3rd day, late assignments will not be accepted and the student will receive 0 points for that assignment. You may always turn in assignments early. If you know that you will have an excused absence when an assignment is due, you must turn in
that assignment before its due date. Oral presentation dates will be assigned randomly. Once the presentation schedule is selected, we will strictly adhere to it. There will be no options to change.

**TENTATIVE LECTURE SCHEDULE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Reading(s)</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/24</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/31</td>
<td>Overview of Scientific Methods and Scientific Writing; Critiquing; How to choose a Topic</td>
<td>Knisely: Chapters 1 &amp; 3 Gillen: Sections 3-8</td>
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<td>9/7</td>
<td>Scientific Writing: Citations, Plagiarism, References</td>
<td>Knisely: Chapter 3 Gillen: Sections 3-8</td>
<td>Presentation Topic due 9/7; Paper critique in class</td>
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<td>9/14</td>
<td>Finding Scientific Literature / Visit to Bell Library</td>
<td>Knisely: Chapter 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/28</td>
<td>Preparing Oral and Poster Presentations; Presentation outline</td>
<td>Knisely: Chapters 5 &amp; 7-8, Appendix 3</td>
<td>Title – Abstract due 9/28; Poster critique in class</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/5</td>
<td>Scientific Writing - Publishing a Scientific Manuscript</td>
<td>Knisely: Chapters 4 &amp; 6</td>
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<td>10/12</td>
<td>Finding a Job in Science / Visit to Career Center; Preparing For a Job Interview</td>
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<td>Paper summary and Presentation Outline due 10/12</td>
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<td>10/19</td>
<td>Resume and cover letter preparation; Oral presentation overview</td>
<td>Rosenberg: Chapters 1-10, 12</td>
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<td>10/26</td>
<td>Student Oral Presentations</td>
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<td>Resume and Cover letter due 10/26</td>
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<td>11/2</td>
<td>Student Oral Presentations</td>
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<td>11/9</td>
<td>Student Oral Presentations</td>
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<td>11/16</td>
<td>Student Oral Presentations</td>
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<td>11/23</td>
<td>Student Oral Presentations</td>
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<td>11/30</td>
<td>Student Oral Presentations</td>
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<td>12/6</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
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<td>12/11</td>
<td><strong>FINAL EXAMINATION:</strong> 7:15 p.m. - 9:45 p.m.</td>
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FINAL GRADING: The final grading scale will also be determined at the end of the semester, but the cut-off for each grade will be no higher than the following:

A ≥ 90% > B ≥ 80% > C ≥ 70% > D ≥ 60% > F

Components of Course Grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic/Paper Selection</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title – Abstract</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper Summary and Outline</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td>Resume and Cover Letter</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>1000</strong></td>
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The points for the oral presentation are based on a combination of instructor and class evaluations. Two-thirds of the points derive from the instructor’s evaluation; and one-third of the points derive from the average of the class evaluations (after dropping the highest and lowest class evaluations).

BONUS POINTS: No individual extra credit assignments will be available in this class. I may provide opportunities for the entire class to earn additional bonus points (e.g., attendance, video assignments, written reports, library or web exercises, un-announced quizzes, etc.). Such opportunities may be offered or announced only once, so be in class, be on time and stay for the entire period. Extra points are also built into all examinations (as extra questions). Bonus points (from quizzes, exercises, etc.) cannot be made up—period.

Opportunities Listserv:

All students are encouraged to subscribe to the opportunities listserv. To subscribe, send an e-mail to the following address: opportunities-list-request@sci.tamucc.edu. Make sure that your e-mail appears in the “From” heading. In the subject heading, type “subscribe,” then send the e-mail. Next, you will receive a second message with a long set of letters and numbers in the subject line. You must also reply to that message in order to be subscribed to the list-serve. After the initial message to subscribe, to send items on the list-serve, just type opportunities-list@sci.tamucc.edu (do NOT add –request after list). You may not receive the messages from the list-serve if your Internet service provider (Yahoo, Hotmail, Excite,
Roadrunner, Grande, etc.) keeps these messages from being placed in junk-mail. At the end of the course, send an e-mail that contains your e-mail address in the “From” heading to opportunities-list-request@sci.tamucc.edu. In the subject heading, type the word “unsubscribe,” then send the e-mail.

**Career Services Listserv:**

Students are also encouraged to register on the website: http://career-services.tamucc.edu to benefit from all the campus services offered by the TAMUCC Career Center.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:** The course will allow students to explore career options in the biological sciences and appropriate professional skills. Training will be provided in the professional skills of scientists to assist students in realizing their career goals. An emphasis will be placed on reading, understanding, critiquing, presenting and writing scientific literature. Upon completion of this course, the student will have:

1) Prepared a professional resume and cover letter
2) Explored career opportunities through the Career Center
3) Used library and electronic databases to search scientific literature
4) Acquired skills critical to perform a successful job interview
5) Learned to properly prepare a research paper including an abstract and bibliography
6) Given an oral presentation about a research study using PowerPoint

In addition, successful completion of this class will satisfy the university computer literacy requirement.

**DISABILITY AND VETERANS’ SERVICES:** Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is committed to providing persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to access campus facilities, resources and programs. 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. Support and accommodations are also available for returning veterans who experience cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Driftwood 101. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.
REMEMBER TO ARRIVE ON TIME FOR ALL CLASSES.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED for this course. Students are required to attend all the classes during the semester, including the visits to the Bell Library and to the Career Center. Three absences are permitted before LETTER-GRADE deductions begin. Four or more absences (either excused or unexcused) is considered excessive and there will be a penalty of 1 LETTER GRADE for EACH additional absence. I will check attendance in each class period. Students are responsible for the material covered and assignments made in every lecture regardless of whether you attend it. Points missed because of an unexcused absence (including tardiness and leaving early) cannot be recovered. An excused absence allows us to make alternative arrangements for completing assignments, so please let me know if an absence is excused. The documentation required for an absence to be excused must be:

- From an appropriate source (e.g., doctor, dentist, funeral director) who states the nature of the event that caused (or will cause) your absence.
- In writing, on official stationery, and signed (I do not return excuses to you). Telephone calls, FAXes, and e-mails are not acceptable.
- Presented prior to the absence for a scheduled event (e.g., university-sponsored activity, recognized religious holiday, military service).
- Presented no more than one week after the date of an unexpected absence.
- In case a student cannot attend class because he/she officially representing TAMU-CC (e.g., meetings or sports events), the documentation required for an absence to be excused must be from the Office of Dr. Eliot Chenaux, Vice President for Student Affairs. Refer to your student handbook on obtaining an excused absence from his office.

UNACCEPTABLE EXCUSES: Only unavoidable absences are excused, so you should schedule routine personal events (e.g., vacations, weddings, reunions, non-emergency medical or dental visits, parent-teacher conferences, household or auto repairs) to avoid conflicts with your classes. Oversleeping is never an acceptable excuse. Employment conflicts are not acceptable excuses for absences, tardiness, or leaving class early. (Once enrolled in a class, it is the student’s responsibility to arrange his or her work schedule so that no regularly scheduled class, laboratory, or examination time is missed). Texas waives jury duty for students, so jury duty is not an acceptable excuse. With a legitimate excuse, you may attend a different laboratory section (including a practical examination) during the same workweek, if—and only
if—(1) there is room for you, and (2) you obtain permission from the instructor. If you arrange to take any
test at an alternate time and do not show for that appointment, then you forfeit the opportunity to take the
test except at its originally scheduled time. Special circumstances that may warrant giving an individual a
make-up test will be referred to Dr. Eliot Chenaux, Vice President for Student Affairs. A make-up test
given after the original test will be all written (i.e., no multiple choice or matching), and it will be
administered on the last “Flex Day”.

EXPECTATIONS: You are adult University students. I will treat you as such, and I will expect you to act
as such. You will act with courtesy and common sense. I will not tolerate disruptive, disrespectful, or
abusive behavior/language directed toward anyone in this class (i.e., student or instructor). Violations
range from talking during class to outright insubordination, and will result in penalties that range from the
student being asked to stop to the student being “escorted” from the class—permanently. Cellular phones
(including text messaging), pagers, and other “beepers” must be turned off in the classroom and
laboratory. (I will make exceptions for certain “emergency” personnel, but you must see me to obtain this.)
Children are not allowed in the rooms during lecture or laboratory periods, or when the child’s guardian is
working or studying “after hours.”

LEARNING: Learning is more than just reading, taking notes and memorizing. Reading and taking notes
puts information in short-term memory where it is forgotten quickly unless you do something with it.
Memorizing, though important, is but the first step in the learning process. As university students, you
should be able to link, combine and synthesize the bits of data that you memorize into useful concepts.

SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. It will be prosecuted to the full extent of
University regulations (see the Student Handbook and the Catalog 2009-10: Texas A&M University-
Corpus Christi). The following procedures will be enforced:

- You must be prepared to present a photo ID at all examinations.
- Different test forms may be prepared for a single examination. To ensure that the appropriate key
  will be used to grade your answer sheet, always follow instructions on the test or answer sheet, or
given orally by the instructor.
- If you leave an examination room—for any reason—you must hand in your answer sheet and you
  will not be allowed to resume the examination. Attend to personal matters (e.g., rest room visits)
  before the examination.
- Be on time! Anyone arriving after someone has completed an examination and left the
  room will not be allowed to take that examination.
- Cheating and plagiarism are unacceptable behaviors.
GRADE APPEALS: As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

Academic Advising: The College of Science and Technology requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Faculty Center 178, and can be reached at 825-6094.

SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION (SI), TUTORING AND OTHER SERVICES: To be successful in this course, and most others, you must cultivate good note-taking skills, organization skills, study habits, and test-taking strategies from the very beginning. Your lecture and laboratory instructors are always available for help, but don’t wait until it is too late! Students who have done well in this class in the past may have been hired to lead Supplemental Instruction (SI) sessions outside of class meeting times. You will receive a schedule of SI sessions separately from this syllabus. Please take advantage of your SI leader’s expertise. Attend SI sessions on a regular basis; don’t wait until the session before an examination to start attending SI sessions. A great way to prepare for the comprehensive final is to attend the SI session just after an examination. At these sessions, your SI leader can review any questions you had difficulty answering correctly. Asking questions about the questions you did not answer correctly will help you answer other questions about that concept correctly if they appear on the comprehensive final.

The Center for Academic Student Achievement (CASA) (825-5933) provides free tutoring, test-taking strategies, and extra help. Take advantage of this service! The center has copies of the text and CD-ROM and is an invaluable source for help. In addition, tutors may be set up for this class specifically and a schedule with times and location will be placed on the website at the beginning of the semester. Should you have test anxiety, stress problems or need help with study skills, the University Counseling Center
DROPPING THE COURSE (OR NOT): I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. If you drop the class before the “drop date” (see the online Spring 2011 schedule for more information), you will be assigned a grade of “W.” There are consequences for dropping a class, so read the drop policy in the University Catalog (better still, see your academic advisor and someone in the financial aid office) before you drop any class. In the middle of the semester, you are likely to receive midterm grade reports (either on S.A.I.L. or through some other means). If you have a lower mid-term grade than you wish, it should concern you, but not frighten you. (Remember that there are more opportunities to earn points and boost your grades in the last half of most courses than in the first half.) Talk to your instructors (not to other students) to explore your options. Also note that the mid-term grades posted on S.A.I.L. are not official, not a guarantee and are never updated; once they are posted they cannot be changed even if your grade in the class does change.

GENERAL DISCLAIMER: We reserve the right to modify the information, schedules, assignments, deadlines, and policies in this syllabus if and when necessary. Whenever possible, we will announce such changes in a timely manner during regularly scheduled lecture or laboratory periods. We will not attempt to contact students who were absent when an announcement was made. Nevertheless, all students are responsible for abiding by all announced changes, and it is a student’s responsibility to obtain this information. In rare cases, some modifications may be implemented without prior warning.