ENGL 299C, Spring 2014: Syllabus

[last revised on March 31, 2014]

This syllabus and many other files used in this course are based on materials previously developed by Norman Wacker, Brian Buchwitz, Stephen Maley, Vincent Oliveri, and other Interdisciplinary Writing Program instructors. I am grateful to these instructors for sharing their resources so generously.

Description: ENGL 299C: Intermediate Interdisciplinary Writing for the Natural Sciences (instructor: Greg Crowther) is linked with BIOL 220A: Introductory Biology (instructors: Jessica McAbee and Greg Crowther). Although the two courses complement each other, they have distinct goals, activities, and assessments. Our focus in ENGL 299C is on the creation and communication of knowledge in science through writing. We will (1) read and analyze biology texts and (2) outline, draft, comment on, and revise our writings as biologists do.

Why might you want to take this course?

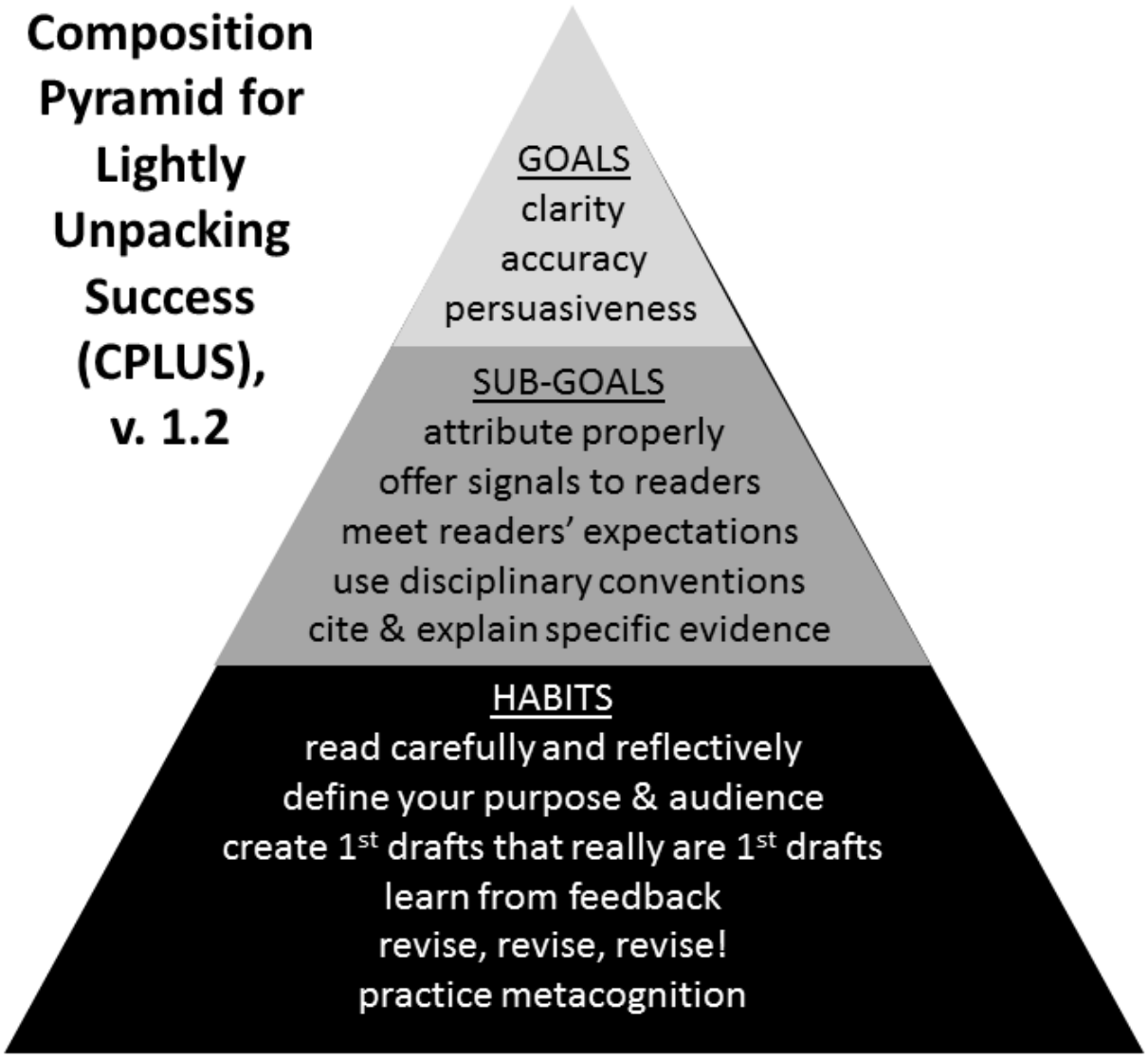
- To improve your ability to write about biology and other topics.
- To improve your ability to read papers about biology and other topics.
- To enhance your BIOL 220 experience.
- To receive "C" or "W" credits toward graduating from UW.

Learning goals: (common to all Interdisciplinary Writing Program courses!)

- Read texts by academic and professional participants in the discipline, identifying these writers' purposes and recognizing rhetorical principles that underlie genres in the field.
- Analyze writing tasks assigned in a disciplinary context.
- Identify and generate material relevant to discipline-based paper assignments; draft and revise arguments as a participant in your disciplinary context; and respond to arguments by other participants.
- Use critical comments on your work, and writing activity itself, to extend and refine your thinking.
- Grasp, employ, and pursue implications of new learning in the discipline lecture course (i.e., BIOL 220).
- Become more fully aware of the factors that affect your success in reading and writing. (The fancy term for this is “metacognition.”)

How exactly will this course help me improve my writing?

Here is one way to visualize the writing process:



Each of the 3 big-picture GOALS can be hard to define and hard to achieve. However, good HABITS allow progress toward SUB-GOALS, which in turn bring the GOALS into reach.

We encourage good habits through frequent "low-stakes" homework and in-class exercises. "Low stakes" means that these exercises are graded gently and/or have a very small impact on your final grade.

Expectations:

- Participate fully in course activities. This includes preparing for class; taking notes, asking questions, and offering ideas during class; and completing assignments on time and with your best effort.
- Show respect for all individuals and demonstrate responsibility in groups. Many activities in science and writing are collaborative in nature.
- Take advantage of opportunities to incorporate feedback and to grow as a scientist and writer.
- Communicate clearly and regularly with your peers and the instructor.
- Conduct yourself with academic honesty. Do not deprive yourself of opportunities to learn.

Instructor: Gregory J. Crowther, Ph.D. (crowther@uw.edu)

Website and assignments: Check the course website (https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/896461) for frequent announcements, assignments, and messages from your instructor and peers. You will submit most assignments electronically using this website.

Meetings:

- Classes: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 12:30-1:20 PM, Parrington 305.
- Conferences: By appointment.
- Office Hours: Mondays and Fridays, 10:00-11:59 AM, Padelford B-26, and by appointment. Please note that all questions and requests related to ENGL 299C should be directed to Dr. Crowther. Other BIOL 220 instructors and teaching assistants are not responsible for ENGL 299C and should not be consulted about ENGL 299C, simply because their BIOL 220 duties keep them plenty busy already!

Participation: Please bring recent readings and homework assignments to class (either as hard copies or electronically) to facilitate discussion. Come ready to take notes and offer ideas. In-class activities cannot be completed at another time. If you are unable to participate in class due to an illness, family emergency, or UW-recognized event, email the instructor before class or as soon as possible. An excused absence from participation may require appropriate documentation.

Grading: Your final grade will be determined from three papers (collectively worth 70% of your grade) and homework and participation (collectively worth 30%). Assignments submitted late will be penalized 15% per day, up to a maximum of 50%, unless documentation of a valid excuse is provided. Grades on a 0-to-100% scale will be converted to a 0.0-to-4.0 scale as follows: 95% = 4.0, 94% = 3.9, 93% = 3.8, 92% = 3.7, 91% = 3.6, 90% = 3.5, 89% = 3.4, 88% = 3.3, 87% = 3.2, 86% = 3.1, 85% = 3.0, etc.

Additional resources: Check the Pages section of the course website for guides to Avoiding Plagiarism, Collaborating Online, Searching for Scientific Literature, and Supporting Your Learning & Writing.