PHYS 496, General Course Information, Spring 2015

Classes

The class will meet on Fridays, 2:00–4:50 PM.

On most class days, we will meet at 2:00 PM in Room 257 Loomis (student computer classroom) for "Writing Workshop" (WW), a series of online activities designed to improve your writing skills. Around 2:45 PM, the class will move to Room 158 Loomis for lectures, student presentations, and other in-class activities.

Course Website

The course syllabus, grading rubric, written instructions for assignments, announcements, lecture notes, and links to useful external resources are posted on the course website. Check it frequently.

Instructors

	Office Hours	Where	Email
Charles F. Gammie	by appointment	235 Loomis	gammie@illinois.edu
Celia M. Elliott	by appointment	215 Loomis	cmelliot@illinois.edu

Course Rationale

The purpose of this course is to teach you valuable writing, presentation, teamwork, leadership, and organizational skills that will better prepare you for a successful career in science or technology. You will learn good communications practices and standard conventions for physics talks, abstracts, news stories, and journal articles, and you will be exposed to forefront physics research.

Course Components

The course will consist of in-class writing practice, lectures, student presentations and group exercises, and written homework assignments. No formal exams will be given.

For the in-class writing practice (WW), you will gain experience in reading and revising technical material electronically and in correcting common rhetorical errors. You will also have an opportunity to ask questions and get detailed feedback from the instructors during WW on your other class assignments.

The written homework assignments consist of specific writing tasks, including written evaluations of presentations and papers, abstracts, analogies, outlines, figure captions, and news stories for a general audience. You will also learn how to create effective figures to illustrate your written work.

Formal presentations will include a team journal-club presentation and an informal presentation as part of in-class activities.

Refer to the class syllabus and written assignments for additional details and deadlines.

Textbook

No textbook is required for this course. Lecture notes are posted on the course website after each class. Some scientific papers published in the peer-reviewed literature will be assigned; all are available free of charge online through the University's library subscription.

Recommended Reading

The following books are well worth adding to your personal library.

William Strunk, Jr., and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed. (New York, Longman, 2000).

Vernon Booth, *Communicating in Science: Writing a scientific paper and speaking at scientific meetings*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Herbert Michaelson, *How to Write and Publish Engineering Papers and Reports*, 3rd ed. (Phoenix, Oryx Press, 1990).

Grading

Timely submission of written assignments is required. You will be given feedback on both the physics and the technical writing components of your assignments, and each will contribute to your final grade. A grading rubric is posted on the course website.

Each WW exercise will be reviewed and points awarded for completing it. Solutions to the WW exercises will be posted on the course website, and individual feedback will be given.

Each homework assignment will be scored and points granted. The total points for each assignment are provided in the written instructions for that assignment and on the grading rubric.

To encourage you to complete your assignments on time and to revise your work, you will be able to earn additional points for rewrites on some assignments, *provided the initial draft is submitted by the posted due date and time.* Late submissions will be ineligible for "rewrite" points. You will be able to earn additional points for each eligible revision, up to 100 percent of the original points assigned to that exercise.

You may use the student gradebook for PHYS 496 available at my.physics.illinois.edu to check on your grades at any time and to confirm that all your submitted assignments have been graded. Incremental rewrite points will be added to the total points awarded to each assignment in the gradebook.

Attendance

Class attendance is required. Much of what you will gain from the class will come from interacting with your fellow students and the instructors during in-class activities. A portion of your final grade will be for "participation," and unexcused absences will count against you.

Assignments

Assignments include written work, team activities, and oral presentations. Detailed instructions for each assignment, along with its due date, are posted on the website. Most assignments are due by midnight on the designated due date, but *check the written homework instructions* for due dates and times. **Assignments turned in after the deadline date will be**

downgraded proportionately, depending on lateness, and *will not be eligible for rewrite points*.

Deadline extensions will not be granted except for extraordinary circumstances (kidnapping; severe, sustained chest pains; uncontrolled bleeding from a major artery...). Get *something* on paper and get it turned in by the deadline.

All assignments are to be emailed to both instructors by the deadline noted on the assignment page. A summary of the homework assignments, including due dates, eligibility for rewrites, and points assigned, is posted on the course website.

Don't forget to put your name at the top of the page for submitted assignments.

Revisions of Previously Submitted Assignments: If you are submitting a revised assignment for regrading, please note that it is a revision on the top of the page, e.g., "Homework #6_Rev. 1. Subsequent revisions should be labeled in ascending numerical order. Keep ***all*** files (originals and revisions) for your records.

Writing Workshop

In-class exercises have been devised to help you identify common technical writing flaws and practice correcting them. These exercises will be completed in real time during WW and emailed to Celia at the end of the workshop. Each submitted WW exercise will contribute to your final grade. **Missed exercises may not be made up**.

Physics Colloquium

PHYS 496 students are required to ***attend at least four departmental colloquia*** during the semester and ***prepare a short written analysis*** of each colloquium attended, using the "Colloquium Report" template. Colloquium is held at 4:00 pm on Wednesdays in Room 141 Loomis. If you have a class conflict and cannot attend Colloquium, email Professor Gammie for suggestions on alternative arrangements.

As you listen to the colloquium speaker, think critically and analytically not only about the physics, but also about his or her strengths and weaknesses as a speaker and communicator. Did the slides enhance the talk or detract from it? What parts were unclear? How did the speaker handle questions? Did the speaker have any annoying mannerisms?

Completed colloquium reports should be emailed to Celia. Note that colloquium reports must be ***submitted within 15 days*** of the talk to receive full credit.

Class Administration

Any concerns, questions, or comments about the administration of the course should be directed to Professor Gammie.

Email

The instructors will communicate with you about the course via email to your ***University of Illinois*** email account; check it regularly! If you send email to the instructors, please put PHYS 496 in the subject line of each message. We do not use the "threading" feature of some email programs, so don't omit the subject line, and be sure to include your full name in your message.