

Course Information

Course Number:	VIBS 660
Course Title:	Reporting Science and Technology
Section:	600
Time:	Mondays, 9:00–11:45 a.m.
Location:	VIDI 126
Credit Hours:	3.0
Semester:	Fall 2024

Instructor Details

Instructor:	Barbara Gastel
Office:	VIDI 397
Phone:	979-845-6887
E-Mail:	b-gastel@tamu.edu
Office Hours:	By appointment (Appointments in person, by Zoom, and by phone are readily available, usually within 1 day. Also feel free to drop by if I'm in the office and not meeting with someone else.)

Course Description

Gathering, writing, and editing complex information; translation techniques; interpretation and analysis; literary and organizational devices; and assessment of readability.

Course Prerequisites

Graduate status or permission of the instructor.

Special Course Designation

None.

Course Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, the student will be able to do the following:

- State and apply principles of writing about science and technology for general readerships.
- State and apply principles of interviewing scientists and others for stories on science and technology.
- Gather written information from various sources for potential use in popular writing about science and technology.
- Critically evaluate information for potential use in popular writing about science and technology.
- Describe and apply basic formats for writing news stories and feature stories about science and technology.

Textbook and/or Resource Materials

The required books are

- *The Craft of Science Writing*. Siri Carpenter, editor. The Open Notebook, 2020.
- *A Tactical Guide to Science Journalism*. Deborah Blum, Ashley Smart, and Tom Zeller Jr., editors. Oxford University Press, 2022.
- *Ideas Into Words: Mastering the Craft of Science Writing*. Elise Hancock. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.
- *News and Numbers: A Writer's Guide to Statistics*. 3rd edition. Victor Cohn and Lewis Cope, with Deborah Cohn Runkle. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

The first book is being provided to you free of charge. The last three books can be accessed electronically through the Texas A&M library and are available from various booksellers.

In addition, the course will include some reading from the following books (which also are available electronically through the Texas A&M University library):

- *The Science Writers' Handbook*. Tom Hayden and Michelle Nijhuis, editors. Da Capo, 2013.
- *Handbook for Science Public Information Officers*. W. Matthew Shipman. University of Chicago Press, 2015.
- *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper*. 9th edition. Barbara Gastel and Robert A. Day. Greenwood, 2022.

Especially if you do not have journalism background, you may find it useful also to consult a textbook such as

- *MediaWriting: Print, Broadcast, and Public Relations*. 5th edition. W. Richard Whitaker, Ronald D. Smith, and Janet E. Ramsey. Routledge, 2019. (available electronically through the library)

Other readings are provided in Canvas. Core readings are noted on the class schedule, and additional readings (such as newly published articles) will be announced in class.

Grading Policy

This course is graded A through F. Final averages and the corresponding final grades are as follows: 89.50% or above, A; 79.50–89.49%, B; 69.50–79.49%, C; 64.50–69.49%, D; and below 64.50%, F.

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

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Equivalence in Points</u>
an analysis of some explanations	8/25	5%	100
news brief based on assigned journal article	9/8	5%	100
choice of conference sessions to cover	9/15	5%	100
news story on journal article of choice	9/22	5%	100
presentation: comm sci thru AV or social media	9/29	5%	100
report on three internship portfolios	10/13	10%	200
highlights of a ScienceWriters2024 session	10/20	5%	100
profile of a scientist, engineer, or health prof	10/27	10%	200

proposal for a feature article	11/3	5%	100
presentation: PIO handbook chapter	11/10	5%	100
take-home quiz on <i>News and Numbers</i>	11/24	5%	100
feature article or alternative assignment	12/1	25%	500
discussion posts		10%	200
		100%	2000

Late Work Policy

Except in cases of excused absences or previously approved extensions, 10% of the maximum available points for an assignment will be deducted for each 24 hours or portion thereof that an assignment is late. Normally, late work should be emailed to the instructor.

Introductory Notes

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, discussion posts, 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. There also will be guest segments.

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.

Core reading assignments from the listed books and elsewhere are noted on the schedule below, and other readings (such as examples of science writing) will be announced. As well as completing the assigned readings, you should follow current coverage of science, technology, and medicine.

Please meet with the instructor twice for conferences on your work. One conference should be before mid-semester and the other after; lists of available times will be provided. Additional conferences are readily available.

Discussion posts normally will be due at 5 p.m. Friday, with a grace period until noon Saturday. Writing normally will be due at 5 p.m. Sunday. You are encouraged to submit your posts and writing assignments early.

All writing assignments should be in Word and should be double-spaced, with an unjustified right margin; pages should be numbered. At the top of each assignment, please write your name, the title or topic, the intended audience or venue, and the word count. Unless otherwise specified, assignments should be submitted through Canvas.

At the end of each writing assignment, list all resources used in preparing it. Examples include materials read, people interviewed, grammar checkers used, artificial intelligence (AI) tools used, and people who provided feedback on drafts. If you used AI, also provide your prompt(s) and a copy of the output.

Grading of assignments will be as follows: A+:98, A:95, A-:92, borderline A/B: 90, B+:88, B:85, B-:82, etc. To receive a grade in the A range, work must be of essentially professional quality.

Rewrites of writing assignments other than the final one will be permitted. If you submit an acceptable rewrite one week or less after the graded assignment is returned, your grade for the assignment will be increased by two points. Portals for submitting rewrites will be provided in Canvas.

Communication outside of class sessions will be mainly by email. Therefore, please check your Texas A&M University email at least once a day. When emailing about class items, please start the subject line with “VIBS 660” (example: VIBS 660—Question about Reading).

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

Course Schedule

(Final instructions for reading and writing assignments will appear in the weekly modules in Canvas.)

<u>Date/Session</u>	<u>Main Activities and Writing Assignments</u>
08/19 1	Introduction to the Course Discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Scope of Science and Technology Reporting • Historical Perspectives on Science Writing • Basics of the Science Writer’s Craft • Newsworthiness in Science Introduction: Sources of Story Ideas and Information
08/26 2	Workshop: Writing Assignment Discussion: Reading for Today [Note: In this course, you should be actively engaged with the reading. As you read, please ask yourself questions such as the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What material in this reading is especially useful, interesting, insightful, or otherwise worthwhile? • What points in this reading seem debatable? What counterarguments 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 clearer or more interesting? To aid in classroom discussion, please keep notes about such items.] Presentation/Discussion: The Structure of News Stories Workshop: Examples of News Stories Based on Journal Articles

[Note: This session or a subsequent one will include a guest segment introducing the VMBS Communications office and chances to write for it.]

Core Reading Due:

- “Tip Sheet for Newcomers to Science Writing” by Shira Feder (*The Open Notebook*, 13 April 2021, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2021/04/13/a-getting-started-guide-for-newcomers-to-science-writing-2/>)
- *Craft of Science Writing*: either “Trading the Pipette for the Pen: Transitioning from Science to Science Writing” (pages 15-22) or “Do You Need a Science Degree to Be a Science Reporter?” (pages 23-29) or both
- *Tactical Guide*: Chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7
- “Late Night Thoughts about Science Writing” by Alton Blakeslee (*Quill*, November-December 1994, pp. 35-38)
- “Science and Technology” in *On Writing Well*, 25th anniversary edition, by William Zinsser (New York: HarperCollins, 2001)
- “Constructing News Stories with the Inverted Pyramid” by Tony Rogers, <https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-structure-news-stories-2074332>
- “Associated Press Style,” https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/journalism_and_journalistic_writing/ap_style.html [Note: You also will receive a copy of *Associated Press Stylebook*, and later you will have some reading in it.]

Optional Reading This Week and Other Weeks:

- relevant portions of *MediaWriting*

Writing Due: an analysis of some explanations

Instructions: Look at the three explanations provided, and write an analysis identifying aspects that help make them clear and engaging. Support at least some of your points with examples. The analysis should be intended for fellow members of this class. It may be organized however you consider best, and it should run 250 to 500 words (about 1 to 2 double-spaced pages). Please be concise; length in itself will not be rewarded. If you use resources other than the three explanations, be sure to list them, as noted in this syllabus.

(09/02

No Class—Labor Day)

09/09
3

Workshop: Writing Assignment

Discussion: Covering Various Realms of Science

Introduction and Exercise: Some Organizations in Science Communication

Discussion: Covering Conferences

Discussion: Some Stories from Conferences

Guest Segment on Library Resources: Bryn Murphy, MLIS, Research and Education Librarian, Texas A&M Medical Sciences Library

Core Reading Due:

- *Tactical Guide*: Part IV (Chapters 20-35)
- *Craft of Science Writing*: “How to Read a Scientific Paper” (pages 232-238) and “Getting the Most out of Scientific Conferences” (pages 254-261)

- "Conferences" (pp. 47-49) in *Health Writer's Handbook*, 2nd edition, by Barbara Gastel (Ames, Iowa: Blackwell Publishing, 2005)
- "How to Take Advantage of Online Conferences" by Rachel Crowell (*The Open Notebook*, 9 March 2021, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2021/03/09/how-to-take-advantage-of-online-conferences/>)
- "Publishing Excellent Conference Reports: Editors and Reporters Share Advice" by Barbara Gastel (*Science Editor*, July-August 2002, pp. 118-121)
- "Ask TON: Meeting Coverage" (*The Open Notebook*, 25 October 2011, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2011/10/25/ask-ton-meeting-coverage/>)
- selected items from the *Associated Press Stylebook*

Writing Due: a news brief based on a journal article

Instructions: Write a news brief based on the journal article and news release specified in class. The brief should run about 250 words. In preparing the brief, you may consult background resources such as textbooks and other journal articles. However, you should not look at popular stories based on the journal article, and you should not do interviews. Above your news brief, please indicate the newspaper, wire service, magazine, website, or other venue for which it is intended. Below it, list two or more people (or types of people) to consider interviewing if you were to develop the story more fully; say why you would interview each. (Note: Please write the news brief as if you were reporting on a newly published journal article.)

09/16
4

Workshop: Writing Assignment

Discussion: Sources of Story Ideas and Information, Part 1:

- Periodicals and Books
- Government, Associations, and Other Institutions
- Online Resources
- Scientists, Engineers, Health Professionals, and Other People

Core Reading Due:

- *Ideas Into Words*: Foreword, Chapters 1-3
- "Treasure Hunt: How to Find and Vet Journal Articles" by Jane C. Hu (*The Open Notebook*, 23 March 2021, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2021/03/23/treasure-hunt-how-to-find-and-vet-journal-articles/>)
- "Problems with Preprints: Covering Rough-Draft Manuscripts Responsibly" by Roxanne Khamsi (*The Open Notebook*, 3 June 2020, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2020/06/01/problems-with-preprints-covering-rough-draft-manuscripts-responsibly/>)
- *Craft of Science Writing*: "Is Anyone Out There? Sourcing News Stories" (pages 123-127)
- "How to Find Scientist Sources and Plan Interviews" by Abdullahi Tsanni (*The Open Notebook*, 27 April 2021, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2021/04/27/how-to-find-scientist-sources-and-plan-interviews/>)

Writing Due: choice of conference sessions to cover

Instructions: Imagine that you are a science writer for a wire service such as the Associated Press and that you will cover the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) meeting. From this standpoint, review the meeting program designated in class. Identify three sessions on which you probably would like to write news stories; for each, say why you consider the topic newsworthy. Also identify three sessions from which you might like 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. (Note: In preparing this assignment, please do not look at coverage of this meeting.)

 09/23
 5

Workshop: Writing Assignment

Discussion: Sources of Story Ideas and Information, Part 2:

Scientists, Engineers, Health Professionals, and Other People (cont)

Discussion: Profile Writing

Discussion: Some Profiles of Scientists

Interview Practice

Discussion: Giving Effective Presentations

Core Reading Due:

- *Craft of Science Writing*: “Interviewing for Career-Long Profiles” (pages 128-137), “How to Conduct Difficult Interviews” (pages 138-144), “Including Diverse Voices in Science Stories” (pages 145-153), and “Pulling It All Together: Organizing Reporting Notes” (pages 154-158)
- “Please Don’t Ignore Me: Requesting Interviews with Scientists” by Karen Kwon (*The Open Notebook*, 14 September 2021, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2021/09/14/please-dont-ignore-me-requesting-interviews-with-scientists/>)
- “The Art of Crafting Effective Interview Questions” by Emily Laber-Warren (*The Open Notebook*, 26 September 2023, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2023/09/26/the-art-of-crafting-effective-interview-questions/>)
- “How to Steer an Interview So You Get What You Need” by Tyler Santora (*The Open Notebook*, 20 February 2024, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2024/02/20/how-to-steer-an-interview-so-you-get-what-you-need/>)
- “Taking Good Notes: Tricks and Tools” by the TON Editors (*The Open Notebook*, 6 December 2011, available at <http://www.theopennotebook.com/2011/12/06/taking-good-notes/>)
- “The Human Element: Bringing Science to Life with Profiles” by Esther Landhuis (*The Open Notebook*, 15 December 2015, available at <http://www.theopennotebook.com/2015/12/15/the-human-element-bringing-science-to-life-with-profiles/>)
- some profiles of scientists

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 500 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 (including news releases), and you are strongly encouraged to do interviews. Above your story, please indicate the newspaper, wire service, news website, or other venue for which it is intended. Below your story, please list the sources you consulted in preparing it. Also, please submit a copy of the scientific paper or an electronic link to it.

 09/30
 6

 Student Presentations on Communicating Science through Audiovisual or Social Media
 Discussion: Internships in Science Journalism

Core Reading Due:

- “Internships in Biomedical Communication: Could They Work for You?” by Anne Marie Weber-Main and Heather Haley (*AMWA Journal*, 2006, Vol 21, pp 11-16)
- “Hosting a Biomedical Communication Intern: From Idea through Implementation” by Barbara Gastel (*AMWA Journal*, 2006, Vol. 21, pp 97-101)
- “Finding and Landing the Right Internship in Science Writing” by Rodrigo Pérez Ortega (*The Open Notebook*, 23 May 2017, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2017/05/23/finding-and-landing-the-right-internship-in-science-writing/>)
- “The Intern’s Survival Guide” by Rachael Lallensack (*The Open Notebook*, 28 August 2018, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2018/08/28/the-interns-survival-guide/>)
- PowerPoint presentations by some previous interns

Presentation on Communicating Science through Audiovisual or Social Media:

Instructions: Choose a topic from the list presented in class, or propose a topic and have the instructor approve it. Then prepare a 10-to-15-minute presentation on it, intended to inform your classmates. As a start, at least one resource will be provided on each of the listed topics.

(10/07

No Class—Fall Break)

 10/14
 7

 Workshop: Writing Assignment
 Discussion: Plans for Profiles
 Discussion: Feature Writing in Science
 Discussion: Crafting a Science Story, Part 1
 Discussion: Investigative Science Journalism
 Internship Presentation: Madison Brown, Second-Year STJR Student, Intern,
 Texas A&M University Press

Core Reading Due:

- *Ideas Into Words*: Chapters 4 and 5
- *Craft of Science Writing*: “Good Beginnings: How to Write a Lede Your Editor and Your Readers Will Love” (pages 182-189), “Nailing the Nut Graf” (pages 190-197), “Like Being There: How Science Writers Use Sensory Detail” (pages 198-

202), “Good Endings: How to Write a Kicker Your Editor and Your Readers Will Love” (pages 203-209), and “Explaining Complexity” (pages 262-264)

- *Craft of Science Writing*: “How to Do a Close Read” (pages 265-272) and one or more “A Conversation with” chapters of your choice (at the ends of the sections of the book)
- some short or medium-length feature articles other than profiles
- *Tactical Guide*: Part III (Chapters 15-19)
- Some examples of investigative science journalism

Writing Due: report on three internship portfolios

Instructions: Read the internship portfolios emailed to you. (Each class member will receive internship portfolios by three previous students.) State the main things you learned (about doing an internship, about science communication, or in other regards). If you wish, comment on other aspects of the portfolios. This report should be targeted for classmates, and it should run 500 to 1000 words. It may be structured however you consider best. Please be concise.

Note: The virtual part of the conference [ScienceWriters2024](#) (from the National Association of Science Writers and the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing) will run October 16–18. Students in VIBS 660 will receive registration for the virtual aspect. You are encouraged to attend as many of the virtual sessions as your schedule permits. To complete the next writing assignment, you will need to attend at least one virtual session.

10/21
8

Discussion: Crafting a Science Story, Part 2
 Discussion: Working with Editors
 Workshop: Writing Assignment
 Guest segment by a science writer/editor (tentative)

Core Reading Due:

- *Ideas Into Words*: Chapters 6 and 7
- *Craft of Science Writing*: “The First Critic Is You: Editing Your Own Work” (pages 210-214)
- “Editing and Proofreading Your Own Work” by Barbara Gastel (*AMWA Journal*, 2015, available at <https://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/handle/1969.1/156010>)
- “Working with Editors—and Their Edits” by Monya Baker and Jessica Marshall in *The Science Writers’ Handbook*, edited by Tom Hayden and Michelle Nijhuis (Boston: Da Capo, 2013)
- “How to Ask for Feedback from Editors” by Knvul Sheikh (*The Open Notebook*, 9 July 2019, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2019/07/09/how-to-ask-for-feedback-from-editors/>)
- “Roundtable: A Writer’s Guide to Being Edited” by Humberto Basilio (*The Open Notebook*, 17 October 2023, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2023/10/17/roundtable-a-writers-guide-to-being-edited/>)
- *Tactical Guide*: Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 38
- some examples of award-winning audiovisual science journalism

Writing Due: highlights of a ScienceWriters2024 session

Instructions: In 250 to 350 words, present highlights of an online session presented at ScienceWriters2024. The format should be that of a segment of a *Science Editor* conference roundup article. Examples will be provided in class.

10/28
9

Workshop: Profiles by Class Members
Discussion: Writing about Science for Magazines
Browsing: Some Magazines in the Sciences
Discussion: Fact Checking

Core Reading Due:

- Excerpts from *You Can Write for Magazines* by Greg Daugherty (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1999)
- *Tactical Guide*: Chapters 5 and 13
- "How to Handle a Mistake" by Shira Feder (*The Open Notebook*, 9 February 2021, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2021/02/09/how-to-handle-a-mistake/>)

Writing Due: profile of a scientist, engineer, or health professional

Instructions: Prepare a profile of a scientist, engineer, or health professional. The profile should run 1000 to 1500 words, and it should be based on interviews and background reading. Visuals may be included.

11/04
10

Workshop: Writing Assignment
Exercise: Analysis of a Science Magazine
Discussion: Writing Analytically on Research, Part 1
Discussion: More about Query Letters/Pitches

Core Reading Due:

- *News and Numbers*: Front Matter and Chapters 1-5
- *Craft of Science Writing*: "Is This a Story? How to Evaluate Your Ideas Before You Pitch" (pages 63-67), "Sharpening Ideas: From Topic to Story" (pages 68-74), "Finding the Science in Any Story" (pages 75-79), "Pitching Errors: How Not to Pitch" (pages 80-92), "Five Ways to Sink a Pitch" (page 93), and "What Makes a Good Pitch? Annotations from the TON Pirch Database" (pages 94-107)
- some queries from the pitch database (<http://www.theopennotebook.com/pitch-database/>) in *The Open Notebook*

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. The 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 later in the syllabus.)

11/11
11

Discussion and Presentations: Science Reporting from Institutions
Progress Reports: Feature Article or Alternative Assignment

Discussion: Reporting Analytically on Research, Part 2

Core Reading Due:

- *News and Numbers*: “A Guide to Part II” and Chapters 6-8
- *Field Guide*: Part Six (Chapters 37-42)
- “Government Public Information” by Gail Porter in *Encyclopedia of Science and Technology Communication*, edited by Susanna Hornig Priest
- “Introduction” in *Handbook for Science Public Information Officers*

Instructions for Presentation:

Identify a chapter of *Handbook for Science Public Information Officers* that interests you, and prepare a brief presentation conveying highlights of it. (Additional instructions will be provided in class.)

11/18
12

Discussion: Reporting Analytically on Research, Part 3

Review Session: *News and Numbers*

Discussion: Writing and Reviewing Books in the Sciences

Progress Reports: Feature Article or Alternative Assignment

Guest segment by a science public information professional (tentative)

Core Reading Due:

- *News and Numbers*: Chapters 9-12 and back matter
- *Tactical Guide*: Chapters 4 and 14
- “Science Isn’t Broken: It’s just a hell of a lot harder than we give it credit for” by Christie Aschwanden (*FiveThirtyEight*, 19 August 2015, available at <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/science-isnt-broken/>)
- *Craft of Science Writing*: “What Are the Odds? Reporting on Risk” (pages 239-243) and “Spotting Shady Statistics” (pages 244-253)
- “Writing Books on Science Topics” by John Noble Wilford in *A Field Guide for Science Writers* (1st edition), edited by Deborah Blum and Mary Knudson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997)
- “A Book Publishing Primer for Science Writers” by Darren Incorvaia (*The Open Notebook*, 12 December 2023, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2023/12/12/a-book-publishing-primer-for-science-writers/>)
- “How to Write a Book Chapter or a Book” in *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper*, 9th edition
- “A Strategy for Reviewing Books for Journals” by Barbara Gastel (*BioScience*, October 1991, pp. 635-637)
- “Read This! (Or Not): Writing Book Reviews” by Jeanne Erdmann (*The Open Notebook*, 6 June 2017, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2017/06/06/read-this-or-not-writing-book-reviews/>)

Writing Due: none

Please be working on your feature article or alternative assignment. You are strongly encouraged to have at least a rough draft or detailed outline by now.

11/25
13

(Instead of class today, there will be individual conferences this week and the previous week.)

12/02
14

Review: Take-Home Quiz on *News and Numbers*
Workshop: Writing Due Today
Discussion: Additional Aspects of Science Journalism
Discussion: Humor in Science Writing

Core Reading Due:

- *Tactical Guide*: Chapters 11, 12, 36, 37, 39-44
- “Dibbler Dingles, Worm Blobs, and Fossilized Poop: Finding Humor in Science” by Carolyn Wilke (*The Open Notebook*, 1 March 2022, available at <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2022/03/01/dibbler-dingles-worm-blobs-and-fossilized-poop-finding-humor-in-science/>)
- Some science humor

Writing Due: feature article or alternative assignment

Instructions: Write a feature article on a topic in science, technology, or medicine. The article should be for a specific publication and should run 2,000 to 3,000 words. It should be thoroughly researched, drawing on multiple written sources (generally including journal articles) and multiple interviews. (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.)

University Policies

Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to 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 reason 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 the Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below) 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.

Disability Resources is located in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit disability.tamu.edu.

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, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct 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 related to mental and/or physical health in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [University Health Services](#) or download the [TELUS Health Student Support app](#) for 24/7 access to professional counseling in multiple languages. Walk-in services for urgent, non-emergency needs are available during normal business hours at University Health Services locations; call 979.458.4584 for details.

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 influencing a student’s academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care practices by utilizing the resources and services available through [University Health Services](#). Students needing a listening ear can call the Texas A&M Helpline (979.845.2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends for mental health peer support while classes are in session. The [TELUS Health Student Support app](#) provides access to professional counseling in multiple languages anytime, anywhere by phone or chat, and the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline offers 24-hour emergency support at 988 or [988lifeline.org](#).

Students needing a listening ear can contact University Health Services (979.458.4584) or call the Texas A&M Helpline (979.845.2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends while classes are in session. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988) or at [988lifeline.org](#).