Professional Skills BIOL/BIMS 2200.002
Department of Life Sciences
Spring 2019

A. COURSE INFORMATION

Course number/section: BIOL/BIMS 2200.002
Class meeting time: MW 9:00-9:50am
Class location: ECDC 219-A
Course Website: https://bb9.tamucc.edu/

B. INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Sharon M. Derrick
Office location: CS-250
Office hours: MW 2:00-4:00 PM, TH 10:30-11:30 AM, or by appt.
Telephone: 361-825-3637
e-mail: sharon.derrick@tamucc.edu
Appointments: Appointments may be arranged by e-mail or phone

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 life 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; oral and poster presentations, critiquing scientific journal articles, writing of scientific papers, and professional ethics.

This course is designed to help students meet the requirements and skill levels expected of a professional, either at work or in an academic setting.

D. PREREQUISITES AND COREQUISITES

Prerequisites
None

Corequisites
None
E. REQUIRED TEXTBOOK(S), READINGS AND SUPPLIES

Required Textbook

Other References
Reading and research materials will be made available online or students will be provided links to resources. Students are expected to read assigned online readings.

Supplies
This class will require 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. Please feel free to bring electronic devices to class. Internet capabilities will be required in the classroom.

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 participation 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 oral/visual presentations.
5. Critique scientific journal articles.
6. Create and give a professional quality 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%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>% of FINAL GRADE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resume and Cover Letter</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bibliography and Literature Search</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title and Abstract</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic Proposal Paper</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper Critique</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper Summary</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mock Interview (Career Services)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graph Exercise</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>100%</td>
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*If you have a problem finishing an assignment or other course concerns, please talk to me. My goal is to help you succeed in the course and if you put in the effort, you will.

I. COURSE CONTENT/SCHEDULE

The class schedule below is subject to change, as many of the dates depend on other individuals and departments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 14 &amp; 16</td>
<td>• Course Introduction with Syllabus Review</td>
<td>Begin thinking about a research topic that is interesting to you.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Discussion of General Assignments</td>
<td>Bring an Internet example of possible plagiarism to class on 1/16.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Using the Textbook</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Writing Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduction to Research Topics, Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event and Details</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 21</td>
<td>Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Birthday NO CLASS</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| January 23       | • Discuss Scientific/Technical Writing  
                    • Interpreting Graphs and Tables  
                    • Preparing a Bibliography  
                    • Introduction to Style Guides  
                    Develop research topic ideas |
| January 28 & 30  | Visit to Bell Library with Tour of Resources                                    |
|                  | • ScienceDirect  
                    • Use of Reference Software  
                    • What is a Literature Review?  
                    • Discuss Research Topics and Choose Time Slots for Presentations  
                    Bring research topic ideas |
| February 4 & 6   | Visit to the Writing Center                                                     |
|                  | • Overview of Services: supplemental instruction, peer mentoring, scientific writing and bibliographies |
| February 11 & 13 | • Discuss and Assign Topic Proposal Papers and Peer Review Teams  
                    • Critiquing a Paper  
                    • Using Excel and PowerPoint for Graphs  
                    • Assign Graph Exercise  
                    • Web-Based Writing Resources  
                    Preliminary research topics due |
| February 18 & 20 | American Academy of Forensic Sciences Meetings (AAFS) in Baltimore               |
|                  | Class time provided for homework assignments                                    |
|                  | Complete graph exercise                                                        |
|                  | Complete Topic Proposal Papers                                                  |
| February 25      | Career Services Speaker:                                                        |
|                  | • Overview of services  
                    • Professional attire  
                    • Interviewing  
                    • Resumes and cover letters  
                    • Letters of intent  
                    Graph exercise due via Blackboard |
| February 27      | Writing Center:                                                                 |
|                  | • Resume and Cover Letter Preparation  
                    • Cover Letter and Resume Exercises Assigned |
| March 4 & 6      | • Peer Review Teams Critique Topic Proposal Papers in Class  
                    • Discussion of Critiques  
                    • Title and Abstract for Research Topics Assigned  
                    Topic Proposal Paper due via Blackboard prior to class on 3/4 |
| March 11-15      | Spring Break – NO CLASS                                                          |
| March 18 & 20    | • Writing Center:  
                    Effective Presentations; figures, tables, graphs  
                    Title and Abstract due 3/20 |
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, and a portion of your grade is based on attendance. Attendance will be checked during each class period. Tardiness and leaving early count as unexcused absences. **Only two unexcused absences are permitted before letter-grade deductions are taken from your attendance points. Thereafter, a penalty of 1 letter grade per each additional unexcused absence will be assessed.** Students are responsible for the material covered and assignments made in every lecture regardless of whether you attend the lecture. An **excused absence** allows the instructor and student 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. Employment conflicts are not generally 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 submitted 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. **Cell Phone use is not allowed during the final exam.**

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. Electronic submission of presenter critiques will require a wireless–capable laptop or mobile device.

Food in Class
Students’ schedules may be hectic and may not allow time between classes for meals. If consuming food and drink in the lecture classroom, please respect the facilities by cleaning up all spills immediately and removing all trash.

Missed Final Exam
You are expected to take the final exam when scheduled. Make-up exams will only be permitted under department-approved circumstances.

Students are not required to take more than two final examinations in any one day. Any student with three or more final examinations scheduled on the same day may request to take one of the examinations on another day during the final examination period. The process is described at the bottom of the Final Exam Schedule found at http://registrar.tamucc.edu/Register%20for%20Classes/Final_Exams.html.

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.

**Appointments** Please make an appointment or send an e-mail to my school e-mail account if you wish to have a conference. I cannot maintain confidentiality in the classroom setting in front of other students.

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.

**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)**
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 your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. 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. 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](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/](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.