

Syllabus

Course Information

Course Number: VIBS 655
Course Title: Preparing Scientific Papers and Presentations
Section: 601
Time: Mondays, 8:45-11:30 am
Location: VIDI 121
Credit Hours: 3

Instructor Details

Instructor: Yasha Hartberg, B.S., M.S., Ph.D.
Office: VIDI 398
Phone: (979) 458-7816
E-Mail: yhartberg@cvm.tamu.edu
Office Hours: To set up an appointment, first consult the link to my appointment calendar on Canvas. If none of those times work, feel free to email me to see if I have other times we can meet. Note that my appointment calendar sets Microsoft Teams as the default for meetings. However, I'm very happy to meet face-to-face, too. Just let me know your preference in advance.

Course Description

Welcome to VIBS 655! This course is designed primarily to improve your skills in scientific discourse. Regardless of your discipline, communication is the beating heart of a scientific career. To be successful, you need to be able to communicate your research in professional journals, at conferences, in grant proposals, and to the public. These skills take years to hone. Our hope is that this course can jumpstart and accelerate that process.

Course Prerequisites

To participate, you must come into VIBS 655 with enough completed, high-quality research to submit your findings to a peer-reviewed journal in your field. Indeed, it is best if you come into the class with at least a partial rough draft of an article, though that's not required.

Course Learning Outcomes

Students in VIBS 655 will:

- Improve their ability to write papers for peer-reviewed journals
- Increase their knowledge of the academic publication process
- Enhance their skills at other forms of professional communication such as presentations and grant proposals
- Increase their ability to edit and peer review others' work
- Refine their English-language skills

Textbook and/or Resource Materials

The reading will come mainly from the book *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper*, 9th edition, by Barbara Gastel and Robert A. Day (Greenwood Press, 2022), which is available free online through the Texas A&M libraries as an eBook. Other readings will be posted through Canvas.

Grading Policy

Your grade in the course will be based on writing assignments, an oral presentation about your work, and weekly discussion posts. Grading will be as follows:

95-100	outstanding; highly professional; likely to wow peer reviewers
90-94	excellent; approaching highly professional quality
85-89	generally solid but still would benefit from substantial revision
80-84	a reasonable start but still needs much more work
<80	below acceptable graduate student level

For all assignments, both content and crafting will be considered. An average of 89.50% or above will earn a final grade of A, an average of 79.50% to 80.49% will earn a B, and so forth.

The table below shows the contribution of assignments to your final grade. Note that the due dates are tentative. There is a good chance they will be altered as the semester progresses. Nevertheless, they should give you a general idea of how you will need to structure your time. In general, the homework for this course will take at least several hours per session. Our hope is that by the end of the semester, you will have a manuscript nearly ready to submit to a journal.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Draft of informal abstract	8/27	1
Set of annotations	9/3	4
Draft of methods section	9/10	2
Revised informal abstract	9/17	2
Revised draft of methods	9/24	5
Draft of results section	10/1	2
Draft of discussion	10/8	2
Draft of introduction	10/15	2
Revised draft of results	10/22	5
Revised draft of discussion	10/29	5
Revised draft of introduction	11/5	5
Formal abstract	11/12	5
Final version of paper	12/4	35
Oral presentation	TBD	15
Discussion posts	Weekly	10

Discussion posts normally will be due **Fridays**, with a grace period until 5 p.m. Saturday. Writing assignments normally will be due at 11:59 p.m. on **Sundays**. Early submissions are welcome.

Because your and others' learning will depend in part on your class participation, you will be expected to attend the course regularly; normally, no more than two sessions should be missed. However, if you are ill, please stay home; I will be glad to have you join us by Zoom if your condition permits.

Late Work Policy

Please submit assignments on time. Except in cases of excused absences, 10% of the maximum available points for an assignment will be deducted for each 24 hours or portion thereof that an assignment is late.

University Policies

Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and complete all assignments.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reasons deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#)).

"The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#)).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See [Student Rule 24](#).)

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

"Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case" ([Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#)).

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact Disability Resources in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit disability.tamu.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see [University Rule 08.01.01.M1](#)):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, you will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University's goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS).

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University's [Title IX webpage](#).

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student's academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in proper self-care by utilizing the resources and services available from Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS). Students who need someone to talk to can call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.