Professional Skills ESCI 3202.001
Department of Physical & Environmental Sciences
Spring 2016

COURSE INFORMATION

Course number/section: ESCI 3202, Section 001.
Class meeting time: Monday & Wednesday at 15:30 – 16:20.
Class location: CI-138.
Course Website: N/A.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dominic G. Swift
Telephone: (361) 425 6889
E-mail: dominic.swift@tamucc.edu
Office hours: Campus Starbucks, Wednesday at 10:30.

Students can make appointments with 24 hours’ notice.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Catalogue Course Description
Presentation and discussion of selected topics relating to the professional skills of environmental scientists. This includes literature searches, reviews, paper presentation, professional and career opportunities, and professional ethics.

Extended Course Description
This course will assist students exploring career options by teaching professional skills relevant to environmental science. An emphasis is placed on reading, understanding, critiquing, presenting and writing scientific literature. Topics include preparation of a professional résumé and cover letter, exploring career opportunities, interviewing, use of library and electronic databases for scientific literature searches, class presentations, critiquing scientific journal articles, writing of scientific papers, and professional ethics.

PREREQUISITES AND COREQUISITES

None.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK(S), READINGS AND SUPPLIES

None required. Students are expected to make notes from class PowerPoints. Handouts will not be provided. Students are expected to read assigned online readings. Advised additional reading will
This class will require extensive writing and research. Students will need regular access to the internet, and to a computer or tablet which allows composition of written documents. A cell phone will not suffice. If you have one, please bring either of laptop or tablet to class.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT

Assessment is a process used by instructors to help improve learning. Assessment is essential for effective learning because it provides feedback to both students and instructors. A critical step in this process is making clear the course’s student learning outcomes that describe what students are expected to learn to be successful in the course. The student learning outcomes for this course are listed below. By collecting data and sharing it with students on how well they are accomplishing these learning outcomes students can more efficiently and effectively focus their learning efforts. This information can also help instructors identify challenging areas for students and adjust their teaching approach to facilitate learning.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Prepare a professional résumé and cover letter.
- Explore career opportunities through the Career Center, including participation in a career assessment and mock interview.
- Use library and electronic databases to search scientific literature.
- Perform literature analysis, develop visual aids, and organize audio-visual presentations.
- Critique scientific journal articles.
- Create a presentation.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND ACTIVITIES

Instructional methods include interactive lectures, guest speakers, assignments in literature-searching, writing, interviewing, oral presentations, and other skills, and substantial use of peer editing and other peer assistance and feedback. This course requires active participation, and students are expected to attend all classes.

MAJOR COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

The student learning outcomes described in Section F will be measured through the assignments listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>% FINAL GRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Résumé and cover letter</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography and literature search</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title and abstract</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas A&amp;M University-Corpus Christi</td>
<td>College of Science &amp; Engineering</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic Paper Summary</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper critique 1</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper critique 2</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of two related papers</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mock interview (Career Services)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choices Career Assessment (Career Services)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1000</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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A 10-point grading scale will be used:

- A = 90-100%
- B = 80-89.9%
- C = 70-79.9%
- D = 60-69.9%
- F = ≤ 59.9%

All assignments should be typed and emailed before the start of class on the day due. All assignments should be written in Times New Roman 12 point font, single spaced with one inch margins.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

This is subject to change. Students will be advised of changes in advance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January 20</td>
<td>Introduction. Writing a résumé and cover letter.</td>
<td>Résumé and cover letter assigned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>January 25</td>
<td>Science overview; research topics and paper critiques discussed. Bibliographies discussed.</td>
<td>Bring ideas for research topics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>January 27</td>
<td>Visit to Bell Library. Science Direct, preparing a bibliography.</td>
<td>Must decide on four research topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>February 1</td>
<td>Discuss scientific writing; APA, critiques and creating a bibliography.</td>
<td>Bibliography assigned.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 February</td>
<td><strong>Visit to the Writing Center.</strong> Topics will include (1) Overview of Center, including Supplemental Instruction and Peer Mentoring, (2) scientific writing and bibliographies.</td>
<td><strong>Topic paper summary assigned.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 February</td>
<td>Discussion on topic paper summary.</td>
<td><strong>Topic paper summary assigned.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 February</td>
<td><strong>Visit to Career Services</strong> (University Center Room 304). Topics will include an overview of services, including professional attire, interviewing, cover letters, and letters.</td>
<td><strong>Bibliography due.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>5 February</td>
<td><strong>Writing Center:</strong> Résumé and cover letter preparation.</td>
<td><strong>Bibliography due.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>5 February</td>
<td>Discussion of critique 1.</td>
<td><strong>Critique 1 assigned.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>6 February</td>
<td>Professional interviewing skills: preparing for mock interviews.</td>
<td><strong>Top paper summary due.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>6 February</td>
<td>Time management.</td>
<td><strong>Top paper summary due.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7 February</td>
<td>Topic paper summaries returned and discussed.</td>
<td><strong>Critique 2 assigned.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7 February</td>
<td>Discussion of critique 2.</td>
<td><strong>Critique 2 assigned.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7 March</td>
<td>Discussion of title and abstract.</td>
<td><strong>Title and abstract assigned.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8 March</td>
<td>Plagiarism and professional misconduct (Paper: On Being a Scientist).</td>
<td><strong>Critique 1 due.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8 March</td>
<td><strong>The Writing Center:</strong> Plagiarism</td>
<td><strong>Draft résumés and cover letters due.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>March 14, 16</strong></td>
<td><strong>SPRING BREAK!</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9 March</td>
<td>Discussion of oral and poster presentations.</td>
<td><strong>Critique 2 due.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9 March</td>
<td>Discussion of summaries of three papers.</td>
<td>Oral presentations are assigned. Three paper summaries are assigned.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 March</td>
<td>Guest speaker (TBA)</td>
<td>Please bring road maps to class along with Choices Assessments results (interest / ability profiles).</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 March</td>
<td>Discuss scientific writing/publishing a scientific manuscript.</td>
<td>Please bring road maps to class along with Choices Assessments results (interest / ability profiles).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 30</td>
<td><strong>Writing Center:</strong> Effective poster presentations; figures, tables and graphs.</td>
<td><strong>Title and abstract due.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 4</td>
<td>Film: End of the Line (or in class presentation practice)</td>
<td><strong>Final résumés and cover letters due.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 6</td>
<td>Film: End of the Line (or in class presentation practice)</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 11</td>
<td>Oral presentations</td>
<td><strong>Summary of two related papers due.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 13</td>
<td>Oral presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 18</td>
<td>Oral presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 20</td>
<td>Oral presentations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 25</td>
<td>Oral presentations</td>
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<td>April 27</td>
<td>Final Review</td>
<td>CI-138</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 9</td>
<td>Final Exam 1:45-4:15 pm</td>
<td>CI-138</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Changes in this course schedule may be necessary and will be announced to the class by the instructor. The assignments and exams shown are directly related to the Student Learning Outcomes described in Section F.

**Important dates:**
- January 20: First day of classes
- January 27: Last day to late register or add a class.
- March 14-16: Spring Break
- April 6: Last day to drop a class
- April 25: Last day to withdraw from the University
- April 27: Last day of classes
- April 27: Last day to apply for August 2014 graduation
- May 2: Final examinations

**COURSE POLICIES**

Attendance is required. Only **TWO** unexcused absences are permitted before letter-grade deductions. Thereafter, there will be a penalty of 1 letter grade per each additional absence.
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I will check attendance in each class period and a portion of your grade is based on attendance. Students are responsible for the material covered and assignments made in every lecture regardless of whether you attend it. Your grade for attendance 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.

The documentation required for an absence to be excused must be:
- From an appropriate source who states the nature of the event that caused (or will cause) your absence.
- In writing, on official stationery, and signed.
- 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.

Unacceptable Attendance/Tardiness Excuses:
Only unavoidable absences are excused, so you should schedule routine personal events to avoid conflicts with your classes. Employment conflicts are not acceptable excuses for absences, tardiness, or leaving class early. Texas waives jury duty for students, so jury duty is not an acceptable excuse.

Late Work and Make-up Exams
Most assignments will be turned in via Blackboard or mail. Written assignments are due by the beginning of class on the date announced. The late assignment penalty for tardy work is 10% assignment grade deduction per class day late; however after the third day, late assignments will not be accepted and the student will receive no grade 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.

Cell Phone Use
Electronic communication devices should be in silent mode during class. If you need to use them, please do so in a manner that does not interfere with or distract other students from the learning experience. If an emergency call has to be answered, please walk unobtrusively out of the class, finish the conversation, and return to your seat equally unobtrusively.

Laptop Use
The use of laptop computers or tablets is permissible in class and highly encouraged. We live in a mobile society and the use of such devices can, when properly used, be a tool for professional growth. While not required, I would encourage students to bring whatever data device they normally use to class every week. You will receive assignments electronically and will also have journal articles that you will be responsible for reading and understanding. I wish to minimize the amount of paper that needs to be distributed to and from students as a part of this class.

Food in Class
No food during class time
Missed Exam
You are expected to take the exam when scheduled. Make-up exams will only be permitted under
department-approved circumstances.

Participation
Students are expected to participate and do a great deal of peer-reviewing and peer-editing in class.
Please be willing to help your fellow class members.

My Decree
If you are having a problem finishing an assignment or other concerns, please talk to me. My goal
is to help you succeed in the course and if you put in the effort, you will.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Integrity (University)
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of
academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all
forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification,
forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s
own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on
an assignment or test will result in a failing grade.

Behaviour
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual
respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of
the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behaviour that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s
ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional
program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in
article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behaviour may be
instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including
classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Statement of Civility
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the
population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is
free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state
and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful
and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual
orientation or disability. Behaviours that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be
tolerated.

Deadline for Dropping a Course with a Grade of W (University)
The grade of W will be assigned to any student officially dropping a course. Please consult with
the instructor before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Just stopping
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi  

College of Science & Engineering

attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, visit the Office of the University Registrar for the Course Drop Form that must submitted. No student is eligible to receive a W without completing the official drop process by this deadline. Please consult the Academic Calendar (http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/calendar/) for the last day to drop a course.

Grade Appeals (College of Science and Engineering)

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, 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 Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules website at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html, and the College of Science and Engineering Grade Appeals webpage at http://sci.tamucc.edu/students/GradeAppeal.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the chair or director of the appropriate department or school, the Office of the College of Science and Engineering Dean, or the Office of the Provost.

Disability Services

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 call (361) 825-5816 or visit Disability Services in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

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.

http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/

Statement of Academic Continuity

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.
OTHER INFORMATION

Academic Advising
The College of Science & Engineering 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. Meetings are by appointment only; advisors do not take walk-ins. Please call or stop by the Advising Center to check availability and schedule an appointment. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Center for Instruction 350 or can be reached at (361) 825-3928.

GENERAL DISCLAIMER

I reserve the right to modify the information, schedule, assignments, deadlines, and course policies in this syllabus if and when necessary. I will announce such changes in a timely manner during regularly scheduled lecture periods.