Course Overview
Since Aristotle, science has been viewed as a method of inquiry leading to an objective truth about reality. And, for a large part, many people accept this as fact today. We place our faith in medical science to make us healthy, our trust in technological science to provide fundamentals such as transportation and banking, and our trust in science as a whole to assist us in progressing as a society and as a species. Rhetoricians since Aristotle have questioned, however, the objectivity of science. In a world where “acceptable knowledge” is a social construct, where language and rhetoric and discourse and social circumstance shape the meanings of what we understand to be “true,” how can science claim to be objective? This course examines the intersections between science and rhetoric and the role that writing plays in the development of scientific knowledge.

English 303, Science and Technical Writing, is designed to introduce you to the variety of ways knowledge is created and communicated in the scientific and technical professions. This course will also help you better understand how language, discourse, and writing come together to assist in the construction of knowledge in the sciences. You will gain a better understanding of why and how a “scientific style” of writing has developed over the years, and why and how the constraints and boundaries of this style shape scientific discourse and knowledge.

In other words, English 303 is not a skills-based course in which you will learn how to use a specific scientific format or to write scientific or technical reports. Rather, we will examine how knowledge is created in the scientific professions, and we will practice the variety of ways of communicating that knowledge.

Required Texts

Current copies of your choice of scientific magazines such as Scientific American, Popular Science, Discover, National Geographic, and others.

You will also be required to listen to National Public Radio’s Science Friday several times, and we will watch at least one nature documentary in class.
Periodically, I will ask you to locate essays/articles in either Ekstrom library’s electronic course reserves or in one of the full text databases such as Ebsco Academic.

Other Required Texts/Materials

• A good dictionary (I use the *Oxford American Desk Dictionary and Thesaurus*, 2001 edition. [ISBN 0425180689])
• E-mail and regular WWW access
• A folder or binder in which you’ll keep printed copies of ALL work. Print all drafts, and don’t throw ANYTHING away until after the end of the semester (see warning in next item).
• Two or three floppy diskettes and a floppy diskette holder (around $1.00 each). Always back up your work. Warning: papers lost due to corrupted diskettes receive no credit.
• You will be required to have your final projects bound. CopyIT (Ekstrom or Miller Information Technology bldg.) charges no more than $2.00 per item.

Course Goals

1. Learn and practice reading and analyzing writing for the sciences
2. Practice producing and revising readable and interesting texts that reflect as well as challenge various conventions of science writing
3. Use various methods for developing and focusing ideas, drafting, revising, assessing audience needs, and proofreading/editing
4. Use vocabulary associated with science writing
5. Demonstrate an awareness of writing for general and specialized audiences
6. Draw support for your writing from the works we read in this course as well as from independent research
7. Illustrate appropriate documentation, including adequately summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting research
8. Work through multiple drafts of all writing assignments
9. Learn effective techniques for editing, proofreading, and finalizing your writing in order to minimize error

Course Requirements

Reading
You will be doing a lot of reading in this course. Many of the readings will come from Angier’s *The Best American Science and Nature Writing, 2002* and your other required texts. However, you will be asked to purchase and read copies of current popular science magazines such as *National Geographic* and *Scientific American*.

Writing

**Short Essay One (4-6 pages): Critical Analysis of Nature Documentary.** 15%. In this first essay, you will use one or more nature documentary films or television programs as the principal text(s) for a critical analysis of how we come to understand nature through narrative, anthropocentrism, and control.
Short Essay Two (4-6 pages, some research): The Social Construction of Science. 15% of final course grade. In this essay, you uncover the connections between a scientific or technological movement or paradigm and the social/cultural/political contexts under which it developed.

Longer Essay One (7-9 pages, research): History of a Scientific Principle. 20%. Trace the historical development of a commonly accepted principle or a recent development or issue in science or technology.

Longer Essay Two (7-9 pages, research): Science Writing for a Specialized (Academic) Audience. 20%. Argumentative essay on an issue current in scientific thought.

Question & Response Papers (200-300 words or 1-1.5 double spaced pages). 10%. Assignment details will be announced prior to due dates and may include summary/response, rhetorical analysis of a text, reflection on a reading, etc.

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Periodic In-Class Writing. To be announced individually and without notice.

Writing Assignment Due Dates (these are tentative and subject to change)

Short Essay One: “instructor’s draft” due 9/16
Short Essay Two: instructor’s draft due 10/7
Longer Essay One: instructor’s draft due 11/4
Longer Essay Two: instructor’s draft due 11/25

Assessment & Grading

(see above). Additional 20% will consist of class participation:

Active participation in class discussions; regular attendance; active participation in peer and whole-class workshops; completion of homework reading and writing; attendance of any required individualized conferences with me; reading quizzes; meeting deadlines consistently.

Final Course Grades
To pass this course, you MUST meet the following requirements: (1) complete multiple drafts of each major writing assignment; (2) complete at least 4 of the 6 Q & R assignments; (3) complete all required reading and writing; (4) meet all writing assignment deadlines; (5) meet all attendance requirements for classes, peer review workshops, and individualized conferences. This is the minimum for PASSING.
Grading Scale: 100-97 = A+; 96-93 = A; 92-90 = A-; 89-87 = B+; 86-83 = B; 82-80 = B-; 79-77 = C+; 76-73 = C; 72-70 = C-; 69-67 = D+; 66-63 = D; 62-60 = D-; below 60 = F.

Other Activities and Policies

Participation: Because class participation is essential to a course with a reading and writing workshop format, you will receive a grade for your contributions to class discussions. This grade will reflect not only the amount of participation, but also the quality. Be prepared for each class by reading each assigned text employing active reading techniques such as note taking, underlining, highlighting, etc. Participation is 20% of your final course grade, so if you cannot prepare and come to class regularly, you should drop the course.

Revision: Revision means to see again (re-vision) and involves much more than mere editing and proofreading. Revision involves attentive and thorough examination of one’s intentions, style, audience, and voice to create a unified, innovative piece of student criticism. Revision is an important part of successful writing, and you should produce at least three drafts of each major assignment.

You are responsible for keeping all of your work—including invention activities, drafts, and responses to those drafts—over the course of the term. Don’t throw anything away!! Also, BACK UP EACH DRAFT on separate diskettes or on a diskette and a hard drive. E-mailing a draft to yourself is another way to back up your work.

Individualized Conferences: We will meet in one-to-one conferences at least once, possibly twice this term to discuss your writing. These conferences are mandatory. Missing a conference will significantly lower your 20% course participation grade.

Attendance: Class discussions will often revolve around assigned reading and writing. For this reason, your participation in every class meeting, peer review workshop, and one-to-one conference is extremely important to your success in this course. Specifically, your final course grade will be lowered by one letter grade after missing four (4) classes. After six (6) absences, either withdraw from the course or receive a final course grade of "F."

I make no distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. If you must miss class, contact me first. You will be responsible for submitting any assignments due during the class you will miss before they are due. Absences due to a death in the family, illness, automobile accidents, and the like must be covered by the six allowable absences. In case of heavy snow, try to e-mail me, but use common sense in decided whether to drive.

Late Arrivals and Early Departures: Don’t be late. It’s disruptive for me and for others. Packing bags and/or leaving class early is rude and disruptive, as well. Consistent late arrivals or early departures will adversely affect your 20% participation grade. Special circumstances should be discussed with me before class.
**Late Work:** All reading and writing assignments must be completed/submitted at or before 8:00 a.m. of their due dates. Failure to complete/submit work by the due date will result in a “zero” for the assignment; I will not accept late writing assignments. (If illness or some other situation prevents your from attending class on the due date for a writing assignment, submit your work via e-mail attachment before 8:00 a.m. of the due date.) If you know in advance that you will miss a class meeting, you may submit your work early. However, unannounced in-class writing assignments cannot be made up after an absence. Major assignments submitted late will adversely affect both your final portfolio grade and your participation grade.

**Academic Fraud and Plagiarism:** Academic fraud consists of (1) submitting another person’s writing as your own, in every instance; (2) having someone dictate what should be written or write an assignment for you. Academic fraud is grounds for failure in the course. For the purposes of this course, *plagiarism* occurs when a writer unintentionally fails to document another’s words and/or ideas. Unintentional plagiarism is grounds for revision with or without penalty.

**Class Disruption:** Students who consistently disturb class in any way will be asked to stop the disruptive behavior. Students who continue to disrupt class will be dismissed from the course and will be referred to the English department’s director of undergraduate studies.

**Cell Phones:** Cell phones may remain on ONLY if you anticipate an emergency phone call and ONLY if you notify me first. Otherwise, turn off cell phones before class begins. If your cell phone rings while we’re having class, I’ll ask you not to bring it to class again.

**University Writing Center**
The University Writing Center is located in Ekstrom library, room 312 (3rd floor behind the elevators). Writing consultants will provide feedback on your projects, whether you’re just starting and have only a few ideas or you’re ready to submit a final draft but want someone to read it one last time and suggest final touches. Writing consultants will show you effective ways to produce better writing, but their primary goal is to help you, the writer, to find your own successful ways of producing better writing. Thus, you’ll be better prepared for future writing because you’ll have become a better writer, not just produced a better draft for that particular project. Visit the Writing Center’s web site for more info:
http://www.writingcenter.louisville.edu/
Administrative Statements

Course prerequisites: Successful completion of English 102 or 105.

Disabilities Modification Statement: Students who have a disability or condition which may impair their ability to complete assignments or otherwise satisfy course criteria should meet with me to identify, discuss, and document any feasible instructional modifications or accommodations. Please inform me about such circumstances no later than the second week of the semester or as soon as possible after a disability or condition is diagnosed, whichever occurs earliest. For information and auxiliary assistance, contact the Disabilities Resource Center.

Student Grievances: In case of a grievance, follow these steps in order: (1) Discuss the problem with me; (2) if a resolution is not reached, discuss the matter with one of the assistant directors of composition in Bingham Humanities 321; (3) if a resolution is not reached at that level, consult the director of composition, Brian Huot, Bingham Humanities room 320; (4) if a resolution is not reached here, Professor Huot will suggest further steps to take.