This course is designed mainly to help you become more adept at writing for the public about science and technology. Other goals include increasing your knowledge of the science journalism world, enhancing your skill in editing popular science stories, broadening your familiarity with science and technology, and helping you to write for scientific and technical readerships.

These goals will be pursued largely through classroom activities, readings, conferences with the instructor, and (of course) writing assignments. Classroom activities will include discussion of topics in science/technology reporting, analysis of science/technology stories from the popular media, and workshops on class members' writing. Because much of your learning will depend on your participation in class, you will be expected to attend the course regularly; only in exceptional circumstances should more than two sessions be missed.

Readings for the course will include both writings on and examples of science/technology reporting. The required books are


An optional book that registrants may wish to use is


Core reading assignments are noted on the schedule below, and other readings may be announced in class. As well as completing the assigned readings, you should follow current coverage of science and technology.

During the course, you should meet with the instructor twice for conferences on your work. One conference should be before mid-semester and the other after. Opportunities for additional conferences are readily available.

The graded assignments, the dates they are due, and the percentages of your grade they will constitute are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>news story based on a journal article</td>
<td>9/9</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>points from <em>Field Guide</em> (first set)</td>
<td>9/16</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>choice of conference sessions to cover</td>
<td>9/23</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
points from *Field Guide* (second set) 9/30 5%
profile of a scientist 10/14 15%
quiz on *News & Numbers* 10/21 5%
news story on journal article of choice 10/28 5%
proposal for feature article 11/4 5%
analysis of award-winning science writing 11/11 5%
feature article or alternative assignment 11/18 25%
final project 12/2 20%

All writing assignments should be word-processed and double-spaced; pages should be numbered. Unless otherwise specified, please submit hard copies, not electronic versions.

The writing assignments are described on the schedule below, and further guidance will be provided in class. Normally, 10 points will be deducted for each day an assignment is late. However, one assignment may be submitted one week late without penalty. You are encouraged to publish writing you do for the course.

Grading of assignments will be as follows: A+: 98, A: 95, A-: 92, B+: 88, B: 85, B-: 82, etc. To receive a grade in the A range, work must be of professional quality. Rewrites will be permitted of the writing assignments due in September and October. If you submit an acceptable rewrite two weeks or less after the assignment is returned to the class, your grade for the assignment will be increased by two points. Please be sure to submit the graded original with the rewrite.

The success of a course such as this one depends on contributions from the students as well as from the teacher. Suggestions for making the course more educational and more enjoyable are appreciated at any time.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Main Activities and Writing Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/2</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course&lt;br&gt;Discussion:&lt;br&gt;• The Scope of Science and Technology Reporting&lt;br&gt;• Historical Perspectives on Science Writing&lt;br&gt;• Basics of the Science Writer’s Craft&lt;br&gt;• Newsworthiness in Science&lt;br&gt;Introduction: Sources of Story Ideas and Information&lt;br&gt;Workshop: Examples of News Stories Based on Journal Articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/9</td>
<td>Discussion: Reading Assignment Due Today&lt;br&gt;[Note: In this course, you should be actively engaged with the reading. As you read, please ask yourself questions such as the following:&lt;br&gt;• What material in this reading is especially useful, interesting, insightful, or otherwise worthwhile?&lt;br&gt;• What points in this reading seem debatable? What counter-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
arguments might be made?

• How well is the item written? If the item is clear and interesting, what aspects of the writing make it so? If the item is confusing or dull, how could it be made more clear or interesting?

To aid in classroom discussion, please keep notes about such items.

Discussion: Sources of Story Ideas and Information:

• Periodicals and Books
• Government, Associations, and Other Institutions
• Online Resources

Workshop: Writing Assignment Due Today

Core Reading Due:

• Field Guide: Chapters 1, 2, 7, 8, and 17
• Ideas Into Words: Foreword, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2
• “Late Night Thoughts about Science Writing” by Alton Blakeslee (Quill, November-December 1994, pp. 35-38)

Writing Due: a news story based on a journal article

Instructions: Write a newspaper story based on the journal article and news release specified in class. Your story should run about 250 words. In preparing the story, you may consult background resources such as reference books, textbooks, and earlier journal articles. However, you should not look at popular stories based on this journal article, and you should not do interviews. Above your story, please indicate the newspaper or wire service for which it is intended. Below it, list two or more people (or types of people) to consider interviewing to develop the story more fully; say why you would interview each. Please bring copies of your article for yourself, the instructor, and your classmates.

9/16

Discussion: Covering Various Realms of Science
Discussion: Covering Conferences
Workshop: Some Stories from Conferences

Core Reading Due:

• Field Guide: Parts Four and Five
• "Conferences" (pp. 44-46) in Health Writer's Handbook by Barbara Gastel (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1998)
• “Publishing Excellent Conference Reports: Editors and Reporters Share Advice” by Barbara Gastel (Science Editor, July-August 2002, pp. 118-121), http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/members/securedDocuments/v25n4p118-121.pdf

Writing Due: identification and discussion of 10 points you found especially helpful or interesting in this week’s reading in the Field Guide

Instructions: Please state, in your own words, 10 points in today’s reading in the Field Guide that you found especially helpful or
interesting. If possible, briefly discuss how you could envision applying each point in your work. You may use any format you consider appropriate. The assignment should run about 500 to 1000 words (2 to 4 double-spaced pages).

9/23  Guest Segment: Communicating Science through Animation
Speaker:  David Bolinsky
Medical Director
XVIVO Scientific Animation
Rocky Hill, CT
http://www.xvivo.net/
Interview of David Bolinsky
Discussion: Sources of Story Ideas and Information:
   Scientists, Engineers, Physicians, and Other People
Workshop: Interviewing
Discussion: Some Profiles of Scientists; Profile Writing
Workshop: Writing Assignment Due Today
Core Reading Due:
   • Ideas Into Words: Chapter 3
   • Field Guide: Chapter 18
   • some profiles of scientists
Exercise Due: choice of conference sessions to cover
Instructions: Imagine that you cover science, technology, or medicine for a wire service such as the Associated Press. From this standpoint, review the program for the 2009 AAAS meeting. (This program is available at http://www.aaas.org/meetings/2009/. For each of the four main days of the meeting (Friday through Monday), identify one symposium or other session on which to write a story, and explain why you consider it newsworthy. Also identify a total of three sessions from which to gather material for possible future stories, and say how you envision using the material. This assignment should run about two double-spaced pages. It may be in any format that you consider effective. In doing this assignment, please do not look at coverage of the meeting.

9/30  Discussion: Plans for Profiles
Discussion: Reporting Critically on Research, Part 1
Discussion: Crafting a Science Story, Part 1
Core Reading Due:
   • News & Numbers: Front Matter and Chapters 1-3
   • Ideas Into Words: Chapters 4 and 5
   • Field Guide: Chapters 3-6 and 19-22
Writing Due: identification and discussion of 10 points you found especially helpful or interesting in this week’s reading in the Field Guide
Instructions: Please state, in your own words, 10 points in today’s
reading in the Field Guide that you found especially helpful or interesting. If possible, briefly discuss how you could envision applying each point in your work. You may use any format you consider appropriate. The assignment should run about 500 to 1000 words (2 to 4 double-spaced pages).

10/7  Progress Reports on Profiles
      Discussion: Reporting Critically on Research, Part 2
      Discussion: Crafting a Science Story, Part 2
Core Reading Due:
      • News & Numbers: Chapter 4, 5, and 6
      • Ideas Into Words: Chapters 6 and 7
      • some science feature stories

10/14  Discussion: Reporting Critically on Research, Part 3
      Workshop: Profiles by Class Members
Core Reading Due:
      • News & Numbers: Chapters 7-11 and Appendix
Writing Due: profile of a scientist, engineer, or health professional
      Instructions: Prepare a profile of a scientist, engineer, health professional, or science writer. The profile should run about 1000 to 1500 words. At the beginning, state the word count and the publication for which the profile is intended. At the end, list all sources used. Please bring the specified number of copies to class.
(Note: If you wish to revise your profile after the workshop, you may submit the final version at the next session.)

10/21  Quiz on News & Numbers
      Discussion:
      • Writing About Science for Magazines
      • Feature Writing in the Sciences/Types of Science Feature Writing
      • Freelancing as a Science Writer
Core Reading Due:
      • Field Guide: Chapters 9, 10, and 12
      • Excerpts from You Can Write for Magazines by Greg Daugherty
         (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1999)
      • “How to Write a Query Letter” by John Hewitt,
         http://www.poewar.com/how-to-write-a-query-letter/
      • examples of feature writing in the sciences

10/28  Discussion: Writing and Reviewing Books in the Sciences
      Discussion: Plans for Feature Articles
Core Reading Due:
• Field Guide: Chapter 13
• “How to Write a Book Chapter or a Book” in How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper by Robert A. Day and Barbara Gastel (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006)
• examples of book and other reviews

Writing Due: a news story based on a journal article of your choice
Instructions: Identify a newsworthy scientific paper in a journal, and write a newspaper story about the research reported. Your story should run about 250 words. In preparing the story, you should not look at popular stories based on the journal article. However, you may consult whatever other written resources you wish, and you may do interviews. Above your story, please indicate the newspaper or wire service for which it is intended. Please bring copies of your article for yourself, the instructor, and your classmates. Also, please submit a copy of the scientific paper or an electronic link to it.

11/4 Workshop: Proposals for Feature Articles
Discussion: Science Reporting for Electronic Media
Viewing and Discussion: An Award-Winning Science Documentary
Core Reading Due:
• Field Guide: Chapters 11, 14, and 15
• “Bringing Science to a Television Audience” by Jon Palfreman, Nieman Reports, Fall 2002, http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/contents.html
• “Radio’s Relentless Pace Dictates Different Coverage” by Christopher Joyce, Nieman Reports, Fall 2002, http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/contents.html

Core Listening Due:
• some radio science stories

Writing Due: proposal for feature article
Instructions: Prepare a proposal for your feature article. The proposal may take the form of a query letter (proposal to editor) or a memo to the course instructor. Content should include, but need not be limited to, your proposed topic, the intended publication, and your plans for information-gathering. The proposal need not exceed the equivalent of one to two double-spaced pages. It should make clear that the story idea is a good one and that you are well prepared to pursue it.
(Note: If you are a graduate student in a field other than science and technology journalism, you can either write the feature article you propose or do the alternative assignment noted below.)

11/11 Progress Reports on Feature Article or Alternative Assignment
Discussion: Some Examples of Award-Winning Science Reporting
Guest Segment: Communicating Science from Institutions

Core Reading Due:
- *Field Guide*: Part Six and anything else not yet read
- examples of science writing from institutions
- examples of award-winning science writing in various media

Writing Due: analysis of some award-winning science writing
Instructions: Drawing on material in this course, identify strengths of one of the award-winning pieces of science writing assigned for today; please support your conclusions with evidence. If you have suggestions for improving the piece, also provide them. Your analysis should address both content (including range of sources) and crafting. It need not exceed one to two double-spaced pages.

11/18  Discussion: Communicating Science from Institutions
Workshop: Feature Article Due Today

Writing Due: feature article or alternative assignment
Instructions: Prepare a feature article on a topic in science or technology. The article should be for a specific publication and should run about 2,000 to 3,000 words. At the beginning, please state the word count and the publication for which the article is intended. At the end, list all sources used. (Alternative assignment: If you are in a field other than science and technology journalism, you can do an alternative assignment that entails reading *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper* and writing about its applicability to your work. Instructions will be provided during the course.)

(Note: If you wish to revise your writing assignment after the workshop, you may submit it as late as 2 p.m., Monday, November 23.)

11/25  Supper Seminar
(to be rescheduled for a mutually convenient date)

12/2  Workshop: Project Due Today
Wrap-Up Exercise

Writing Due: project of your choice
Instructions: Please prepare one of the following:
- another feature article (may be a profile)
- a portfolio of news stories on journal articles, scientific presentations, or both
- a review of one or more books about science or science journalism
- an article on some aspect of science reporting
- part or all of a scientific paper
- part or all of a proposal in the sciences
- part of a thesis or dissertation in the sciences
- other writing of a type discussed in this course (please see instructor
for approval)

The assignment should total at least 1000 words. As usual, the target publication should be specified, and all sources should be listed.

(Note: If you wish to revise your project after the workshop, you may submit the final version as late as noon, Monday, December 7.)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call 845-1637. For additional information, see http://disability.tamu.edu.

As the Aggie Honor Code states, “An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.” It is expected that you will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid on work in this course. All writing for this course must be your original work. For Texas A&M Honor Council Rules and Procedures, please see http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor.