Course Syllabus

MCB 3841W-001
Fall 2013
Lecture: Mondays and Wednesdays 12:20-1:10pm, Laurel Hall, 308.
Seminar: Fridays 12:20-1:10, BPB 130.

Instructor
Prof. David Daggett
Office: TBA
Phone: TBA
Email: david.daggett@uconn.edu Please include “3841W” in your Subject Line.
Office Hours: TBA

Required Texts
A Short Guide to Writing About Biology, (Eighth Edition) Jan A. Pechenik;


Recommended Texts
Recent Edition of a Developmental Biology textbook. i.e. Developmental Biology, Gilbert; Principles of Development, Wolpert & Tickle.


The elements of style (any edition published after 2001) William Strunk

Course Objectives
The primary objective of this course is to improve your scientific communication skills with an emphasis on writing. Other objectives are to learn how to search the scientific literature, read scientific articles, and design and deliver effective scientific presentations.

Along the way, we will be exploring the emerging field of “Evo-Devo”, shorthand for Evolutionary Developmental Biology. This field represents an interdisciplinary endeavor, drawing from Embryology, Developmental Biology, Cell and Molecular Biology, Genetics, Genomics and Evolutionary Biology. As such, it gives us a rich opportunity to learn how to digest, interpret and integrate scientific ideas across fields, and to communicate them to fellow scientists, policy makers, industry members and the lay public.
Assignments

W courses at UConn require a minimum of 15 revised and edited pages of writing. For MCB 3841W-001, this will include:

- One, 1-page Essay: What is Evo-Devo?
- One, 5-page Review of Evo-Devo Model Systems.
- Two, 1-page Summaries of Evo-Devo Primary Literature Papers.
- Multiple 1-page Critiques from Graduate Seminar.
- One, 5-page Research Proposal; “Evo-Devo DIY”.
- One, 10 minute PowerPoint Presentation based on Research Proposal.
- One, 2-3-page Final; Editorial: Why does “Evo-Devo” matter?

More detailed Assignment Descriptions and a Course Schedule list to be provided.

Assignment Formatting:
- Assignments should use 12-pt Arial Font and text should be double-spaced with 1” side, top and bottom margins. Double-check your word processing program.
- Include a Header that contains your Name, the Date submitted, followed by the type of paper (Essay, Review, etc.) and the terms “Draft”, “Revision 1” or “Final Version” as appropriate.
  Example: Bob Loblaw 10/14/2035 Mini-Review, Revision 1
- Assignments must be turned in accompanied by hard copies of any referenced/cited journal articles as well as your previous draft with instructor comments.

Other Considerations:
- As MCB students, you are expected to read the primary literature. It takes time and practice to become comfortable reading, assessing and expressing the material. We will use Review Articles to introduce many topics. Please bring questions to class for us to discuss when you have difficulty with the material. It is likely that others have similar questions.
- Web Sites are NOT generally appropriate as citations. You do not know if they are reliable, and they often represent filtered and pre-digested information.
- Search databases are the best method for accessing primary research literature: i.e. PubMed; http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed
- Relying heavily on one source for your work introduces bias. Data generated by different laboratories sometimes conflict. You must learn how to understand scientific arguments and interpretation, and be able to evaluate data against the existing background literature yourself.
- Whenever possible, use the most current literature. You can go further back to cite major or foundational findings in order to give proper credit.
**Evaluation**

Please Note: *According to university-wide policies for W courses, you cannot pass this course unless you receive a passing grade for its writing components.*

Your final grade in this course will be determined by the following:

- Writing Assignments with various components and Final Editorial; 70%.
- PowerPoint presentation on your Research Proposal; 15%.
- Preparation and Class Participation; 15%. Assigned readings must be completed before class to allow us to have productive discussions, and for you to participate.

While each assignment will have specific criteria for evaluation, the general criteria for evaluating your writing include:

- A focused thesis.
- Demonstration of content knowledge; proper detail.
- Organization; sequence of information is logical and has effective flow.
- Use of effective transitions.
- Concise conclusions or summaries.
- Proper use of literature resources and citations.
- Grammar and demonstration of proofreading.
- Incorporation of comments made on previous drafts.

**Plagiarism**

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, to plagiarize means:

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source
- to commit literary theft
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

Please complete the UConn Plagiarism Module:
http://www.irc.uconn.edu/PlagiarismModule/intro_m.htm

Other plagiarism resources:

- See pages 13-15 in our Pechenik textbook.
- http://www.plagiarism.org
Penalties for copying another student’s work:
1. First violation will result in a “0” for the assignment
2. Second violation may result in an “F” for the course

Penalties for failing to cite properly:
1. First violation will result in written warning.
2. Second violation will result in a “0” for the assignment.
3. Third violation will result in a “0” for the course.

In addition, violations of the Student Code can result in Suspension or Expulsion.

BE AWARE THAT IGNORANCE OF POLICIES NEVER EXCUSES A VIOLATION.

Academic Integrity
In this course we aim to conduct ourselves as a community of scholars, recognizing that academic study is both an intellectual and ethical enterprise. You are encouraged to build on the ideas and texts of others; that is a vital part of academic life. You are also obligated to document every occasion when you use another’s ideas, language, or syntax. You are encouraged to study together, discuss readings outside of class, share your drafts during peer review and outside of class, and go to the Writing Center with your drafts. In this course, those activities are well within the bounds of academic honesty. However, when you use another’s ideas or language—whether through direct quotation, summary, or paraphrase—you must formally acknowledge that debt by signaling it with a standard form of academic citation. Even one occasion of academic dishonesty, large or small, on any assignment, large or small, will result in failure for the entire course and referral to Student Judicial Affairs. For University policies on academic honesty, please see UConn’s Responsibilities of Community Life: The Student Code and the Office of Community Standards: http://www.community.uconn.edu

University Writing Center
All UConn students are invited to visit the University Writing Center for individualized tutorials. The Writing Center staff includes talented and welcoming graduate and undergraduate students from across the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. They work with writers at any stage of the writing process, from exploring ideas to polishing final drafts. Their first priority is guiding each student's revisions, so they frequently provide a sounding board for a writer's ideas, arguments, analytical moves, and uses of evidence. They can also work with you on sentence-level concerns, but please note that they will not proofread for you; instead, they will help you become a better editor of your own work. Come with a copy of the assignment you are working on, any assigned writing guides, a current draft (or notes if you are not yet at the draft stage), and ideas about what you want out of a session. Tutorials run 45 minutes and are free. You can drop in or make an appointment. For more information, please go to writingcenter.uconn.edu.
Students With Disabilities

Students who think that they may need accommodations because of a disability are encouraged to meet with me privately early in the semester. Students should also contact the Center for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible to verify their eligibility for reasonable accommodations. For more information, please go to http://www.csd.uconn.edu/.