# academic writing

Winter 2023,
Central European University
Vienna

## Instructor Info —

Eva Wittenberg

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## Course Info ———

Prerequisites: None

Fridays

13:30–15:10

CLASSROOM: tbd

## Overview

This is a PhD course with around 30-50 pages of literature per week, lectures, discussions, and homework assignments. The course is aimed at PhD students who are beginning to write a research manuscript. The course teaches a variety of skills related to presentation of research, from A like Abstract to P like Presentations (sadly, we won't make it to Z).

## Learning Objectives

This class is designed to do three things: First, to teach skills for field-specific academic writing and publication; second, to read and comment on others' writing and productively use peer feedback; and third, to actively develop a manuscript you are currently working on.

Topics covered:

1. writing techniques and motivation
2. the structure of an academic paper in CogSci
3. writing specific sections
4. graphs and statistics
5. critiquing others' writing and reviewing papers
6. to talk, not only write, about your research

## Material

### Required Texts
See Class Schedule. Texts will be uploaded on Moodle. Please check regularly for updates.

### Recommended Books (no need to buy!)
We mainly use two books that say the same things in strikingly different ways.

Barbara Sarnecka (2021): The Writing Workshop: Write More, Write Better, Be Happier in Academia. Open Access: https://osf.io/n8pc3/

Paul Silvia (2007). How to write a lot: A practical guide to productive academic writing. American Psychological Association.

## Structure of this class

### Structured writing
Each class session begins with a 25 minute writing period, trying out different techniques and with different goals. Some of the writing periods may be used for other practical tasks.

### Taking stock & setting goals
After the writing period, we take stock of everyone's progress over the past week, and we set goals for the upcoming week.

### Weekly theme
The remainder of the class will be spent discussing and discovering the specific class theme (see syllabus).

## Assignments

### Homework I: Reading
Please read all the texts each week. They're well written and helpful!

### Homework II: Writing
The expectation is that each week, substantial progress (to be defined each week) will have been made in each student's individual writing project. Part of that progress will be achieved in class, and part, at home. I encourage students to meet in groups at least once in addition to class time, for a social writing session.

### Homework III: Peer Reviewing
Students will peer-review each other each week by editing each others' documents stored in our class SharePoint drive with "track changes" on.

## Class Schedule

### MODULE 1: GETTING READY

| Date | Theme | Readings |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Jan 13 | Intro to the workshop | • [Kosslyn and Rosenberg, 2005]<br>• Sarnecka, *The Workshop* |
| Jan 20 | No excuses | • Sarnecka, *The Practice of Writing*<br>• Silvia, *Specious Barriers to Writing a Lot* |
| Jan 27 | A German's Dream: The Schedule | • Silvia, *Motivational Tools*<br>• Sarnecka, *Planning Your Time* |

### MODULE 2: GETTING STARTED

| Date | Theme | Readings |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Feb 3 | What do you want to say? | • Nature abstract<br>• [Skinner, 1981] |
| Feb 10 | What's an academic paper in our field? | • [Gernsbacher, 2018]<br>• Silvia, *Writing Journal Articles* |

### MODULE 3: WRITING SO THAT PEOPLE UNDERSTAND YOU

| Date | Theme | Readings |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Feb 17 | Graphs | • [Rougier et al., 2014]<br>• [In and Lee, 2017]<br>• [Wainer, 1984] |
| Feb 24 | Paragraph Structure | • Silvia, *A Brief Foray into Style*<br>• Sarnecka, *Paragraphs* |
| Mar 3 | Sentences & Words | • Sarnecka, *Presentations* |

### MODULE 4: FEEDBACK AND DEALING WITH IT

| Date | Theme | Readings |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Mar 10 | Getting & Writing Reviews | • [Pier et al., 2018]<br>• [Hill, 2016] |
| Mar 17 | Scientific Presentations | • [Pier et al., 2018]<br>• [Hill, 2016] |
| Mar 24 | CONCLUSION | Your presentations: DOUBLE SESSION: 1–4:30pm |

# Grading Scheme

| 20% | Participation |
|-----|---------------|
| 50% | Writing |
| 30% | Peer Reviewing |

Grades will not be curved, and will follow the standard scale:

| Grade | Points (0-4 scale) | Points (0-100 scale) |
|-------|-------------------|----------------------|
| A | 3.68 - 4.00 | 100-96 |
| A- | 3.34 - 3.67 | 95-88 |
| B+ | 3.01 - 3.33 | 87-80 |
| B | 2.68 - 3.00 | 79-71 |
| B- | 2.34 - 2.67 | 70-63 |
| C+ | 2.33 - (minimum pass) | 62-58 |

# Academic Integrity

In general, *The Killers* got it right when they say "may your efforts be your own". Otherwise, you don't learn anything, and what are you here for if not to learn things? Also, academic integrity is of the utmost importance in the (academic) world. Any form of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, copying, etc.) will not be tolerated. You are expected to follow the standards set out in the CEU Code of Ethics; see also https://documents.ceu.edu/documents/p-1405-1. Ignorance is no excuse for academic integrity violations.

# ✱ References

[Gernsbacher, 2018]  Gernsbacher, M. A. (2018). Writing empirical articles: Transparency, reproducibility, clarity, and memorability. *Advances in methods and practices in psychological science*, 1(3):403–414.

[Hill, 2016]  Hill, J. A. (2016). How to review a manuscript. *Journal of electrocardiology*, 49(2):109–111.

[In and Lee, 2017]  In, J. and Lee, S. (2017). Statistical data presentation. *Korean journal of anesthesiology*, 70(3):267–276.

[Kosslyn and Rosenberg, 2005]  Kosslyn, S. and Rosenberg, R. (2005). *Fundamentals of Psychology: The Brain, the Person, the World*. Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

[Pier et al., 2018]  Pier, E. L., Brauer, M., Filut, A., Kaatz, A., Raclaw, J., Nathan, M. J., Ford, C. E., and Carnes, M. (2018). Low agreement among reviewers evaluating the same nih grant applications. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(12):2952–2957.

[Rougier et al., 2014]  Rougier, N. P., Droettboom, M., and Bourne, P. E. (2014). Ten simple rules for better figures. *PLoS computational biology*, 10(9):e1003833.

[Skinner, 1981]  Skinner, B. F. (1981). How to discover what you have to say—a talk to students. *The Behavior Analyst*, 4(1):1.

[Wainer, 1984]  Wainer, H. (1984). How to display data badly. *The American Statistician*, 38(2):137–147.