PROFESSIONAL SKILLS ESCI 3202  
Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences  
Fall 2016

A. COURSE INFORMATION  
Course number/section: ESCI 3202.003  
Class meeting time: Tuesday 5:30 – 7:10 p.m  
Class location: TBD  
Course Website: http://Bb9.tamucc.edu. Class will use Blackboard extensively

B. INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION  
Instructor: John S. Wood, PhD.  
Office location: CI 214  
Office hours: TR 5:00-5:30 pm or by appointment  
Telephone: 361-548-2528  
e-mail: john.wood@tamucc.edu  
Appointments: Please make appointments through email, texting, or calling before meeting with me, as I may be off campus or with another student.

C. COURSE DESCRIPTION  
Catalog Course Description  
Presentation and discussion of selected topics relating to the professional skills of practicing environmental scientists including literature searches, reviews, paper presentation, professional and career opportunities, and professional ethics.

Extended Course Description  
This course will allow students to explore career options in the environmental sciences and gain professional skills appropriate to scientists, to assist in realizing their career goals. An emphasis will be placed on reading, understanding, critiquing, presenting and writing scientific literature. Topics include preparation of a professional resume and cover letter; career opportunities, interviewing, use of library and electronic databases for scientific literature searches; audiovisual presentations, critiquing scientific journal articles, writing of scientific papers, and professional ethics.

D. PREREQUISITES AND COREQUISITES  
None.

E. REQUIRED TEXTBOOK(S), READINGS AND SUPPLIES  
None required. Materials will be made available online or students will be provided links to resources. Students are expected to read assigned online readings.
Optional Textbook(s) or Other References
We will discuss style guides during the first meeting.

Supplies
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 cellphone will not suffice. Please feel free to bring electronic devices to class.

F. 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:

1) Prepare a professional resume and cover letter.
2) Explore career opportunities through the Career Center, including participate in a career assessment and mock interview.
3) Use library and electronic databases to search scientific literature.
4) Perform literature analysis, develop visual aids, and organize audiovisual presentations.
5) Critique scientific journal articles.
6) Create and give an oral presentation.

G. 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.

H. MAJOR COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING
The student learning outcomes described in Section F will be measured through the assignments listed below.

The following grading scale will be used:

A = 90-100%
B = 80-89.9%
C = 70-79.9%
D = 60-69.9%
F = ≤ 59.9%
I. COURSE CONTENT/SCHEDULE

The class schedule is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>August 25</td>
<td>• Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>August 30</td>
<td>• Science overview; research topics and paper critiques discussed.</td>
<td>Bring ideas for research topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Bibliographies discussed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Visit to Bell Library.</strong> (ScienceDirect, preparing a bibliography.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sept. 6</td>
<td>• Discuss scientific writing-APA, critique 1, creating a bibliography</td>
<td>Research topics due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Visit to the Writing Center.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Topics will include (1) Overview of Center, including Supplemental</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instruction and Peer Mentoring, (2) scientific writing and bibliographies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topics</td>
<td>Assignments Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4    | Sept. 13  | • Discussion and work on Topic Paper Summary.  
         • **Visit to Career Services**  
           (University Center Room 304)  
           Topics will include an overview of services, including professional attire, interviewing, cover letters, and letters of intent. |                 |
| 5    | Sept. 20  | • **Writing Center:** Resume and cover letter preparation.  
         • Critique 1 assigned and discussed.                                                                                                                                                           | Topic Paper Summary due. |
| 6    | Sept. 27  | • Professional interviewing skills: preparing for mock interviews  
         • Time management.                                                                                                                                                                            |                 |
| 7    | October 4 | • Topic Paper Summaries returned and discussed  
         • Discussion of Critique 1; Critique 2 assigned and discussed.  
         • Title – Abstract discussed and assigned.                                                                                                                                            | Critique 2 assigned  
         Title – Abstract Assigned |
| 8    | October 11| • Plagiarism and professional misconduct  
         • (Paper: On Being a Scientist).  
         • **The Writing Center:** Plagiarism  
         • Critique 1 due (via Blackboard).  
         Please read “On Being a Scientist” listed under “Content” on Blackboard before class.                                                                                                                                                  |                 |
| 9    | October 18| • Oral and poster Presentations; three paper summary assigned.  
         • Guest presenter (TBA)                                                                                                                                                                | Draft resumes and cover letters due.  
         Critique 2 due (via Blackboard).  
         (Final is due 11/1)                                                                                                                                                                       |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 10   | October 25 | • Discuss scientific writing/publishing a scientific manuscript;  
      |             | • Combining road maps and career assessments.  
      |             | • **Writing Center:** Effective poster presentations; figures, tables & graphs.  
      |             | • Film: **End of the Line** (or in class presentation practice)         | Please bring road maps to class along with Choices Assessments results (interest / ability profiles).  
      |             |                                                                       | **Title - abstract due**                               |
| 11   | November 1 | • Film: **End of the Line** (or in class presentation practice)         | **Final resumes and cover letters due**  
      |             | • Oral presentations                                                   | **Bibliographies due.**                                |
| 12   | November 8 | • Oral presentations                                                   | **Three paper summaries due** (via Blackboard).  
      |             |                                                                       | **Choices**                                             |
| 13   | November 15| • Oral presentations                                                   | **Three paper summaries due** (via Blackboard).     |
| 14   | November 22| • Reading Day – No Class!                                              | **Three paper summaries due** (via Blackboard).     |
| 15   | November 29| • Oral presentations                                                   | **Three paper summaries due** (via Blackboard).     |
| 16   | December 6 | • Final Review                                                         | **Three paper summaries due** (via Blackboard).     |
|      | December 13| • **Final Exam** 7:15 p.m. – 9:45 p.m.                                  |                                                      |

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.
J. COURSE POLICIES

- Attendance/Tardiness
  Attendance is required. Only ONE unexcused absences is permitted before letter-grade deductions. Thereafter, there will be a penalty of 1 letter grade per each additional absence. I will check attendance in each class period, usually with a sign-in sheet, 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 through Blackboard. Written assignments are due by the beginning of class on the date announced. Late assignment penalty for tardy work = 10% assignment grade deduction per class day late. 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 encourage students to bring whatever
data device they normally use to class every week. You will receive assignments
electronically (Blackboard) 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.
  Treat this course like you would a job that you really like!

K. **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.

• **Classroom/Professional Behavior**
  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 behavior 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 behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom.
  This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic
  classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.-related
• **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. Behaviors 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 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/](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](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](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. See 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.

L. **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.