

University of Detroit Mercy

Biology and Social Issues

BIO 499 Sr. Seminar Syllabus

Semester: Fall 2006

Credits: 3

Instructor: Dr. Barbara Hollar

Time: 1:00 to 3:30 Friday

Required texts:

McMillan VE. 2006. Writing papers in the biological sciences. 4th. ed. Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's. 269 p.

Objectives:

1. The student will learn to research the biological literature, read and interpret original research articles, and integrate the information gained into a review article. The article will be well-written and properly referenced and will represent the current thought in the field.
2. The student will consider the ways in which the discipline of biology has an impact on society and the ways in which society has an impact upon science. He/she will work to articulate his/her own value system with regard to scientific issues and will thoughtfully consider the viewpoints of others including those of classmates, the instructor, and the authors of the published works which are discussed. The student will listen to opposing viewpoints with civility and respect until it is his/her turn to speak. All viewpoints will be heard. Where possible, the student will propose constructive solutions to unsolved problems.

Methods:

Each student will research and write a review article on a topic that has **both** social relevance and scientific merit. He/she will then present the findings in a 20 minute talk given before the class. A framework for the topics covered by the entire class will be worked out at the first class meeting so that the course has continuity and coherence, but still provides each student with a topic that holds his/her interest. You may not choose a topic on which you have previously written a paper in high school or college.

The semester will begin with each member of the class choosing a topic during the first class period. The instructor will copy down the topics and devise a tentative schedule of speeches and

dates for the term which will be passed out at the second class period. You will have until Wednesday Sept. 20th to refine or clarify your idea or trade topics with someone else (by trading topics you also trade the date of the speech). After that, the instructor will pass out a final list of topics/ dates and there will be no changes in either dates or topics once the final list has been published.

The first few class meetings will be devoted to lectures and practice in how to do library and online searching in the biological literature and how to properly write and reference a paper. Take careful notes. It is much easier to write your paper correctly the first time than to rewrite it many times due to careless errors.

EVERY MEMBER OF THE CLASS WILL HAND ME HIS/HER FIRST DRAFT OF THE PAPER ON FRIDAY OCTOBER 13th BY 1P.M. EACH PERSON WILL HAND ME A CD OF HIS/HER POWER POINT PRESENTATION IN A PLASTIC CASE OR PAPER SLEEVE A WEEK IN ADVANCE OF GIVING HIS/HER PRESENTATION. ZIP DISCS ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE. A 5 PT. PENALTY WILL BE DEDUCTED FROM YOUR SPEECH GRADE FOR FAILURE TO MEET THE DEADLINE.

LATE POLICY: FOR EACH DAY THAT THE PAPER IS LATE, I WILL DEDUCT 5% FROM YOUR FINAL GRADE. That is, if you turn your paper in on Monday the 16th, you will have 5% deducted from your final paper grade. On Oct. 17, you will have 10% deducted, etc. The first draft is to be a complete written draft including references, not an outline or simply a list of ideas about your paper.

I will begin reading as quickly as I can, starting with the people whose presentations are early in the term and continuing through the schedule in order. I will continue reading through the remaining papers, but it will take me a while to read all of the papers. When I finish a paper, I will put it in an "outbox" on Ms. Jackman's desk in the main office, so look there to see if your paper has been corrected. When your paper is returned you will need to revise it. Revision involves reworking the ideas in your paper not just returning to the computer and incorporating my comments or corrections. If I point out to you that you have done your references incorrectly by red-marking the first one, you are to check and correct ALL of your references, not just the one that I marked. In the same way, if I correct an item in the body of your paper you must check to see that you fix the error everywhere it appears. In addition, you must rewrite your paper to address the comments that I have made on your draft(s). This may involve substantial changes. Save your draft copy as I will be asking for it along with the final paper. If you need to see me during the process of revision, just make an appointment or stop by during office hours and I would be happy to help you with your revisions. After I finish reading all of the first drafts I will announce to the class that I am available for additional drafts if you wish to submit them. You may submit as many drafts as you wish up until Nov. 9th. You may consult with me about your paper after that, but I will not be taking additional drafts.

Remember that we have a Writing Center in the Briggs Building. The people there are experts at composition and will be happy to assist you in revising and polishing your paper so that it clearly states your meaning.

ON NOV. 17th YOU WILL TURN IN YOUR FINAL TYPEWRITTEN PAPER, A FLOPPY, A ZIP 100 DISC, OR A CD WITH YOUR PAPER ON IT, AND ALL OF YOUR DRAFTS BY 1:00 P.M. NO PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THAT TIME. Please do not turn in a ZIP 250 as we do not have a ZIP drive that will accommodate those. If you fail to turn in a final paper on time, the grade on your most recent draft will become your final grade for the paper. Remember that you may have trouble with a computer or printer, so do not wait until the last minute to print out your paper. Keep another copy of your paper in a safe location in case your instructor loses your paper. (I have never had this happen, but there is a first time for everything.) The computer disc should be securely fastened to your paper in a transparent plastic sleeve or pasted into a pocket folder so it does not get lost. **FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE DIRECTIONS WILL RESULT IN A LOSS OF 5 POINTS FROM YOUR FINAL GRADE.**

The following specifications will help you to determine what is expected of you on your paper.

1. The paper will be a minimum of 12 typed pages of pica text double spaced with 1 inch margins. Other fonts may be used but they must be similar in size to pica (12 pt). The type on this page is the appropriate size. Papers with larger type will be returned for retyping. Tables or figures may be used, but they will be located at the end of the paper and will not be counted in the page requirements. The page requirement is meant to suggest the scope of the paper. The paper will take as many words as it takes to adequately explicate your ideas. I am more impressed with a dozen excellent pages than with 35 pages of "padding".
2. The paper is to be a review paper on the topic that you agreed to at our first class meeting. It will meet the standards outlined in your textbook for both composition and format. The approach taken by each student will be different depending on the topic, but generally I expect to see a discussion of the historical background of the issue, an analysis of the current state of affairs from both a scientific and an ethical perspective, and a look at future prospects including solutions to the problem. I am aware that in some cases you do not have enough scientific expertise to propose your own solutions, and you may be able to find only a few sources that discuss this. Come and see me during office hours, and I will help you locate what you need.
3. A minimum of **ten journal references** is required. At least 6 of the 10 must have been published in the last five years unless you have an exemption from me to do otherwise. Remember that you cannot actually cite a reference in your paper unless you have personally read it. Keep your notes on the papers you referenced (or Xeroxed copies of the papers) in case I need to help you in explicating the ideas in your paper. You may use "News and Views" columns, commentary, textbooks, Internet sources, or any other sources you desire but they will not count towards the 10 journal articles that you need. In general, one does not usually cite textbooks (although it is not wrong). If you read something in a textbook that you want to use, look in the references cited section for the original paper and read it. **KEEP ALL OF YOUR NOTES OR XEROX COPIES OF THE PAPERS YOU CITE, AS I MAY ASK FOR THEM IN REVIEWING YOUR PAPER. FAILURE TO PRODUCE THE PAPERS CITED IN YOUR SR. SEMINAR PAPER WILL RAISE A SUSPICION OF PLAGIARISM.**
4. You may **NOT** use any quotes in the body of your paper. All of the words in your paper must be yours and yours alone. Read through your paper when you are finished. Would you be able to

explain to me the definition of every word in your paper? If not, you have not written the paper in your own words. Are any phrases familiar from the works you have read? Go back and write those sections over again to make them your own.

5. The paper is to be a review of a scientific issue and the societal issues relevant to it. While you may critique the work of the authors that you cite, you may not write a personal reflection paper expressing your opinion of the subject. You are to provide a balanced, scientifically objective review of the issues and not a personal position statement.

6. You will want to spell check your paper or to have someone look over your paper for typographical errors. I will consider it cheating if you have someone else edit or substantially rewrite your paper.

7. Use the number method for citations as explained in your textbook and in class.

Grading:

Your grade in the course will be based upon the final draft of your paper (65 points, 65%), your speech (20 points, 20%) and your attendance (15 points, 15%). I will have an attendance sheet at the front of the room that you should sign when you come to class. Missing a single class due to illness or emergency will not affect your grade, but a consistent pattern of tardiness or absence will. If you have missed a couple of classes for legitimate reasons (e.g. a medical school interview), please tell me the reasons. I am willing to be flexible, but I consider your participation in the discussions an important part of the the class so I expect you to be present on a regular basis.

The grading scale will be 90 to 100 points is an A, 80 to 89 points is a B, 70 to 79 points is a C and 60 to 69 points is a D. Plus and minus grades will be given for scores within 2 points of the cutoff. For example, 90 and 91 are A- grades while 88 and 89 are B+ grades.

You may want to practice public speaking before you give your speech in order to polish your delivery and avoid common public speaking mistakes. If you like, you may make an appointment to practice your speech with me. My telephone number is (313) 993-1408. If you prefer, you may wish to request that another faculty member listen to your talk. If you wish to practice your speech with me or with any other faculty member, just call and schedule an appointment. If you choose not to practice with me, you nevertheless will want to practice in front of a friend, a parent, or someone that will give you constructive criticism on your talk and your method of delivery.

Failure to appear on the appointed day to give your talk to the class will result in a penalty of one letter grade in your final grade unless you can document hospitalization or other serious emergency. (Car problems are not a serious emergency.) You will still be required to give your speech in order to pass the course. A date will be set up to allow you to present your speech to the faculty at one of our regular departmental meetings.

Your talk will be accompanied by a Power Point presentation. I will be giving instruction in Power Point and information about what will be expected in terms of public speaking during the lecture portion of this course in the month of September. I will give you a checklist of the items which I will be looking for in public speaking so that you will know the criteria used in grading the speech.

The grade for attendance will be determined by having a sign up sheet available. The number of students in the room will also be counted so that if you forget to sign the roll and I have an extra student in the count, you can come to me later and tell me that you forgot to sign.

During the speeches, I will be looking for alert and respectful attention when others are speaking, good questions, and comments relevant to the discussion. You will be unfailingly courteous to all present. A difference in viewpoint does not absolve you from your obligation to respect the person who is speaking.

Plagiarism

The page explaining the use of sources is an official part of this syllabus. I take plagiarism very seriously and will report you to University authorities if I catch you cheating on your senior seminar paper. Persons who have been disciplined for plagiarism are generally not acceptable candidates for admission to medical school or dental school. Punishment for plagiarism can also include dismissal from the university. I run a plagiarism program on the electronic version of the paper that you turn in. It is designed to detect items taken from the internet, so be careful in your use of sources. Before you can receive final approval for your paper topic, you must read, sign and return to me the policy on plagiarism attached to this syllabus.