

**Graduate School of Public Health  
San Diego State University  
Seminar in Advanced Epidemiology Research Design:  
Scientific Writing (for Epidemiology)  
Course number: PH700A  
Fall 2006**

**Course description:**

This course assists in the development of the epidemiology masters thesis and scientific manuscript writing. This course is designed to improve writing skills for epidemiology researchers. The course will cover areas such as performing and organizing literature reviews, organization of scientific papers, and principles of scientific writing. The course is designed for advanced students who are beginning to work on their thesis or a paper for publication. This course can be taken for 3 credits.

**Day:** Wednesdays

**Time:** 4:00–6:40 pm

**Place:** IT-094/ SH 339

**Instructors:** Lauren Bartell Weiss, MS, EdM  
Jan McClure, MPH

**SDSU office:** PSFA 185B

**SDSU office phone:** (619) 594–3453

**Office hours:** By appointment

**UCSD office phone:** (858) 534–4730 (Lauren only)

**E-mail addresses:** Lauren: [lbweiss@ucsd.edu](mailto:lbweiss@ucsd.edu); Jan: [mc006@pacbell.net](mailto:mc006@pacbell.net)

**Course Activities:**

Principles of scientific writing will be taught. Students will work on their papers independently, under the overall supervision of their own faculty advisors. The objective of the class is to provide students with information and experience on scientific writing through a mix of lecture, in class practice, small group work, and student power point

presentations. Guidelines for journals and co-author criteria will be discussed.

**Student learning objectives:**

- Select an appropriate research topic for your thesis (should already be selected prior to the start of the first class)
- Learn how to perform and write a literature review in your topic area
- Learn how to scientifically write the first two chapters of your thesis
- Learn about writing scientific manuscripts for publication
- Become a competent consumer of the SDSU library
- Learn how to use reference software and powerpoint
- Orally present working thesis
- Successfully complete the designated homework and in-class exercises

**Attendance/ participation:**

Attendance and participation is *highly recommended* and will be part of your final grade.

**Evaluation Procedures:**

To successfully complete this course you must meet all of the above stated objectives. Grading will be based on completed homework, in-class exercises, drafts, powerpoint presentations, and attendance/participation.

**Required Texts:** (both available at the bookstore)

- *SDSU Dissertation & Thesis Manual: Policies, Procedures, and Format* (DTM, January 2005)
- *The Craft of Scientific Writing* by Michael Alley

**Recommended Readings:**

- *Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr.
- *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* by Lynne Truss

**Statement on Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating which consists of the misuse of the published and/or unpublished works of others by misrepresenting the material (i.e., their intellectual property) so used as one's own work. Penalties for cheating and plagiarism range from a 0 or F on a particular assignment, through an F for the course, to expulsion from the university. For more information on the University's policy regarding plagiarism, refer to the University guidelines (*SDSU General Catalogs and Announcement of Courses*)

**Syllabus is Subject to Change:**

This syllabus and schedule are subject to change depending on the progression of the class. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on announcements and/or changes made while you were absent.

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**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Wednesday, August 30**

Course overview by Jan McClure and Lauren Weiss

Thesis review – Linda Kilroy, Graduate and Research Affairs

[www.sdsu.edu/thesis](http://www.sdsu.edu/thesis)

Fulfilling your human subjects obligations – Wendy Bracken

**HOMEWORK:** Decision about thesis format and hypothesis (talk to your thesis chair); Review *SDSU Dissertation & Thesis Manual* and new alternate thesis guidelines (GSPH website); Read Chapter 1 (*The Craft of Scientific Writing*).

*\*\*\*\*\*Note: Purchase required texts from bookstore by next class\*\*\*\*\**

**Wednesday, September 6**

Discussion: Selecting a thesis committee

Lecture: Specific aims and hypothesis generation

Discussion: Individual aims/ hypotheses with students

**HOMEWORK:** Revised specific aims and hypothesis due

**Wednesday, September 13**

Lecture: Organization and overview of literature reviews

Lecture: Reading scientific papers

In-class exercise on using literature review tables

**HOMEWORK:** TBA

**Wednesday, September 20**

Using the SDSU library – Marilyn Hall, meet in Library Room LA 78

Check out sample theses and proposals  
Using reference software

**HOMEWORK:** Start tables on individual topics (bring to next class);  
Read Chapter 2, pp. 16–20 (*Creating Titles*) and pp. 27–33 (*Writing Introductions*) (*The Craft of Scientific Writing*).

**Wednesday, September 27**

Lecture: More on writing literature reviews  
In-class exercise using literature review tables  
Continue working on literature review tables in class

**HOMEWORK:** Continue working on literature reviews

**Wednesday, October 4**

Lecture: Scientific writing: Introduction/ Background and referencing  
(primary sources and plagiarism)

**HOMEWORK:** Read Chapter 17 (*The Craft of Scientific Writing*); start  
first attempt at writing an introduction and bring rough draft, articles,  
and literature review tables to class

**Wednesday, October 11**

Lecture: More about scientific writing: focus on Introduction/  
background  
Free class time to continue writing introduction and ask questions

**HOMEWORK:** Continue revising introduction; continue writing  
literature review; Read Chapters 4,5,6 (*The Craft of Scientific Writing*)

**Wednesday, October 18**

Lecture: HANDS-ON POWERPOINT- LIBRARY INSTRUCTION ROOM

**HOMEWORK:** Read Chapters 7,8,9 (*The Craft of Scientific Writing*)

**Wednesday, October 25**

TBA

**HOMEWORK:** Finalize first drafts of introduction and literature review;  
Read Chapter 15 (*The Craft of Scientific Writing*)

**Wednesday, November 1**

Lecture: Methods and results sections of a scientific manuscript  
In class exchange of drafts and critique

**HOMEWORK:** Revisions of introduction and literature review

**Wednesday, November 8**

Lecture: Discussion section of a scientific manuscript

**HOMEWORK:** Revisions of introduction and literature review; work on  
powerpoint presentations

**Wednesday, November 15**

Powerpoint presentations of introduction and overview of literature  
review

**HOMEWORK:** TBA

**Wednesday, November 22: \*\*\*NO CLASS\*\*\***

**Wednesday, November 29**

Lecture: Abstract of a scientific manuscript  
Scientific manuscripts: Bringing it all together

**HOMEWORK:** Read Chapter 16 (*The Craft of Scientific Writing*)

**Wednesday, December 6**

Lecture: Preparing and submitting manuscripts (authorship, journal  
guidelines, review process)

**FINAL HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT: GIVE THESIS CHAIR COMPLETED  
THESIS DRAFT 😊**