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ENGL 21003: Writing for the Sciences

Caitlin Geoghan
CUNY City College

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ENGL 21003: Writing for the Sciences

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Email: cgeoghan@ccny.cuny.edu

Office Location: NAC 6/332B

Office Hours: Monday 9:30-11:00am, and by appointment

Classroom Hours and Location:

Monday/Wednesday 8:00am-9:15am

NAC 4/161

Course Description:

This class will offer an opportunity to refine your skills in presenting technical and scientific issues to various audiences while you critically examine social aspects of scientific information. The course examines new opportunities for covering science (especially on the Internet), the skills required to produce clear and understandable prose about technical subjects, important ethical and practical constraints that govern the reporting of scientific information, and the cultural place of science in our society.

Understanding the writing process is even more important today because new forms of writing--webpages, instant messages, databases, interactive billboards--have different audience expectations, different presentation styles and different persuasive strategies. In every assignment this semester, we will pay attention to the tight connections among writing, reading, and research. Students will have numerous opportunities to conceive, draft, revise, and complete writing projects tailored to various audiences. Writing will also be an important tool and vehicle for thinking about the readings, preparing for class discussion, and developing your own ideas.

Course Learning Outcomes:

This course will help you:

- Acquire knowledge of rhetorical situations and strategies;
- Exercise a flexible repertoire of invention, arrangement, and revision strategies;
- Develop crucial collaborative composition and communication skills;
- Develop your skills in thinking about and designing a comprehensive research study;
- Demonstrate the ability to locate, critically evaluate, employ and cite a variety of sources for a range of purposes;
- Synthesize external data and documentary sources into your own writing with greater awareness of proper citation;
- Demonstrate more fluency in standard, edited English and distinguish the contexts in which formal, informal, and colloquial writing may be appropriate

Required Textbook:

Greene, Laurence. *Writing in the Life Sciences: A Critical Thinking Approach* (2010).

Grade Breakdown

Science Writing Journal (30%)

Collaborative Committee Position paper and Presentation (25%)

- Position Paper (15%)
- Presentation (10%)

Research paper Proposal (5%):

Annotated Bibliography (5%):

Research Paper (15%):

Digital Research Collage (10%):

Participation and Attendance (10%)

Grading Criteria and Assessment

You will be responsible to produce both formal and informal writing.

Formal writing assignments will receive a score out of 100 points based on rubrics created for individual assignments. You will receive rubrics with each writing assignment.

A+: 97.0-100%	C+: 77.0-79.9%
A: 93.0-96.9%	C: 73.0-76.9%
A-: 90.0-92.9%	C-: 70.0-72.9%
B+: 87.0-89.9%	D+: 67.0-69.9%
B: 83.0-86.9%	D: 60.0-66.9%
B-: 80.0-82.9%	F: 0.0 - 59%

Informal assignments will not be given a grade, but you, your peers, and/or instructor will assess the writing to determine how well it fulfills the requirements of the task that it addresses. Informal writing and assessments are important for your **participation grade**. Informal work is important; while it isn't graded in the traditional sense, it is a fundamental component of the participation grade.

Assignment Submissions: All assignment submissions should be posted **digitally copy** in the appropriate place on our **course Blackboard** on time **BY** the due date.

Late submissions are discouraged. Late papers will lose 5 points immediately; then, 5 points for every 24 hour period after the assigned submission deadline. That means if you submit a paper 24 hours after the deadline, 10 points will be deducted from the grade you receive on the paper. If you're having trouble with work load or a particular assignment, please let me know (well in advance of submission deadline) during office hours, in class, or by email. I can only help if I know there's a problem.

Participation and Attendance: Attendance and participation requires more than your physical presence. You should always arrive in class on time. This class starts at 8:00am and you need to make sure you are on time. If you arrive 20 minutes after the start of class, you are marked half an absence; two late arrivals equals one absence. After 40 minutes, you are marked absent. Frequent exiting and entering the class and extended periods of absence during a class session should not become a habit.

You are allowed 3 absences (no excuses necessary). Any absences afterwards (starting with the 4th absence) will impact your grade. Each additional absence results in a deduction of points from your final grade. If you reach 6 absences, it is suggested that you withdraw from the class.

Food and Drinks

If you bring food to class, please make sure it is not overly noisy and doesn't have a distracting smell; drinks are fine, but be prepared for spills (they happen). Be sure to remove all garbage at the end of class.

Summary of major grade components

Science Writing Journal (30%): Directed journal writing greatly increases the time spent focused on the discourse surrounding a particular topic or area of study. Extensive immersion increases the ability to think critically about the material you encounter. As you encounter different texts, you'll encounter arguments and counterarguments on a subject of your choice; or perhaps, a text will simply deepen the knowledge you have in that area.

The **purpose** of the science writing journal is to set you up for the research paper. Over the course of the semester, you'll read, analyze and write about a minimum of 8 self-identified **texts** that will feed into (or be) the research that you do for the final research paper. The articles you document in the science writing journal may all be used as sources for the final research project.

Each entry in your journal must begin with a **citation (CSE (name-year system))** and **annotation**. The annotation should be concise (**200-250 words**); it should summarize the central ideas and argument presented by the text and include one or more sentences that (a) evaluate the authority of the author, (b) document the type and quality of research used by the author in formulating the argument, (c) compare or contrast this work with another you have encountered, or (d) explain how this work relates to your research topic.

Following the citation and annotation, there should be an **informal response (200-250 words)** to the text. You can use this section to express your opinion on the subject, explain how this text shifted or enlarged your understanding of the subject, draw connections between this and another text, document questions that arose while reading the text and ideas about how you might answer those questions and/or

just about anything else. Unlike the citation and annotation which are strictly controlled by academic conventions, this section has no requirement with regard to form, punctuation or convention; however, relevance is crucial, the response should honestly address the text.

Important note on sources: Use a combination of sources. Do not use all Internet sources. **Half of your entries in the journal must be from academic/professional peer reviewed journals accessed from the CCNY library.** Some high end general audience publications such as *Scientific American*, *NYT Science Times*, *Popular Science* and *Discover* can be used. Internet sources can be used if they are from credible sites ([15 credible sites here](#)). See a list of [Internet resources](#) by discipline here. You can also use non-traditional sources: blogs, movies, interviews, YouTube videos, webinars, Twitter feeds etc., but be careful with these. You need to be able to tie them directly to your research area. **Most importantly, don't use sources that are too advanced;** if you don't really understand what you're reading, hearing or seeing, you can't analyze or synthesize the information effectively. There are many academic sources that are beyond the comprehension of anyone who isn't a professional in the field. Half the battle is finding quality information that you can realistically use.

Collaborative Committee Position paper and Presentation (25%): The overall goal of a position paper is to convince an audience to accept a claim on an unresolved research issue. This project will challenge you to work collaboratively to produce an original scientific argument by interpreting data, evaluating research methods, and critiquing arguments in a body of scientific literature. You'll also need to craft a well-developed rhetorical strategy in order to convince the audience that your claim is valid and supported by research. To meet these challenges successfully, you'll need to collaboratively choose a topic that is unresolved, debatable, and perhaps even controversial, and then prove it in a presentation to the class. There are two separate components required for this assignment:

- **Position Paper (15%):** A **multimodal** document that has 4 sections (introduction, counterargument, your argument, and conclusion). The paper length and number of sources will depend on the number of students assigned to your group. A rough estimate is that each participating student will be responsible for producing **1000 words** from **3 sources**. As in the journal and research paper, a balanced combination of sources is recommended.
- **Presentation (10%):** A 25-30 minute presentation of your paper. Mode and manner of the delivery of the presentation should be decided within the group, but there must be visual elements. A 30 minute presentation with no visuals is no fun for anyone.

There will be detailed prompt, classroom discussions, and activities designed to prepare you for this project. You will also be allowed class time for group meetings.

Research paper Proposal (5%): A proposal should contain all the key elements involved in designing a completed research study, with sufficient information that allows the audience to assess the validity and usefulness of your proposed study. The only elements missing from a research proposal are the results of the study and your analysis of those results. Finally, an effective proposal is judged on the quality of your writing and, therefore, it is important that your writing is coherent, clear, and compelling. Regardless of the research problem you are investigating and the methodology you choose, all research proposals must address the following questions:

- **What do you plan to accomplish?** Be clear and succinct in defining the research problem and what it is you are proposing to research
- **Why do you want to do it?** In addition to detailing your research design, you also must conduct a thorough review of the literature and provide convincing evidence that it is a topic worthy of study.
- **How are you going to do it?** Be sure that what you propose is doable and document your course of action.

The research proposal must be between (400-600 words) and include a separate page entitled “References” listing at least six tentative sources. The proposal should have standard academic headings and adhere to standard academic formatting conventions: double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12pt type, Times New Roman or similar font.

Research Paper (15%): A research paper is the culmination and final product of an involved process of research, critical thinking, source evaluation, organization, and composition. It is, perhaps, helpful to think of the research paper as a living thing, which grows and changes as the student explores, interprets, and evaluates sources related to a specific topic. The research paper serves not only to further the field in which it is written, but also to provide you with an exceptional opportunity to enter an ongoing discourse in that field. If you manage and focus your science writing journal early, the research required for the final paper will have been in progress for quite some time prior to the first requisite submission: a detailed outline of the research paper. Generally, the research paper will conform to standard academic conventions with an 8 source minimum requirement. **A more detailed prompt and classroom discussions will occur well in advance of the due date.**

Annotated Bibliography (5%): An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the annotation. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited. If you manage and focus your science writing journal well, the majority of this document will be composed well in advance of the due date and can simply be compiled into a unified document. **A more detailed prompt and classroom discussions will occur well in advance of the due date.**

Digital Research Collage and Statement (10%): The collage is a digital presentation of the research and writing you’ve done for the class. The digital platform required for this submission allows for a creative presentation of your work and personality. Please feel free to design and customize the collage in any way you’d like. There are no limitations or requirements about how the collage should look except that it feature your own work and be housed on and designed for a digital platform. In addition to the collage, you will need to submit a statement of goals and choices (**500-750 words**) in which you, essentially, rhetorically analyze your collage. **A more detailed prompt and classroom discussions will occur well in advance of the due date.**

Proposed Class Calendar

Please be aware, the class calendar is subject to change at anytime.

Date	In class	After class
2/1 (m)	No class	
2/3 (w)	Syllabus review Rhetorical Situations APA: Citation and Annotation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> M. Allen's "The Rhetorical Situation of the Scientific Paper and the "Appearance" of Objectivity" (Blackboard) Locate article and write first journal entry
2/8 (M)	Rhetorical strategies: <i>Ethos</i> , <i>Logos</i> and <i>Pathos</i> Citation and Annotation (<i>cont.</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greene 20-57
2/10 (W)	Journal entry # 1: Due by 8am Scientific discourse conventions Locating and evaluating sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greene 97-112 Locate article and write second journal entry
2/15 (M)	President's day—college closed	
2/17 (W)	Rhetorical and critical analysis: position papers Position paper group assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locate article and write second journal entry Greene 112-147
2/22 (M)	Journal entry #2: Due by 8am Writing a position paper Position paper: Group meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin topic search (position paper) Collect information for position paper Locate article and write journal entry #3
2/24 (W)	Interpreting and synthesizing relevant information Constructing convincing arguments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize topic for position paper Collect information for position paper Locate article and write journal entry #3
2/29 (M)	Journal entry #3: Due by 8am Workshop: Position papers (meet in library)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write draft of position paper Greene 150-170
3/2 (W)	Organizing and writing a draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write draft of position paper
3/7 (M)	Workshop: Position papers (meet in library)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greene 212-248 Locate article and write journal entry # 4
3/9 (W)	Developing a research plan Revision strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locate article and write journal entry # 4 Revision: Position paper
3/14(M)	Journal entry #4: Due by 8am Position paper draft due by 8am Online Class—Peer review of position papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revision: Position paper Read Greene: Appendix A Guidelines for Preparing and Delivering Oral Presentations 453-473

3/16 (W)	Writing a research proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision: Position paper
3/21 (M)	Preparing and delivering oral presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision: Position paper • Greene 380-396
3/23 (W)	Friday Schedule- no class	
3/28 (M)	Position paper final draft due (on BB by 8am) Position paper presentation materials due (on BB by 8am) Class presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate article and write journal entry # 5
3/30 (W)	Class presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write research proposal • Locate article and write journal entry # 5
4/4 (M)	Journal entry #5 due by 8am Class presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write research proposal • Greene 248-252; 410-435
4/6 (W)	Class presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write research proposal • Greene 437-452
4/11 (M)	Research proposal due on BB by 8am In class workshop: Research proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate article and write journal entry # 6 • Compose detailed outline of research paper
4/13 (W)	Rhetorical Goals for Scientific Papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compose detailed outline of research paper • Locate article and write journal entry # 6
4/18 (M)	Journal entry #6 due by 8am In class workshop: research paper outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write full draft of research paper and annotated bibliography
4/20 (W)	<i>tbd</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write full draft of research paper and annotated bibliography
4/25 (M)	Spring break	
4/27 (W)		

5/2 (M)	Research paper full draft and annotated bibliography --4 hard copies of research paper only due in class. Both documents posted on Blackboard by 8am In class workshop: Research papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise research paper and annotated bibliography
5/4 (W)	Digital Collage: What's available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise research paper and annotated bibliography • Compose digital collage and SOGC
5/9 (M)	How to: A Statement of Goals and Choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise research paper • Compose digital collage and SOGC
5/11 (W)	<i>tbd</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise research paper • Compose digital collage and SOGC
5/16 (M)	<i>tbd</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise research paper • Compose digital collage and SOGC
5/18 (W)	Research Paper, Digital Collage and Annotated Bibliography final drafts due before 8am May 23rd on Blackboard End of term party!	

General Information

Student Code of Conduct

All student members of the College community are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that demonstrates mutual respect for the rights and personal/academic well-being of others, preserves the integrity of the social and academic environment, and supports the mission of the College. The College has an inherent right to address behavior that impedes, obstructs, or threatens the maintenance of order and attainment of the aforementioned goals by violating the standards of conduct set forth in the University student conduct policies noted below as well as other policies that may be established by the respective Schools, Global Sites, and administrative offices of the University.

The goals of the CCNY Community Standards are:

1. To promote a campus environment that supports the overall educational mission of the University
2. To protect the University community from disruption and harm
3. To encourage appropriate standards of individual and group behavior
4. To foster ethical values and civic virtues
5. To foster personal learning and growth while at the same time holding individuals and groups accountable to the standards of expectations established by the Code of Conduct

<http://www.cuny.cuny.edu/studentaffairs/community-standards.cfm>

Resources

Everyone here at City College is committed to making your academic experience an enriching one, and should you find yourself in need of help, please make use of these resources.

The Writing Center

<http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/writing/>

The CCNY Writing Center offers a supportive learning environment where students can have one-on-one tutoring sessions with writing consultants. It is a great resource for you to obtain extra help as you write and revise your papers. They DO NOT proofread your papers, but offer assistance on improving certain aspects of them. They also offer ESL tutoring. To set up an appointment or semester-long sessions, contact them in person at the Writing Center, which is located in the NAC, 3rd floor plaza or call (212) 650-8104. They will be partially open starting 9/8, and fully operational starting 9/15. I strongly advise you contact them as soon as possible, even if you don't have anything specific you need assistance with yet.

Gateway Advising Center, NAC 1/220

<http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/gateway/>

Students without a declared major can receive academic advising, especially if you have questions about your course of study, core requirements, etc.

AccessAbility Center Tutoring Services, NAC 1/218

<http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/accessability/>

Provides one-on-one tutoring and workshops to all registered students with learning or physical disabilities.

SEEK Peer Academic Learning Center, NAC 4/224

Phone: 212-650-5786; Email: seekpals@ccny.cuny.edu

Offers counseling and peer tutoring for students in need of academic and financial support who have registered for the SEEK Program.