

Streamlined Syllabus: Biol 420: Scientific Writing Seminar

Instructor: Dr. Kathy Denning
1 credit hour
Fall 2023; Thursdays 10:00-10:50 AM
Haworth Hall, Room 3012

Course Objectives and Timeline

This course is designed to provide students an introduction to scientific writing using the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship application materials as a template. For those who intend to submit a GRFP application, the course will provide structure and a timeline for submission. During this course, students will:

1. Develop a realistic timeline for a fellowship application
2. Write a scientifically sound research statement (i.e. research proposal), using the NSF GRFP as a template
3. Write a compelling personal statement for the NSF GRFP, focusing on Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts
4. Learn to critically evaluate GRF-style proposals in review panel format

Course Format

Unless otherwise noted on the schedule, class will be held in-person each week. On the weeks noted in the schedule below, students will be expected to watch pre-recorded lectures prior to coming to class so that class time can be used for discussion. Lectures are available on the course Canvas page. Applying for the NSF GRFP *is not a required component of this course*. Students intending to submit the GRFP should plan to watch all of the recorded lectures by mid-September, at the latest, in order to stay on track for the mid-October due date. Please note that for this course, final drafts of the GRFP-style research statement are not due until Friday December 8; I will accept personal statements formatted for graduate admissions in lieu of a GRFP-style personal statement.

Grading

Your grade in the course will be determined by the percentage of points that you accumulate and will follow the standard scale: A = 90% - 100%, B = 80% - 89%, C = 70% - 79%, etc. The percentage of points will be assigned in the following way:

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Written Assignments | 50% |
| Class participation | 50% |

Finals Week Activity

During Finals week, students will work in groups to serve as “mock review panels”, providing peer feedback on one another’s research statements. I will provide a rubric on Canvas and further instructions in early November. This activity counts towards your participation grade in the class.

Peer reviews are for the writer's reference only and will not be used to calculate your grade on the research statement. Please see me with any questions.

Course Schedule

| Date | Topic | Pre-Class | Assignment |
|-------------|---|---|--|
| Aug 24 | Intro, GRFP Solicitation | N/A | 1: syllabus + GRFP solicitation quiz |
| Aug 31 | NSF Review Criteria: Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts | Video 1: Merit Review Criteria Baca Research Statement Video 2: Merit Review Criteria | 2: Template for describing previous research experiences |
| Sep 7 | Personal Statement I | Personal Statements videos 1 & 2 | |
| Sep 14 | Research Statement I | Research Statement Video 1 | 3: Template for organizing research proposals, part I |
| Sep 21 | Research Statement II | Research Statement Video 2 | 4: Template for organizing research proposals, part II |
| Sep 28 | Research Statement III/Rec Letters | Optional: soliciting strong rec letters video | |
| Oct 5 | Write-In | Optional: navigating FastLane | |
| Oct 12 | Write-in | | |
| Oct 19 | Other Graduate Fellowships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NIH Predoctoral - GEM - Ford - HHMI | | |
| Finals Week | Mock Review Panels: students peer review research statements | | |