

EPS 299: Communication skills of academia

Spring Term Course

Prof. Ann Pearson

GeoMuseum 362

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Office Hours: by appointment

This course will provide formal mentorship in a variety of skills essential for an academic career in geosciences. Students will be guided through modules that provide practical tools to improve strategies for reading, paper writing, proposal writing, teaching, giving research seminars, informal networking, and peer review. Peer-to-peer feedback and group exercises will be used in addition to typical formats such as written assignments and oral presentations. The units are designed to complement the curriculum of graduate students as they prepare for the qualifying exam.

Schedule: Tuesdays 12:00-2:00 (flexible to 2:45), location GeoMuseum 375

Assessment: **SAT/UNSAT only.** Attendance is required unless an excused absence is arranged. All assignments must be completed to earn a SAT grade.

Credit: This course is an elective and will not count toward the breadth or subject requirements. Students must obtain permission of the advisor before enrolling.

Enrollment Limit: To facilitate group work, discussion, and presentations, enrollment is limited to twelve, with priority given to G1 and G2 (pre-quals) EPS and ESE PhD students.

Reference Texts: The course has no official text, but the following books are good resources

Joseph Williams, *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*. ISBN-13: 978-0321953308

William Strunk & E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*. ISBN-13: 978-0205309023

Stephen Lucas, *The Art of Public Speaking*. ISBN-13: 978-0077778019

Rena Seltzer, *The Coach's Guide for Women Professors Who Want a Successful Career and a Well-Balanced Life*. ISBN-13: 978-1579228965 (Great lessons for everyone, not just women!)

January 24, Week 1 – Literature

- Reading skills – efficient reading for maximum content
- Make a bibliography, use a referencing tool (EndNote, Mendeley, etc.)
 1. *Assignment*: first 5 papers of annotated bibliography (do the first 2-3 in class)

January 31, Week 2 – Visuals

- Good figures, bad figures – discuss examples, suggest improvements
- Research posters – students hunt examples in department; photo show
 2. *Assignment*: edit provided content into a poster (in teams)

February 7, 14, 21, Week 3-5 – Speaking

- Structure of a presentation – “how to”; video of good speaker
- The research seminar – goal, structure, target audience
 3. *Assignment* – develop presentation with team mentorship (video critique)
 4. *Assignment* – make presentation to class (group critique)
- The classroom lecture – teaching lessons vs. building arguments
 5. *Assignment* – design a lecture outline, with notes and slides

February 28, Ann away, Boston College

March 7, Ann away, Weizmann Institute

March 14, Spring Break

March 21, Ann away, Penn State

March 28, April 4, 11, 18, Week 6-9 – Writing

- Writing skills (sentence structure and language); brief presentation on funding and labs
 6. *Assignment* – 1:1 meetings with Ann; discuss term paper topic
- Proposals, structure and goals
 7. *Assignment* – outline a proposal (thesis proposal for G2)
- Research papers, structure and goals
 8. *Assignment* – outline a research paper
- Abstracts – Correct a bad abstract; find a good abstract, explain its structure – in class
 9. *Assignment* – write a meeting abstract, in class

April 25 (long class, until 2:45), Week 10 – Public life; Peer review

- Your CV – examples
- Your web and social media presence – professionalism
- Person-to-person networking – conferences, e-mail, social situations
- How to review a proposal vs. a paper
- Handling revisions and criticisms (handout)
 10. *Assignment* – turn in paper draft #1 by April 25 (Tu)
 11. *Assignment* – Conduct peer review of draft #1 papers by end of week 10 (Fr)

May 3, Last day of reading term – Final paper

- Final papers due
 12. *Assignment* – revise draft #1 paper, turn in as final term paper.