

Graduate Writing Workshop
CSCI 6110
Fall 2025

Instructor

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Class details

Class meetings: Wednesday 2:30 - 3:45, DLC 1B20, in person
Office hours: Tuesday 3:30 - 4:30 and by appointment

Materials

Clear and Simple as the Truth: Writing Class Prose (required)
Other various book chapters, articles, and blog posts will be provided on Canvas/Slack.
Students are encouraged to find hard copies of texts.

Course description

This is a course about writing, editing, revising, and presenting. Class activities include in-class exercises, peer-editing, and improv routines; watching videos by expert writers and screenwriters; and walks around campus with guided observations. These activities are designed to model writing as a conversation between author and reader—one in which the two participants view the subject clearly in front of them [9].

Course objectives

In this course, students will learn to:

- Draft and revise a scientific proposal or paper (of their choice)
- Peer-edit (multiple times) these works
- Apply the And-But-Therefore (ABT) technique to write paper abstracts
- Polish existing CVs
- Increase the signal and decrease the noise in paper figures
- Perform short and memorable research talks
- Tailor different works for the audience at hand
- Read about good, clear, strong technical writing, and also read lots of such examples

Course work and grading

There will approximately 15 in-class activities (one per class), graded for completion. The three lowest grades will be dropped. There will be no (formal) make-ups. Grades are determined based on attendance (30%) and participation (70%) in the various writing and editing exercises. Participation refers to discussions and classroom exercises.

References

- [1] A. Alda. *If I Understood You, Would I Have this Look on my Face?: My Adventures in the Art and Science of Relating and Communicating*. Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2018.
- [2] W. Germano. *On Revision: The Only Writing that Counts*. University of Chicago Press, 2021.
- [3] B. Greene. Welcome to the Multiverse. *Newsweek*, May, 21:2012, 2012.
- [4] A. Lamott. Shitty first drafts. *Writing About Writing: A College Reader*, pages 527–531, 1994.
- [5] R. Olson. *Houston, We Have a Narrative*. University of Chicago Press, 2021.
- [6] S. Pinker. Why academics stink at writing. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 61(5), 2014.
- [7] V. Savage and P. Yeh. Novelist Cormac McCarthy’s tips on how to write a great science paper. *Nature*, 574(7777):441–443, 2019.
- [8] H. Sword. *Stylish Academic Writing*. Harvard University Press, 2011.
- [9] F.-N. Thomas and M. Turner. *Clear and Simple as the Truth: Writing Classic Prose*. Princeton University Press, 2011.