ACADEMIC WRITING FOR COGNITIVE SCIENTISTS

Winter Term 2016

Instructor: Natalie Sebanz

Office Hours: by appointment (e-mail sebanzn@ceu.hu)

Course description: This course aims at improving oral and written presentation skills that are vital for Cognitive Scientists. How does one write an abstract, a methods section, or a results section for an empirical paper? How can experimental results be presented most effectively? What are good strategies for dealing with reviewers’ comments when revising a paper? How does one write a review? What is important to keep in mind when writing a research proposal? What makes for a good oral presentation? Course participants will learn about all of these and many more aspects of exposition through hands-on experience.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will

• know the basics of writing an empirical paper
• know what to look out for when writing a research proposal
• know how to best visualize empirical results or predictions
• be familiar with the publishing process
• have gained practice in preparing a poster
• have gained insight into how to improve their oral presentation skills

Course Requirements: completion of writing assignments; presentation of posters and talks; regular attendance; participation in discussion

Grading: Performance on assignments (oral and written) will determine grades (all assignments have equal weight, grade 100% based on assignments); Grading criteria: 1) clarity of the structure (this includes order and prioritizing of information, logical flow, proper use of paragraphs in text/visual arrangement in presentations), 2) accuracy and completeness of the reported information, and 3) writing/presentation style (command of grammar; effective, non-redundant communication). These three grading criteria have equal weight.
COURSE SCHEDULE

SESSION 1, WEDNESDAY 13TH JANUARY 9:00-10:40
This introductory session will introduce the course structure, and we will warm up with a writing exercise.

SESSION 2, WEDNESDAY 20TH JANUARY 9:00-10:40
This session will introduce guidelines on writing methods and results sections.
Assignment: Write a methods and results section (Stroop task and interesting manipulation).

SESSION 3, WEDNESDAY 27TH JANUARY 9:00-10:40
In this session, we will review specific issues concerning methods and results sections, and we will discuss how to write a good abstract.
Assignment: Write an abstract (Stroop).

SESSION 4, WEDNESDAY 3RD FEBRUARY 9:00-10:40
This session will provide guidance on the presentation of results through figures and tables, including legends.
Assignment: Prepare figures (line and bar graphs, Stroop).

SESSION 5, WEDNESDAY 10TH FEBRUARY 9:00-10:40
This session will focus on how to write an outline, and how to structure the introduction and the discussion of an empirical paper.
Assignment: Reverse-engineer the introduction and discussion of a paper of your choice by writing the outline for these sections.

SESSION 6, WEDNESDAY 17TH FEBRUARY 9:00-10:40
We will practice writing at the sentence level.
Assignment: Improve sentences.
SESSION 7, WEDNESDAY 24TH FEBRUARY 9:00-10:40

This session will address questions related to reviewing papers, dealing with reviewers’ and editors’ comments, and publishing in different journals.

Assignment: write a cover letter for the paper used in the reverse-engineering exercise.

SESSION 8, WEDNESDAY 2ND MARCH 9:00-10:40

Continuation of Session 7 (with focus on reviewing)

SESSION 9, WEDNESDAY 9TH MARCH 9:00-10:40

In this session we will discuss how to write various kinds of research proposals, with a focus on the first year PhD research proposal.

SESSION 10, WEDNESDAY 16TH MARCH 9:00-10:40

Participants will prepare and present posters, receiving feedback on their presentation.

Assignment: Make a poster and present it.

SESSION 11 WEDNESDAY 23RD MARCH 9:00-10:40

In this session, we will continue working on oral presentation skills.

Assignment: Prepare a short presentation.

SESSION 12 WEDNESDAY 30TH MARCH 9:00-10:40

We will discuss individual writing issues related to the research proposal.