

ACADEMIC WRITING FOR COGNITIVE SCIENTISTS

Winter Term 2017/18

Instructor: Natalie Sebanz

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

Course description: This course aims at improving written and oral presentation skills that are vital for Cognitive Scientists. How can the methods and results of an empirical study 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 about the basics of writing empirical papers
- know what is important for writing research proposals
- have gained insight into how to best visualize empirical results or predictions
- be familiar with the publishing process
- have learnt how to improve specific writing issues, from sentence-level to overall structure
- have gained insight into how to improve their oral presentation skills

Course Requirements: completion of writing assignments; regular attendance; participation in discussion

Grading: Performance on assignments 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 10TH JANUARY 13:30-15:10

This session will provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their academic writing and to define specific issues they would like to work on throughout the course. We will start discussing basic principles of academic writing, focusing on the transition between thinking and writing and on the communicative function of writing.

Assignment (note that assignments will be introduced in detail in each session and will always be due before the following session): write (or revise) methods and results for a study

SESSION 2 AND 3, WEDNESDAY 17TH JANUARY 13:30-15:10 and 15:30-17:00 (replacing Jan 24)

These two sessions will provide hands-on guidance on writing methods and results sections. We will discuss common problems and different ways to present methods and results.

Assignments: 1. revise methods/results, 2. write an abstract, 3. create figures

SESSION 4 AND 5, WEDNESDAY 7TH FEBRUARY 13:30-15:10 and 15:30-17:00 (replacing Jan 31)

In these two sessions, we will review specific issues concerning methods and results sections in more depth, discuss how to write an abstract, and how to present results most effectively through figures.

Assignments: 1. revise abstracts, 2. revise figures, 3. reverse-engineer an empirical journal article; 4. submit introduction and discussion of a study

SESSION 6, WEDNESDAY 14TH FEBRUARY 13:30-15:10

This session will focus on how to write an outline, and how to structure the introduction and the discussion of an empirical paper. We will also discuss the use of paragraphs.

SESSION 7, WEDNESDAY 21ST FEBRUARY 13:30-15:10

This will be a continuation of the previous session, focusing in depth on specific issues with writing introductions and discussions.

Assignment: write a cover letter

SESSION 8, WEDNESDAY 28TH FEBRUARY 13:30-15:10

This session will introduce the basics of publishing, focusing on how to write a convincing cover letter and how to deal with reviewers' and editors' comments in revisions.

Assignment: write a review

SESSION 9, WEDNESDAY 7TH MARCH 13:30-15:10

We will discuss how to write various kinds of research proposals, from first year PhD research proposals to applications for research funding.

Assignment: revise sentences from prior writing.

SESSION 10, WEDNESDAY 14TH MARCH 13:30-15:10

We will discuss principles for making sentences clearer and easier to comprehend, and practice writing at the sentence level.

Assignment: submit slides for a short talk or submit a poster

SESSION 11, WEDNESDAY 21ST MARCH 13:30-15:10

This session will focus on how to create effective oral presentations.

Assignment: revise talk slides/poster

SESSION 12, WEDNESDAY 28TH MARCH 13:30-15:10

This session will be tailored to students' specific needs.